Studer Education
A HURON SOLUTION

Focus Group Feedback – What could we do better in Barrington Public Schools? What could we improve?		
Themes from Participants		
Students	*Families & Community Members*	*Employees*
➢ Increase consistency across grades, teachers, clusters, guidance, communication channels and with regard to field trips, use of technology in classes, reward and recognition ➢ Support students to learn behaviors and strategies that support their mental, social, and physical health	➢ Be consistent across buildings, in program implementation, in where we can find information, in what we say and what we do ➢ Communicate with WHY, keep it simple, and engage in 2-way communication with stakeholders ➢ Systematize – take what works well and spread it ➢ Celebrate success ➢ Support instructional methods and content that prepare students for the future; support teachers to deliver new skills in new ways ➢ Address poor attendance, poor attitudes, or unwillingness to adopt practices that work ➢ Be decisive, and stick to decisions; conclude the school start time debate ➢ Enhance collaboration among different groups and build trust	➢ Establish and follow procedures for engaging stakeholders, making decisions, implementing change that will best support student success and employee satisfaction ➢ Balance rigor with support and match the pace of learning and expectations to the students' (and grown-ups') needs to reduce anxiety and offer diverse pathways to success ➢ Listen to all stakeholders equitably, and demonstrate respect for teacher expertise ➢ Communicate what people need to know, fairly across the system, using methods that are valued and accessible to all
Students	● Health curriculum ● Do stuff with other clusters ● Consistency between/ across clusters ● Consistency with reward and recovery across clusters and grades ● New piano ● Specials on same floor as grade ● Variety of specials in elem and choice ● Request specials at middle ● Materials/ resources in maker spaces	

- Consistency with field trips
- Better field trips at Hampden Meadows
- Learning events
- Go to locker whenever needed
- Start times at 8:15
- Schedule overall
- Student engagement/ say on things
- RDI – spread this practice – choice in strategies for Math like at Hampden Meadows
- Outdoor learning
- Freedom of thought
- More Kahoots
- Learning styles (for all)
- Bathrooms
- Blocked websites and access to good ones
- Lunch
- More ozobots
- Need AC
- Need class pets
- Need Makey Makey
- Recess equipment (soccer, basketball)
- Every class chromebooks
- Need secret Santa
- Better bike racks
- Variety of books and new
- Wifi connection
- Better coloring supplies
- Treated differently ("will shoot you down") if not in AP or advanced classes.
- Improve communication about club options/support to approval/opportunities
- Consistency in teaching practices between subjects and levels
- Sometimes all students in a class do poorly; shouldn't the teacher think about that?
- More teachers that are energetic, motivates, gets students involved, and doesn't teach down to you
- Teachers could provide support for different learning styles
- Option to switch teachers seems inconsistent
- Parents are highly influencing competition (#s, tests, results)
- Focused on grades over learning

	• Communication between teachers about testing • Listen to students about stress • Better collaboration between teachers (Example: Literature & History) • More integration across subjects • Address mental health (2 suicides in the community); for 1 week then forget; give students more closure and more resources • More presentations about mental health awareness (like the ones for drug awareness); club option • Hard to get an appointment with guidance; consistency between counselor practices/accessibility • Increase teacher respect for time with guidance • Restrained (WiFi, sign-out when 18 years old, going outside, classes—options based on scheduling) • Inconsistency
Family and Community Members	• Discrepancy between meeting notes and actual school committee meeting • Start time • Opportunities for acceleration at middle and elem • Communicating/ advertising value of senior project • Student stress level • 5 minutes more in each class at Open House • Listen to teachers more • Communication from schools to parents – know the why • High school website • District website – hard to navigate • Careful about changes – clearly communicate and include all • Standards-based grading • Commit to communication with processes for engagement. • Shift from reactive to proactive approach and embrace change. • Implementation of personalized learning to support opportunities for individualized enrichment and growth for all students. • Expand pockets of excellence in all departments. • Introduce, develop and implement a systems focus for all aspects of BPS operations and improve alignment of all systems operations with strong collaboration. • BPS website is insufficient to meet community and BPS needs and requires substantive change and improvement. • Support for recruitment and retention of the best employees.

- Leadership training in core leadership skills -- performance management, key communication skills, and teamwork.
- Manage data to create key performance drivers aligned to School Committee and BPS executive team priorities.
- Determine best practice metrics to monitor progress aligned to key performance drivers.
- Integrate principles of continuous improvement process with School Committee governance model.
- Decisions made w/ no input
- Detailed School Committee agendas
- Advanced notice of topics
- Consolidate administrative jobs to free up money
- Sensors on light to increase energy efficiency
- Transfer of practices from high school to middle school
- Class size
- Agility transportation to address needs
- Improved middle school standards
- Hampden Meadows – weird to have just 2 years at a school
- Awareness of families w/ 2 working parents
- Individualized attention to learner needs
- Thinking outside of the box
- Inconsistency of teacher practices and support at high school
- Lack of advisory at high school; maintaining connection formed in middle school
- Inconsistent class sizes across the district
- Allowing students to choose the method that works for them for solving the math problems (as one example of personalization)
- Special opportunities not available at the elementary level
- No foreign language or coding at the elementary level (but available at Sowams)
- Equity for best practices across schools
- Inconsistency of teacher practices
- No demand for use of best practices; impact of union
- Teacher absenteeism
- Consistency across practices in teacher clusters ("If 2 out of 4 teachers are good; you're in good shape")
- Perception that teachers with performance issues are moved around, instead of addressing it

- Resistance to try new instruction
- Need consistent replacement in cases of medical leave
- Banking of sick days; terms of the contract
- Operation of schools in silos
- Perception that district focuses more on achievement of middle and high school
- Connect to global community
- Engaging those in community without children in the system
- Decrease variation across levels in support and teaching in 4-8 grades
- Deeper opportunities to do projects, not just remembering for a test
- Learning across years
- Meet in middle school as clusters, not individual meetings with teachers
- 4-5 grades consistency in teachers and practices
- Starting languages earlier
- Too many transitions between grade levels (k-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-12); short time does not support connecting
- Transition time between classes (movement) would help; parts of day mixed more
- 4-5 takes away the time to be young; growth to fast
- Ensure structure of school levels best supports students
- Class size should be smaller at elementary level (aligned to national and state averages)
- Ensure right challenge for gifted students (4-8)
- Improve support for broader range of students (those who do "good enough")
- Effective classroom depends on teachers' ability to differentiate
- Guidance should be more proactive at the high school (know students better and not wait for parents to contact them, help in knowing which classes to take, identifying issues with students)
- Is ratio correct for guidance counselors/ students?
- Change school start time (finish last strategic plan); too early, lack of sleep impacts overall health
- If a concept works well and we spread it, let's make sure we plan and are intentional and are ready to implement
- Improve outreach to parents at middle and high school to increase PTO
- Be student-centric and evidence-based consistently across the district and then share when it's successful so that others adopt; hold people accountable if they are not student-centric and evidence-based
- New initiatives impact fidelity/ attention to old stuff that works

- Don't have room for everything – empowering to try those that work (choose)
- Valuing teacher voice (standards-based grading, applying new initiatives without attention to data)
- Some teachers refuse to listen, enter dialogue, and collaborate on pushing the art of teaching
- Teacher absenteeism needs to be addressed; contract prevents policy enforcement
- Administrators should engage and make environment engaging for teachers to improve attendance
- Enforce policies that you make (teacher attendance)
- Communication (opaque writing, spelling and grammatical errors, have to decode back into plain English, not candidly and briefly talking about what's happening and what I can do about it)
- Accessibility of teachers
- Communicate early and engage before bringing a fully-developed topic to stakeholders (standards based grading as ex)
- Be transparent about feedback and who's feeling what
- Present pros and cons as you explain a decision
- Communicate the WHY
- Sometimes you need to lead – make decisions and stick with them. If you've done the due diligence and shared the data and taken the steps to get buy-in, then make the decision and stick to them.
- Request for why or why you decided and get no explanation; get blank stare like "why should I explain"
- Lack of leadership
- Some leaders want to be liked and that's not always leadership
- Lack of feedback on student progress to families and students that fosters complacency. Not aspiring for something more.
- Be student-driven more than data-driven
- Consistency of effective teachers
- Hamden Meadows
- Way to coach teachers for improvement
- Support for diverse learners
- Communication about programs
- Communication with Why, What, How (consistent)
- Communication director needed
- Need ambassador program to HMS

- Thinking outside the box about buildings (2 and 3 Tier)
- Social/emotional goal for district
- Foreign language at all levels
- Mindful minute
- Consistency of programs-transfer of programs
- Consistency of SPED resources
- Keyboarding and coding
- Take care of buildings
- Writing instruction in k-3
- Developmentally appropriate skills education
- Social/emotional support/case-workers
- Support and training for initiatives
- Stress and anxiety support
- Meaningful change
- How we compensate subs to have more
- Balance of fundamentals
- Community partners (more)
- Start time change implementation
- Differentiation at elementary (all levels)
- Get out the positives
- Inconsistent in lower grades (across buildings and clusters)
- Equity
- Community support fractured
- Evidence for all programs
- MS differentiation
- Admin too good at listening to parents
- Do less and do it better
- HS students need to be allowed to be young
- Extreme pressure at HS
- Teacher absenteeism
- Support for Middle learners
- Time for play (longer lunch)
- 7th lack of PE
- Use of class time effectively
- Negative perception of schools in some cases
- Town members not understanding or appreciating the importance of schools and

outcomes
- Communication with non-school population
- Communication in general
- Fiscal transparency
- Stress reduction of students – teach how to destress, mindfulness
- Competitive environment
- Development of healthy habits
- Tell the good stories
- Short list of wins, to not get lost in the noise
- Reduce noise and jargon
- Explaining importance of stability, impact on budget
- Fiscal constraints stifle innovation – budget under microscope
- Explaining sources and uses of funds
- Better shared services (facilities, IT)
- Transportation – effective use, cost-benefit, volume of cards
- Change start times – settle the issue, benefits and costs
- Summer school and after-school program
- Intramurals
- Access to sports
- Full time SRO
- Community Support
- Surveillance outside of buildings
- Substance abuse
- Trumpet our success and what we are doing (our educators)
- Don't let folks fall through the cracks
- Communication in both ways (2-way) needs to improve – system orientation of ongoing opportunities to connect and communicate. A structure that helps us have those options and avoid being reactionary.
- Create a process for teachers and School Committee to communicate
- Ensure that there are channels for effective communication
- Gone so far into the FB presence at expense of website. Hard to find the information you need.
- Feel like we are holding them accountable – teachers and administrators
- Would appreciate opportunity to understand the presentations and be able to ask questions and have data presented in meaningful ways
- At school committee, presentations not provided in advance and given opportunity

to ready for questions, conversation. Perhaps workshop session would be better.

- How should a School Committee member respond when teachers/ parents come directly to us?
- Enhance communication and collaboration with the administrative team/ School Committee
- School Committee meetings are set up to work on certain things at certain meetings
- Spotlight on Learning as a workshop, expand to social emotional progress, too
- Use meetings for operations decisions.
- Align our agenda to specific pillars – when we have a plan, get focused on it and use our meetings to complete it.
- We at this building need to fade into the background and let the focus be on what schools are doing.
- If I can trust that the work is being done well, like curriculum and instruction, then I do
- Feel that there is a gate to us. That no one can get to us. There is a wall between us and the teachers, and parents. No exchange of information. Would appreciate more resolution, and more opportunity to engage
- Communication plan needs to be implemented.
- The new newsletter template for schools is terrible. Can't get connected to the information easily.
- Website is very difficult to maneuver. Looks good but does not communicate effectively. Not our source of information – Google document dump.
- Robust communication and engagement
- Disciplined, meaningful asking students how they are experiencing schools
- Use feedback to act differently
- Empower administrators to excel as well. Some things we do, don't empower them.
- Drive interest, passion, and highlighting of pathways options by providing options and celebrating the range of pathways to graduation
- Connect the importance (for college application and other things)
- Embrace change – not just because we have always done it
- Engage, ask employees for feedback about fiscal decisions
- Prepare for continued fiscal challenges
- Be a system and ensure that people understand we are a system
- Ensure that we implement the ideas we have
- Develop people's awareness of how to do intentional work
- Teachers being better at adapting to students' learning styles and students having

	the opportunity

Employees	• More pro-active, not reactive (high impact of parents, but a small group)
	• Don't leave educators out of major decisions, ask for expertise
	  • School start time-not resolved
	  • Daily schedule-teacher assignments
	• Use the feedback; don't make the decisions beforehand
	• Loudest, most "connected," persistent get what they ask for
	• Disparity of steering committee representation of teachers
	• Empower educators in order to empower kids
	• Reduce new initiatives
	• Focus on a few and master them
	• Advance us, don't rest on laurels
	• Leaders don't lead, meaning answer questions and follow-up
	• PLC-implement, not just talk across the school
	• Physical model, schedule
	o Organization is "old" when trying to do "new"
	o Hierarchical structure
	o Inconsistent messages
	• Shared vision-what do we want the school to be and do?
	• Less "we've always done it that way"
	• Initiatives and diversity, cause challenges
	• Communication
	• Follow through
	• Planning for implementation of initiatives
	• Empowering/supporting teachers (voice)
	• Restrictions: top-down, curriculum, evaluations, field trips, videos, materials, food
	• Trust for decision-making (parents, administrators, community)
	• When student get services
	• Parents' influence on decisions
	• Business-like administration
	• Streamline online grading and learning platforms
	• Building administrators freedom to make decisions (and teachers)
	• Process for addressing issues (honoring the process)
	• Social/emotional, stress of teachers-creating division
	• Recognition of good work, meaningful results, best practices
	• Equality

- Equity
- Too much change
- Community education on how to reduce stress from home (Aps, no interventions, college acceptance)
- Explain to parents about the ALL we are supporting and what we do to support all students
- Improve collaboration between special education and general education
- Teachers are really hard on themselves – hone in on negative; need to celebrate
- Best in state adds stress to teachers, students, employees, leaders
- Negative feedback from school committee and community can be detrimental to continuous improvement.
- 1 comment can destroy hours of work.
- Small group of people can influence broadly – and negatively.
- Reactive to concerns which takes us off our priorities.
- Assumptions are made without knowing the facts of why something occurs; making them public can be hurtful to others
- Reputations of 3 elem schools can be negative or be "pitted" against each other.
- Others don't appreciate that it takes time for decisions are made deliberately – thoughtful and full discussions
- Reframe School Committee to policy-making body
- Focus on the positive – majority of our parents are positive about their experience
- Same with teachers – we can focus on small number of negatives
- Understand the needs of the majority and know when it's the voice of a few and address that respectfully and appropriately
- Community have empathy
- Better follow the chain of command when we are dissatisfied.
- Foster trusting relationship with Committee so that they feel comfortable sending complaints back to leader and knowing that it will be taken care of.
- Support diverse learners accessing core instruction – embrace inclusion and need to develop teachers to not over-protect students with special needs
- Focus on data – 9 school committee meetings on presenting data. Would like a deeper level of data (more personal) than allowed. Want to go deep and get frustrated that we can't provide; also need to connect their expectations and what matters most. Adds stress to the leaders to prepare.
- Committee needs to know the best question to ask – how do we support you in the process? What supports or materials do you need to get it done?

- SC sees themselves as problem-solvers.
- Ask for data that may not actually help them do their job. Too many reports take time away from leaders and then are not necessarily used to make coordinated budget decisions.
- Committee can sometimes make decisions based on few loud voices.
- Streamline assessments, integration of subjects
- Move away from standards
- Things are a show for the School Committee
- Communication, transparency about things that matter
- Confidentiality of personal matters to be honored, admin to staff
- Stress levels reduce
- Retention of staff
- Targeting of staff/ unfair treatment
- Better vetting of new initiatives and fewer
- Time as professionals valued (meetings, work life blend). Lack of personal and professional boundaries
- Worthwhile and thoughtful PD – teacher driven
- Listen to teacher voice
- Well-planned use of SPED, RTI, ELL, Arts
- Beginning of year schedule
- Consequences for students, accountability
- Substitutes – treatment and expectations
- Common planning time is not always time to plan – may be time to "pile things on"
    o Varies within and between schools
- Way too many initiatives and needs to decide what to focus on
- Initiatives that are new sometimes push prior practices backwards
- Flavor of the month
- Building the plan as we go, but plane is never finished
- Continue to see in communication of hopes, dreams, and concerns – disseminated into different groups so that not everybody gets all information at the same time.
- Communication within the district and out to community can be improved
- Community may not view the district as transparent and as public as it was.
- Mistake like not posting Steering Committee happens too often; sometimes when and how you find out the information it makes us struggle to get it done.
- At every level, there's pressure – and it impacts through all of the system. Takes away from bottom-up collaboration. "I'm answering to so and so".

- Teachers feel they have lost their voice.
- Respect to teachers' knowledge, expertise, invited into conversations. District perceives that they are inviting us into the conversation, but we are not.
  o At curriculum selection – teacher influence doesn't really happen. Committees make recommendations but then a different decision is made.
- Better process for adoption of curriculum and materials that includes genuine pilot and shares the evidence of success when a decision is made.
- Process and protocol for curriculum adoption needs to be followed.
- All elementary school teachers should be able to meet together – good work has been accomplished and we knew what was going on across district when we did that. Led to cohesion across schools in grade levels.
- Sometimes money is spent on things that are given to us that we don't even want.
- Sometimes financial decisions halt our progress at implementing good ideas.
- Improve professional development in the district. Ask teachers: what do you need to improve your craft? Differentiate professional development for individuals.
- We have heard, "Teachers don't know what they need." It shouldn't be ok to say that. Disrespectful. We get so many accolades but then these kinds of things are said.
- Professional development may mean something different to admins. When I want to take a PD based on my own plan, I may be told to take a personal day and pay for it myself.
- Deeper learning is a district initiative but we haven't been trained.
- It's all for show and it's not real.
- Make sure our curriculum discussions are age-appropriate for PK-3.
- Implementation of curriculum across schools not effective, seems to go from assessment to assessment.
- Asked to do things that are out of scope: Ex: progress reporting committee could have used a workbook, a resource, to be able to do what was asked.
- When asked to do something different and new, not provided with resources to be successful.
- After you do the work and learn, then sometimes it gets changed.
- If it's written down it's done. If it's posted on a Weebly it's done. Not everyone knows what that is or how to access it. Changes occur and we don't know. We have so many technological tools, not all of which we feel adept using: Fastbridge, Aspen, Google Docs, Frontline. Humanities.
- Responsive classroom is not happening everywhere – overgeneralization.

	- Being trained does not mean that we have implemented with fidelity. - As a parent – transitions happen (i.e. HS) and we don't know or don't have access. - So many things, and expected to do everything well. - A pack of lies that we are a PLC, that everybody knows responsive classroom. We are not a PLC, not everyone knows what it is. Some feel that people know that these things are not true, and still say it. With new programs, we ask if it's staying, someone says yes, and then we don't. - Sometimes it's a matter that people perceive things are going on even when they aren't. - Google docs may be a great idea, but no training and not easily used by teachers - School Improvement Council/ Team – we have not had a plan at our school and we don't know if we execute on the plan as teachers. This make it hard to feel good about going to work each day. - Mindfulness is good, but what have we done that got us here? - Pace and rigor of our expectations for students; can we stop and slow down to individualize based on our students' emotional needs? Don't feel we can. We're under pressure to jump through hoops for assessments. o More assessments at K-3 than any other level.