ENGAGED & CURIOUS LEARNERS

DISTINCTIVE SCHOOLS
COMMIT. CREATE. COLLABORATE.

PART 1: Who is **DISTINCTIVE SCHOOLS?**

The *DISTINCTIVE SCHOOLS* team

★ **Stephanie Cardella**, *Executive Director of Curriculum Instruction & Assessment*

★ **Karey Henderson**, *Managing Director of Operations – MI*

★ **Sarah O'Connell**, *Deputy Chief of Schools – IL & Mentor Principal*

★ **Molly Quinn**, *Managing Director of Marketing & Communications*

★ **Jane Szot**, *Director of Special Projects*

We are *DISTINCTIVE SCHOOLS*

Distinctive Schools is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to supporting and accelerating the work of charter schools.

- Distinctive Schools serves ~5,000 students in Chicago and Metro Detroit.
- We are a culture-first organization of innovative changemakers, committed to providing equity and access for all learners regardless of zip code.
- Founded on Innovation, Culture & Equity, our mission is to to support each child in becoming an engaged and curious learner, a confident self-advocate, and a creative problem-solver by setting high expectations and nurturing a positive culture that honors diversity, collaboration, and optimism.
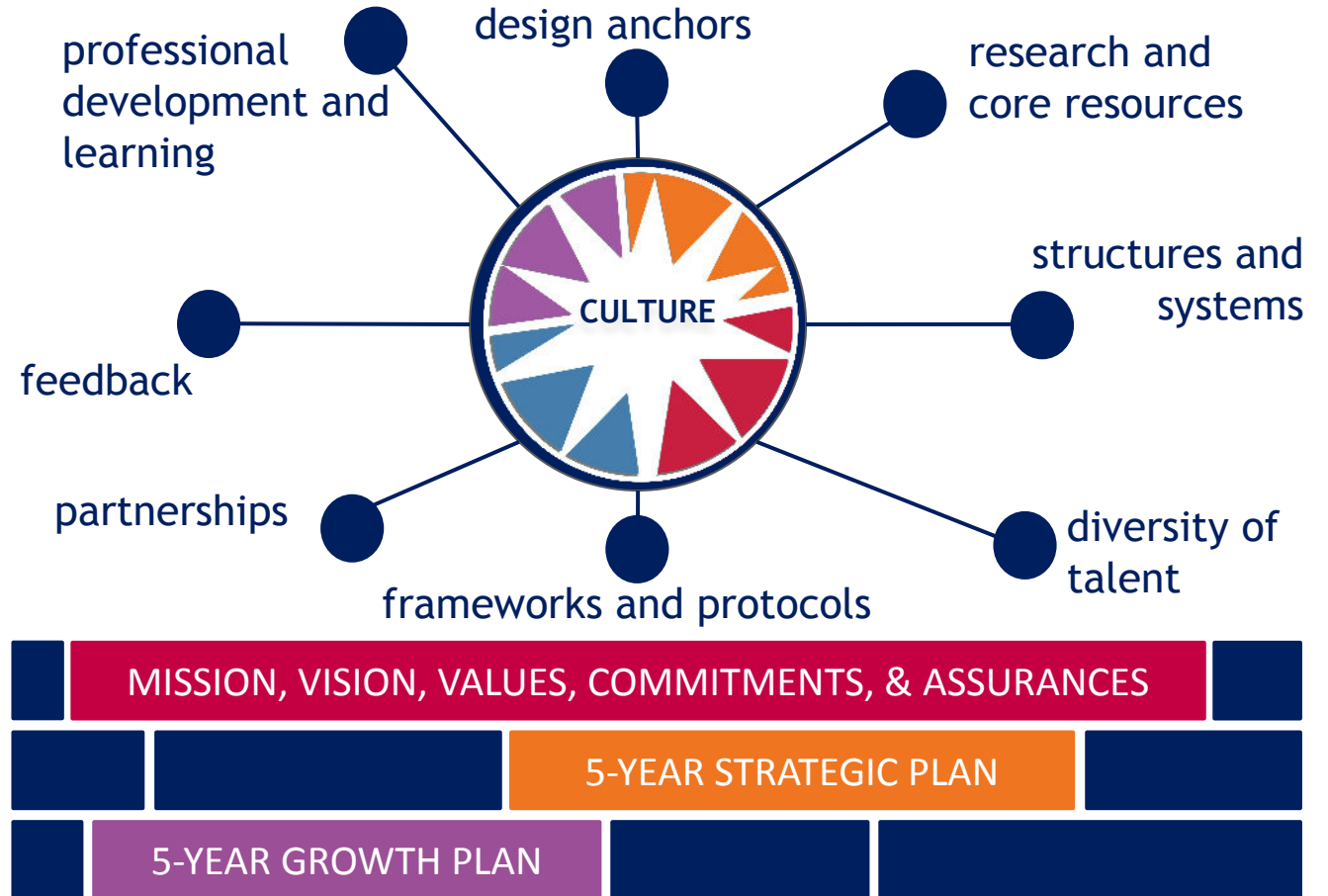
DISTINCTIVE SCHOOLS

What Makes Us *Distinctive*?

The Distinctive model uses culture as a catalyst to develop:

- Future-ready, 21st century learners
- Personalized instruction and customized school models
- Sustainable organizational network

The Distinctive Organizational Model

design anchors

professional development and learning

research and core resources

CULTURE

structures and systems

feedback

partnerships

diversity of talent

frameworks and protocols

MISSION, VISION, VALUES, COMMITMENTS, & ASSURANCES

5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

5-YEAR GROWTH PLAN

The Distinctive Model

ACADEMIC MODEL – Distinctive Schools intentionally integrates rigorous academic expectations, social and emotional learning, and personalized learning.

TRAILBLAZING COLLABORATION – Distinctive teachers use a strengths-based approach coupled with real-time feedback generated from short-cycle assessment data. Distinctive Schools educators coach students in the development of strong and positive student identity and agency, successfully transitioning from a traditional focus on teaching to a focus on *deep learning*.

GROWTH & SUCCESS – Distinctive Students consistently exceed national norms on both growth and attainment targets.

WE MAKE LEARNING *personal.*

Covid-19 Response
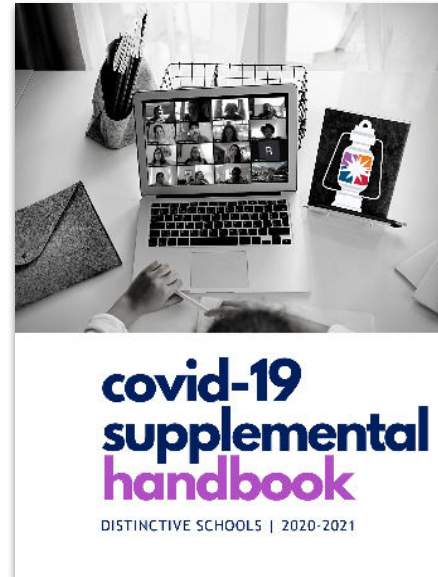
Long before COVID-19 spread across the U.S., Distinctive Schools was working to create **student-directed learning pathways**. Our students are in the driver's seat of their learning, and during the pandemic we put that philosophy to test.

Post Pandemic Distinctive: Schools as *Community* Hubs

A community hub is a public space that brings several community agencies and neighbourhood groups together to offer a range of activities, programs and services.

We must find a way to remove barriers to education by listening to *what families need* and delivering the necessary resources. By focusing on schools as community hubs, we will give students and families access to the academic, health care and social services that they need to thrive.

Through intentional partnerships we will create a web of essential and connected services and weave the unique fabric that makes each school community strong.

This school year, we're making *a **Distinctive Investment**.*

- *Summer Programming*
- *Community School Coordinators*
- *Family & Student Ambassadors – Parent & Student Voice, Trainings and more*
- *Resources for Students Before, During, and After School*
- *Academic Programs & Tools*
- *Mental Health Resources, Programs, Partnerships*
- *National School Visits*

PART 2: Breaking the Ice

Community Builder | *Emoji Waterfall*
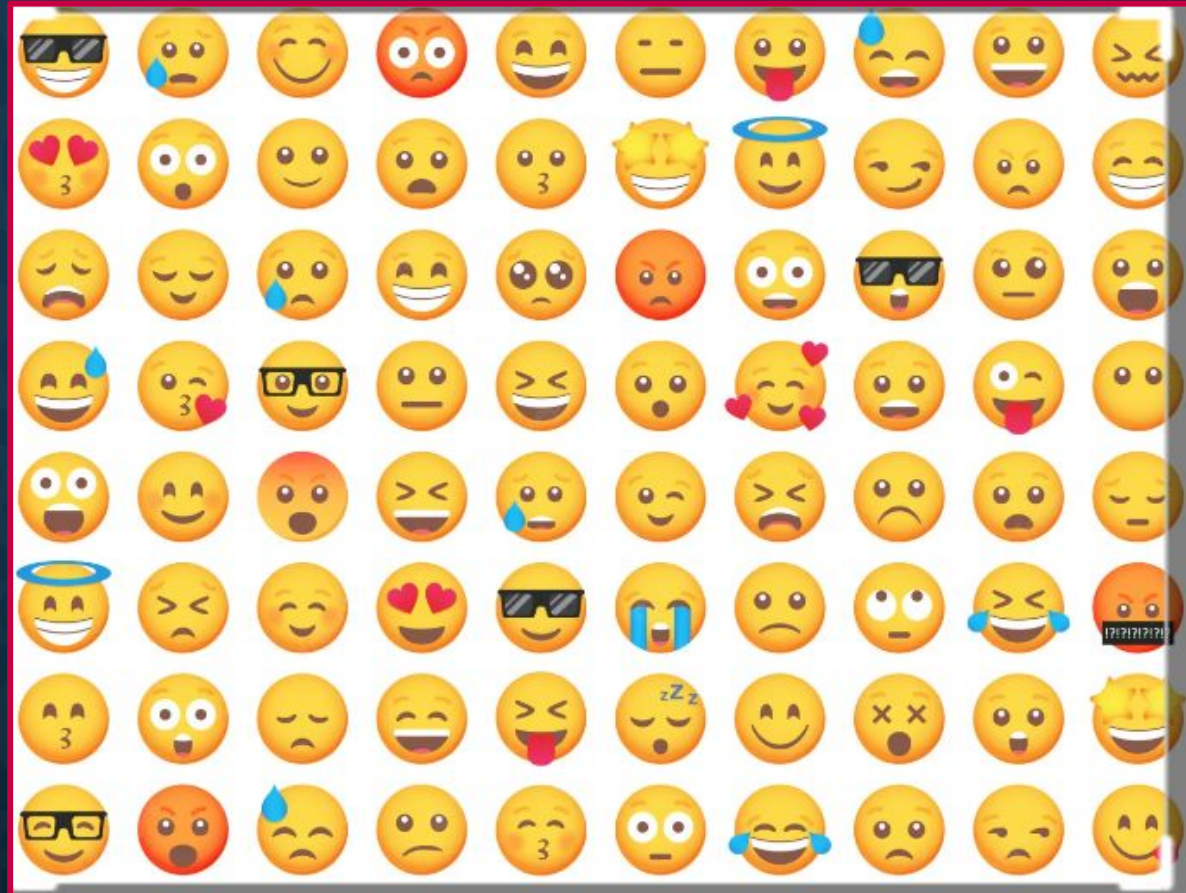
TODAY'S OBJECTIVES:

Leaders will be able to:
- Define the key characteristics of a schools as a community hub
- Build off of assets of a community and Identify key levers and opportunities to create a robust community hub
- Learn a process to design solutions that address systemic barriers and inequities that families face in your community

Leaders will understand:
- Investments should reflect your beliefs
- The entire community benefits when schools, families, and community partners work together.

*From Boston Community Schools

Program Focus	Systems Focus
Isolated, uncoordinated efforts	Interdependent and interconnected
"My Client" mindset	"Our children" and "our partner"
Emphasis on addressing immediate needs, not solving entrenched problems	Emphasis on solving entrenched problems by targeting root causes
Program improvement and expansion	System transformation
Isolated learning	Shared feedback and learning
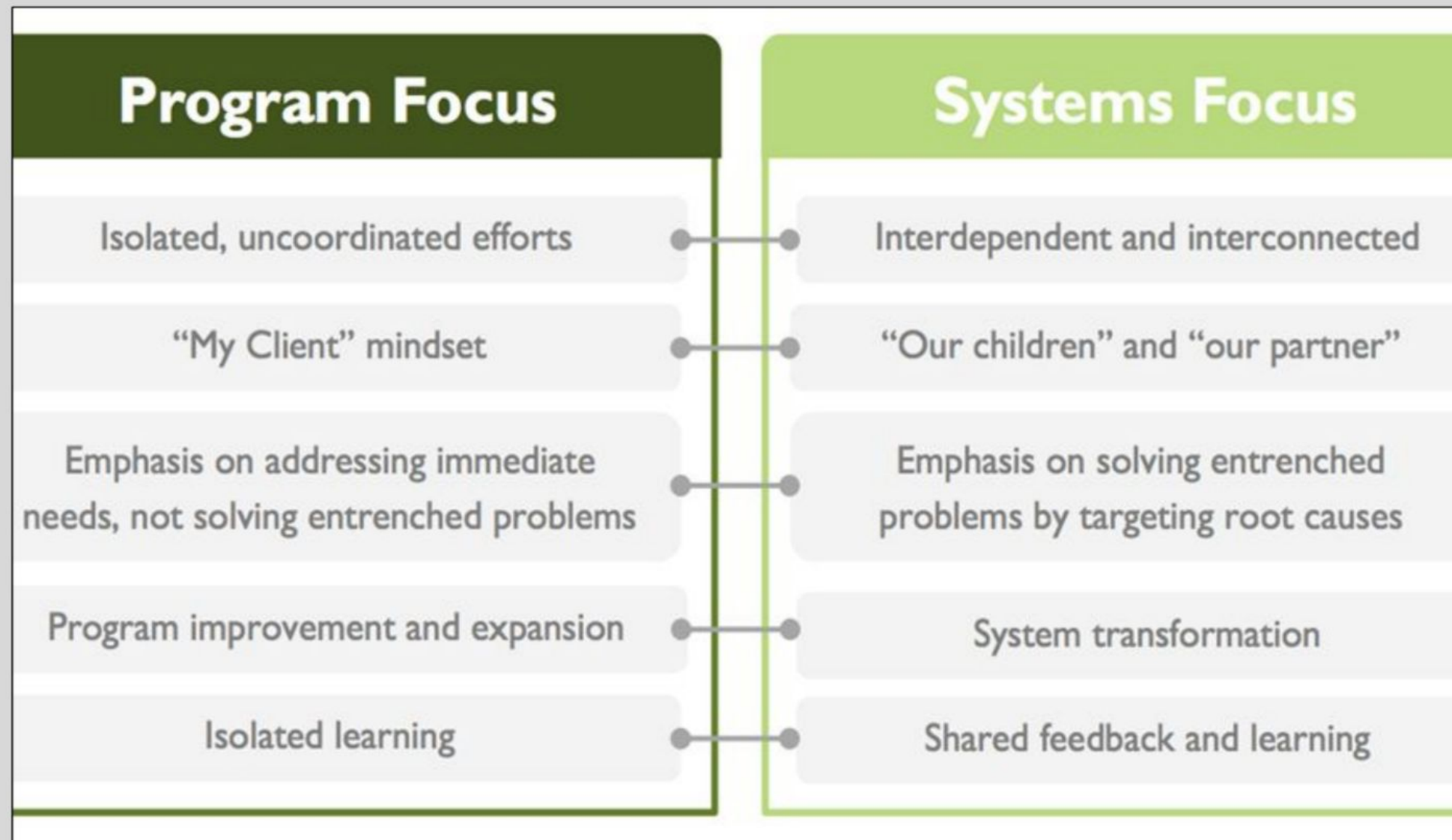
Source: Systems exChange, Drs. Foster-Fishman & Watson

Community Hub
Discussion

In breakout rooms…

Discuss Give a 30 second overview – your elevator pitch – about your school community

What are you currently doing in your schools to address the needs of your community? To partner with your community? To involve your community?
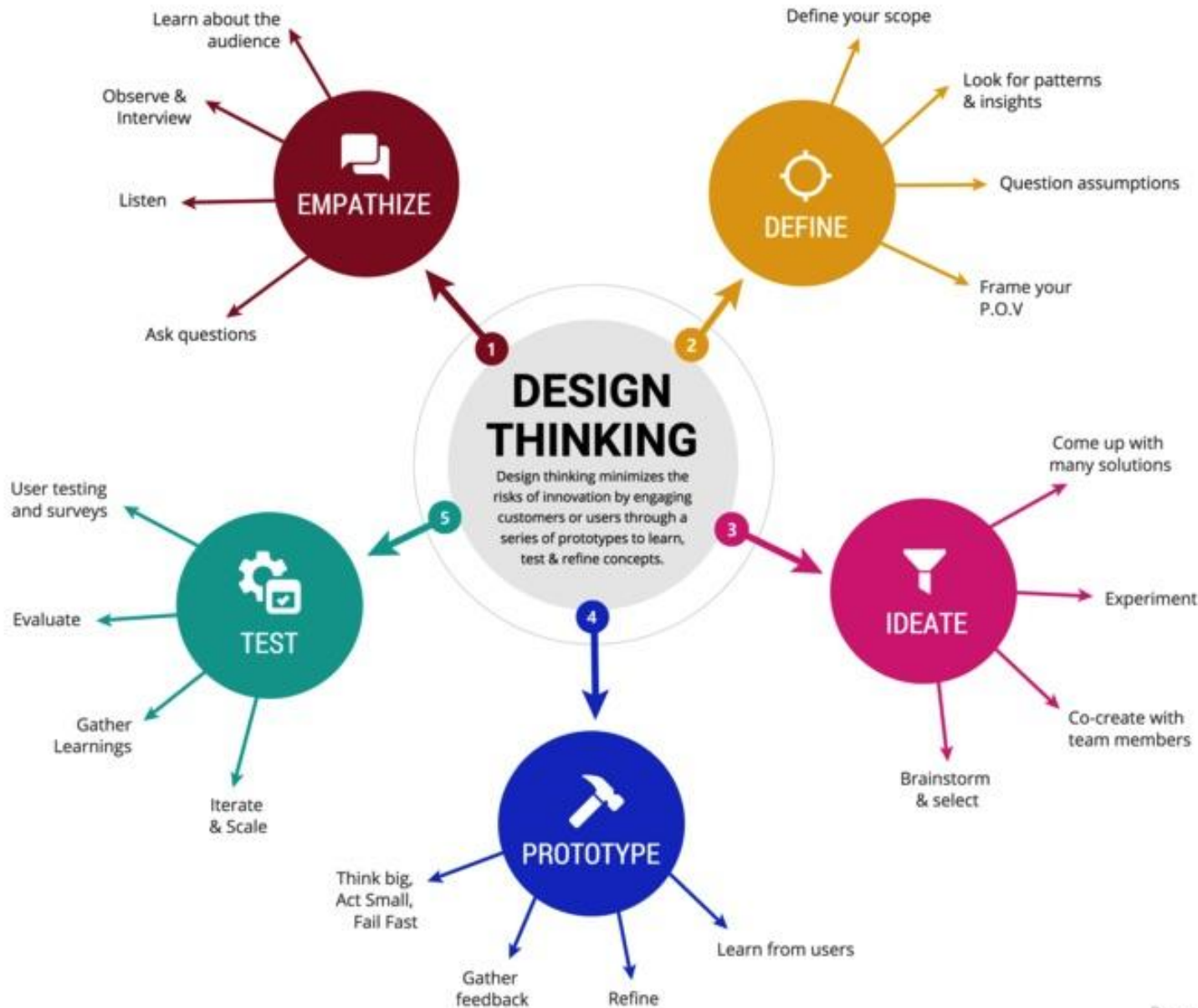
- **Assign Roles**
  - **Facilitator:** Guide the conversation
  - **Timekeeper:** keep an eye on the clock
  - **Presenter:** Share out when we come back to whole group

Share-out

Telling A New Story

In a few minutes, we will start to think about the direction of your school as a community hub.

What will your school look like with an investment in the **Community Hub Model**?

A Vision for the Future | *Sankofa*

"Sankofa" teaches us that we must go back to our roots in order to move forward. *We should reach back to gather the best of what our past has to teach us so that we can achieve our full potential as we move forward.* Whatever we have lost, forgotten, forgone, or been stripped of can be reclaimed, revived, preserved, and perpetuated.

The Journey | *Sankofa*

"Stories have power.
They delight, enchant, touch, teach,
recall, inspire, motivate, challenge.
They help us understand.
They imprint a picture on our minds.
Want to make a point or raise an issue?
Tell a story."

CICS Bucktown *A Distinctive Schools campus*

- Neighborhood in city of Chicago
- K-8th Grade
- 3 classes per grade level
- 700 Students in grades K–8
  - 80% Latinx
  - 20% Black
  - 18% Diverse Learners
  - 20% Culturally Linguistically Diverse
- 90+ Staff

Mission

The mission of CICS-Bucktown is to inspire a culture of respect and inclusivity amongst individuals of different cultures, races, orientations, and backgrounds. We support each child's physical, social, emotional, and academic learning for success at school and beyond by accelerating student achievement through a personalized learning approach.

Vision

Our vision is to provide students with culturally diverse and high level instruction that leads them to be performing at grade level, high school ready, and college bound. We commit to planning authentic learning experiences for our students, building strong student and teacher relationships, and creating an environment where all of our students feel safe and included to be their true selves.
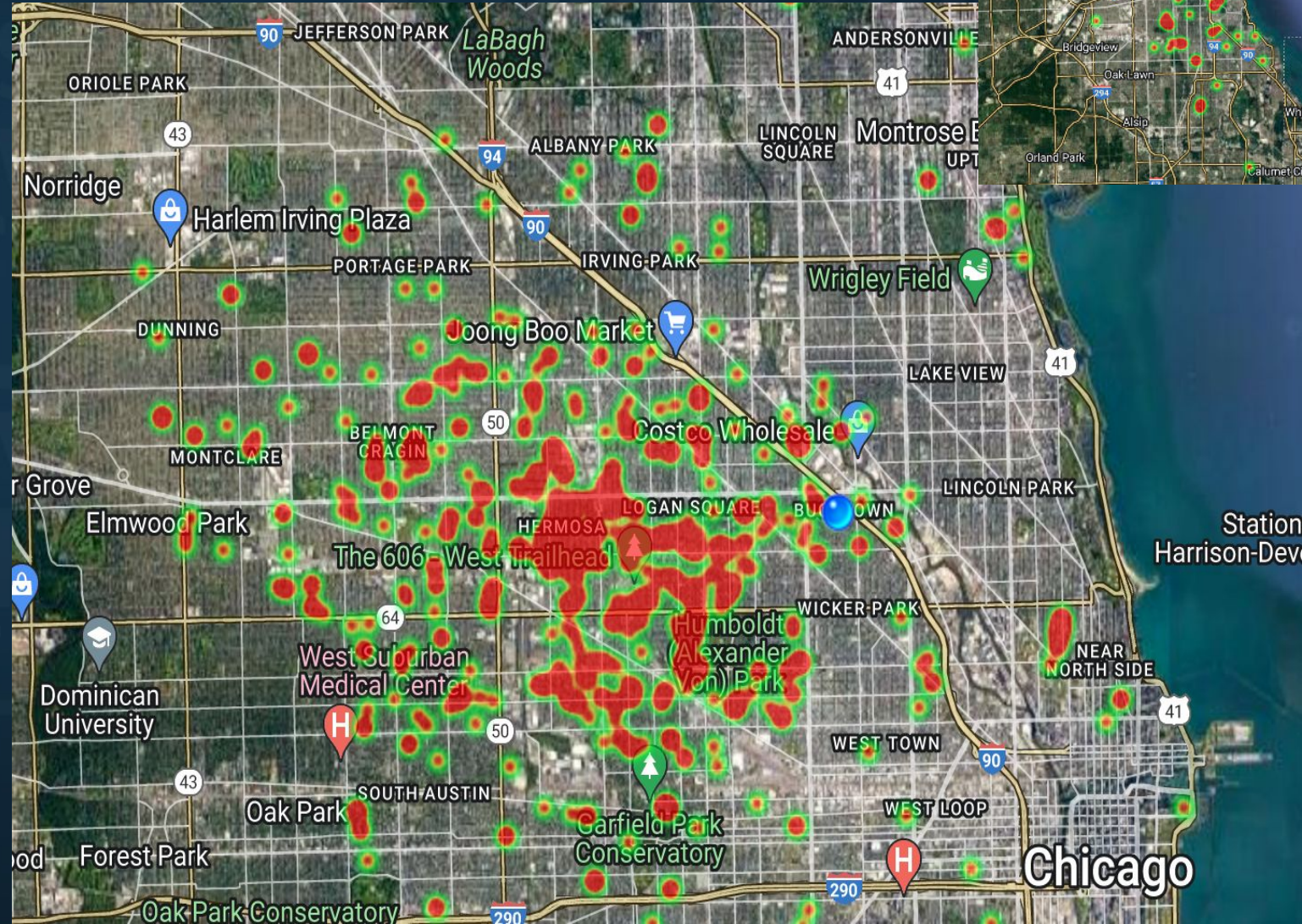
Belief Statement

As a Bucktown community:

- Everyone is welcomed the moment they walk through the door.
- Each community member belongs and is celebrated for the similarities, differences, and perspectives they bring to our BT community.
- We will consistently educate ourselves to learn about different cultures and backgrounds to grow and learn as a community.
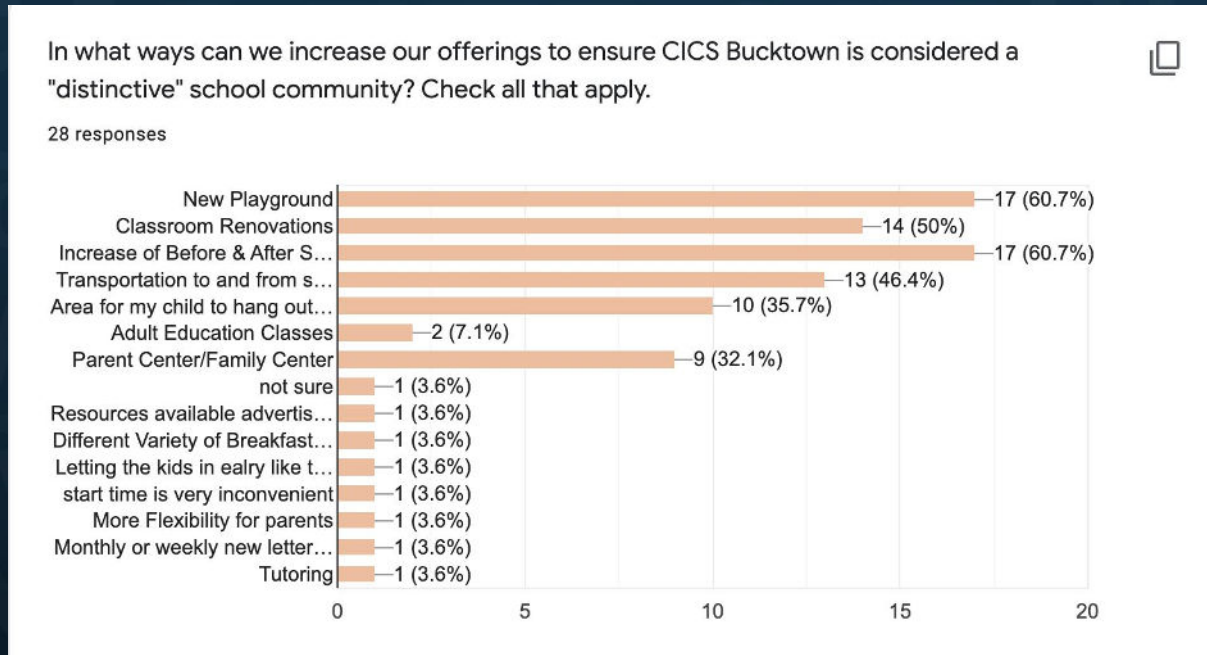- You belong here.

CICS BUCKTOWN

CICS Bucktown | A Unique, Diverse Community

Students are coming from *all across the City of Chicago*:

- Humboldt Park
- Logan Square
- Chicago Lawn/Lawndale
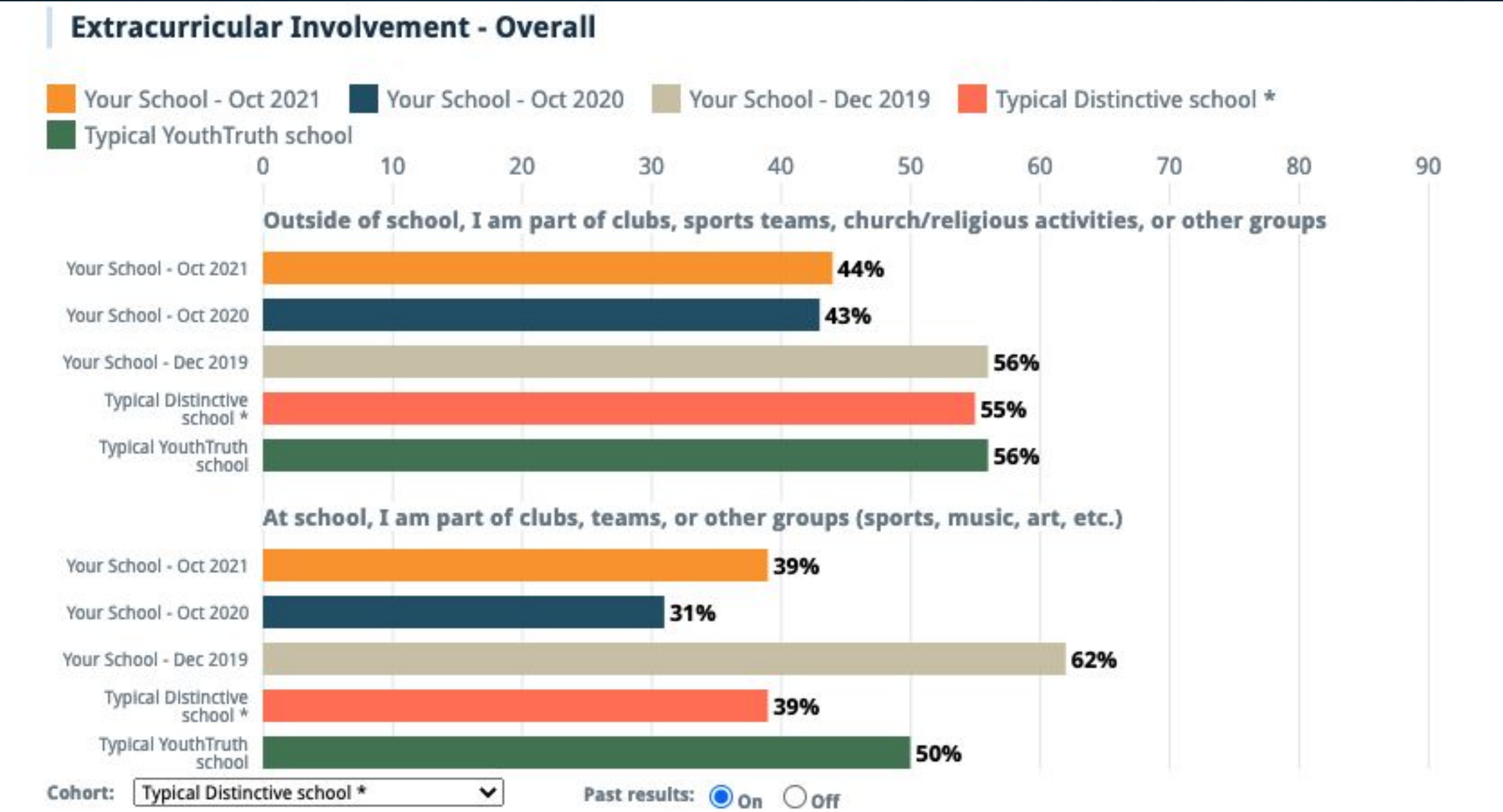- Garfield Park/West Garfield Park
- Austin
- Hermosa

Extracurricular Involvement - Overall

Legend:
- Your School - Oct 2021 (orange)
- Your School - Oct 2020 (dark blue)
- Your School - Dec 2019 (tan)
- Typical Distinctive school * (red)
- Typical YouthTruth school (green)

Scale: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90

Outside of school, I am part of clubs, sports teams, church/religious activities, or other groups

Your School - Oct 2021	44%
Your School - Oct 2020	43%
Your School - Dec 2019	56%
Typical Distinctive school *	55%
Typical YouthTruth school	56%

At school, I am part of clubs, teams, or other groups (sports, music, art, etc.)

Your School - Oct 2021	39%
Your School - Oct 2020	31%
Your School - Dec 2019	62%
Typical Distinctive school *	39%
Typical YouthTruth school	50%

Cohort: Typical Distinctive school *   Past results: ● On   ○ Off

Diving into the DATA ➡ *Staff* Perspective

How can we make Bucktown a "distinctive" school community? Check all that apply.

36 responses

Option	Responses
Additional classrooms or flexible spaces	31 (86.1%)
Updated Teacher's Lounge	15 (41.7%)
Fitness & Wellness Center	19 (52.8%)
Classroom Renovations	22 (61.1%)
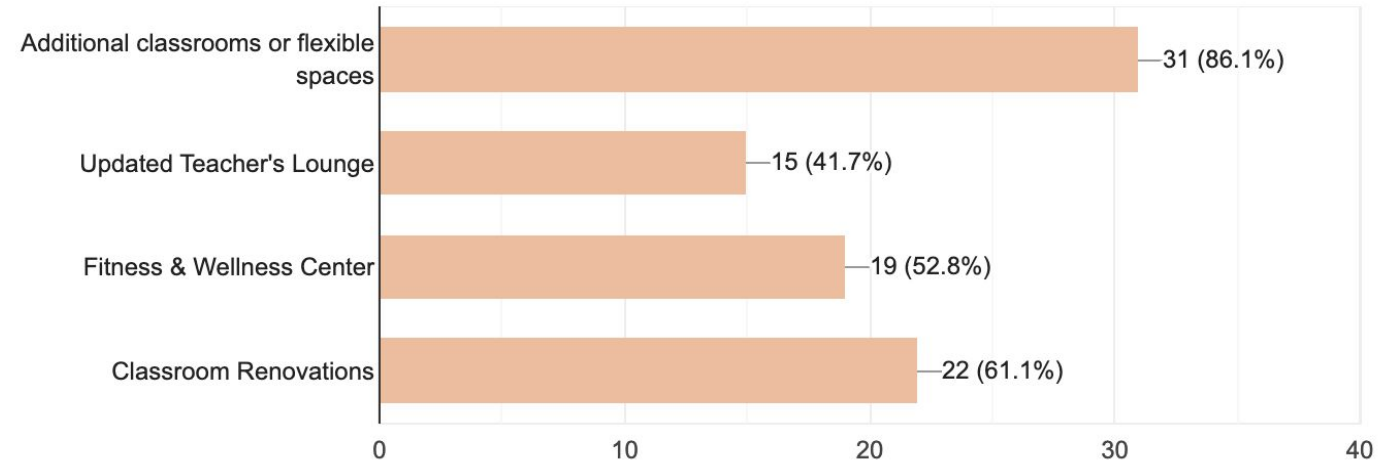
Flexible spaces on each floor. It's hard to hear in the hallways.

From a SPED teacher's perspective, having more classrooms is essential!! I think that having consistent access to a quiet, conducive learning space has been a huge barrier for my students this year. My resource students and I frequently have to share spaces, go into small, non-classroom-designed spaces, sit in the hallway, not have access to our usual classroom, etc. due to extremely limited space. Please make this a priority!!!!! More resource rooms, more flex spaces that could be used by just one resource teacher at a time, etc. would be extremely valuable. I believe that other SPED teachers, CLD teachers, and related service providers likely feel similarly.

By the Numbers… Data driven decision making, considering stakeholder feedback

CICS Bucktown → Data Driven Community Hub

Our action steps in becoming a Community Hub:

- Hired our first Community Schools Coordinator
  - *Sponsored collaborative community events*
  - *Facilitating Community Outreach with partners and potential partners*
  - *Launched Community Newsletter*
- Equipped all classrooms with SmartBoards
- Outfitted the gymnasium to function as a multipurpose events space with projection capabilities, automatic blinds for room darkening, etc.

Community Hub
Discussion

In breakout rooms…

Discuss your assigned question.

- **Assign Roles**
  - **Facilitator:** Guide the conversation
  - **Timekeeper:** keep an eye on the clock
  - **Presenter:** Share out when we come back to whole group

Share-out

Moonshot Thinking is a Mindset

Who's Ready For
Moonshot Thinking?

Moonshot

Thinking

Mindset

How it works: Think BIG and ideate potential ideas that work within a given target for your campus.

Stuck? Think about:
- Community Hub attributes
- Key words & phrases from our communities
- The unexpressed needs of our students, family, staff and community
- Priority Areas
- Survey feedback

Moonshot

Thinking

Mindset

Community Hub | *Key Characteristics*

Health Services

Academics

Community Engagement

After School

Mental Health

Data Tracking

Family Engagement

Social Services

Identified Needs -> Improved Outcomes

Share Out

- Share your ideas
- Don't censor yourself or doubt your ideas!

10K

Quick Reflection…

What does it feel like to "dream big" and then be asked to "dream bigger"?	Did you have trouble coming up with ideas?	Are some ideas building off or improving something that's already in place?

Share-out

Next steps to take back…

Play with & make sense of your ideas

- By Stakeholder
- Topic
- Like ideas
- Priority Area
- Patterns
- Time (during & outside of school day)
- *And what else?*

So... *perhaps*, you're not swimming in money?

- ○ Funding Ideas
  - ■ how to advocate & allocate funding
- ○ Planning for non monetary items; partnership brainstorming
- ○ Making connections to current and potential partners, family businesses, what to write off, securing grants, pitching to funders

Get Creative with first steps for action

Take one of the ideas and map out the steps

Even Plan A. B etc..

Example: if we don't have the funding for the entire project what are some small wins we can do?

- Art teacher mural in hallways
- Smaller space for library until larger space is available
- Community Coordinator - one family event a month

From Talk to Action | Planning Your Next Steps:

Based on what you are thinking AND how you are feeling…

Potential Next Steps

- **Prioritize**: Continue to narrow your Moonshot Thinking ideas, facilitate the Moonshot Thinking activity with your teams
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Identify the stakeholders groups you need to engage with and how/when you might do this
- **Prepare:** Review the resources that have been shared today (see last slides)
- **Team Communication:** Plan for sharing this initiative with your teams
- **Calendar:** Schedule Community Hub Planning meetings or add to existing meeting agendas

DISTINCTIVE COMMUNITY HUBS

Learning Acceleration

Tutoring, Enrichment, Art Integration, STEAM Programming, and Strategic Partnerships, Before, After and Summer School Opportunities

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Student & Family Ambassador Program, Mentoring, Career Exploration, Parent and Family Workshops, Community Needs Assessments & Trainings for Families

Mental Health & Wellness

Art Therapy, Mental Health Programs for Students and Families Clinical and Social Services & Access to Health Care

DISTINCTIVE IMPACT TO DATE

BUILDING COMMUNITY BEYOND THE SCHOOL DAY

- Elevated student, parent, and community voice
- Deepened intentional community partnerships through on needs assessments
- Integration of community supports and services
- Increased student growth & achievement as measured by NWEA MAP and curricular data

DEVELOPING A SENSE OF BELONGING

- Increased student engagement, reduced chronic absenteeism
- Increased teacher capacity with trauma response as measured by Upbeat and staff surveys (pre/post)
- Reported student experience (YouthTruth) of sense of belonging, affirmed identity & academic rigor
- Increased percentage of students showing competency on the SELWeb direct assessment

DISTINCTIVE SCHOOLS

Schools as *Community* Hubs

Timeline for implementation:

Y1: Planning Year & Implementation ➡ **Y2:** Strategic expansion at each Distinctive campus ➡ **Y3:** Network-wide Community Hub implementation

Resource Highlight:
Community Schools Playbook

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO ADVANCING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS STRATEGIES:

- *Community Schools provide each and every student with the resources, opportunities, and support that make academic success possible and that create strong ties among families, students, schools, and community.*
- *This guide provides tools for advancing community schools as a strategy to improve schools, provide more equitable opportunities, and prepare students for success in life and as citizens.*

[LINK TO LEARN MORE](#)

Resource Highlight:
Boston Community Schools

Boston Public Schools Strategy:

- *An opportunity to reimagine schools and partnerships that offer liberating educational opportunities that transform the lives and outcomes of our students, communities, and city.*

LINK TO LEARN MORE

Resource Highlight:
Proposal Planning | Guiding Questions

- *Tool to support district and school leaders in designing and planning*
- *Supports a conversation*
- *Not intended to be a "checklist" of questions to answer*
- *Could be used throughout the process*

Resource Highlight:
Proposal Planning Tool

- *Tool to plan for presenting your Community Hub to stakeholders (district leaders, board, etc.)*

Key Information

'Pitch Your Pathway" DATE | TIME | LOCATION

- This is an opportunity to tell your story and to explain the impact that these investments will have on your community.
- Campus representatives will present in-person to the board.
- Each campus may have up to three pitch presenters.
- The pitch must be 7-10 minutes, followed by no 3-5 minutes of Q & A.
- Presenters may use visuals such as a slide deck or video, but this is not required.
- The pitch should include the information listed below.
- The pitch should be engaging, high-energy, and FUN! Other campus representatives will hear your pitch and celebrate your creativity and innovation!

Planning the Pitch

This section is the information that you will include in your final proposal and your ten-minute pitch. We suggest that you come back to this section and refine throughout the planning process. Your message and what you want to highlight will likely evolve as your design solutions become more concrete.

Title	Create a catchy title that will hook the audience.
Tell Your Story 1-2 paragraphs	What has been your journey? What lessons from the past has informed where you are today?
Challenge: 3-5 sentences	What's the problem you are trying to solve? Who are you creating this for?
The why: 1-2 sentences	What is your call to action? Why is this challenge worth solving? What will be different as a result? What's at stake if we don't make progress?
Idea: 3-5 sentences	What are initiatives that will make (School Name) the premier choice for families? Share an overview of your design ideas. Keep it high-level and interesting.
Impact 2-3 sentences	In what ways will this provide long term returns on our investments for students, staff, and families?
Priority Area 1 sentence	Explain how this investment is in service of {**insert school or district priorities in alignment with mission statement**}. .
Total Cost	What is the net cost of the initiatives? What is the spending timeline?
Key Questions (Q & A)	**These questions may be asked following the pitch:** • In what ways does the proposal represent a commitment to "never going back"? Conversely, in what ways are the proposed investments rooted in the lessons learned from the past (Sankofa)? • What are the Community Hub needs and supports that you will invest in to ensure that the design solutions lead to long-term engagement with the community you serve? • In what way(s) does the proposal provide academic and/or non-academic opportunities that cannot be achieved with our current tools, programs, and partnerships? What new opportunities lie ahead? • Will the proposal leverage, replace, or overlap with existing people, process, and/or systems?

Proposal Planning Tool