

Community Meeting -- February 26, 2002

Your input and opinions are an important part of the current conversations on providing programs and services to best meet the needs of our high school students. Please respond to the questions below. Your responses will be shared with the 85-member Design Down Committee and will be posted on the WDMCSD web site (www.wdm.k12.ja.us). Thank you!

1. What is working in the programming and services provided to high school students in our school district?

- High test scores for upper level standards
 - Merit scholarships
 - Variety of programming
 - Foreign Languages
 - Alternative school (some restrictions on what can be taken)
 - Ability to attend Central Academy (may be a very limited number)
 - Caliber of programs (ie – music) is very high
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- Good academic results
 - Vast choices and well rounded students
 - Ability to request preferred teachers to fit your style
 - Preparedness – better prepared than other students for college – we have seen it in our graduates
 - Phenomenal arts
 - Opportunity to do what interests you
 - Individual activities
 - Size is a benefit – you can find someone who is similar
 - Faculty/staff is approachable
 - Differences in individual students are more likely to be shared in a larger school
 - If you don't fit in the typical high school clique, you have a better chance of finding someone to connect with, shared by student grad of Valley working on PhD at Oxford
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- The success stories of Valley are endless
 - Nationally competitive, not just locally competitive
 - Nationally recognized
 - Known by college administrators
 - Extra-curricular activities are of a high quality – you participate with the best
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- Class size and PAA provide good teacher – student relationships
 - Seminar and resource let students and teachers meet
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- Overall education experience favorable – class sizes small and teachers want kids to succeed
 - Student at table related good relationship with teachers
 - The longer periods on Tuesday and Wednesday work well
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- Low dropout % - alternative school - opportunities for all students
- Extra-curricular activities – varsity
- The number of elective classes offered
- Connection between school, community and parents
- Commitment from parents, teachers and students
- Teaching staff

2. What needs to change? What needs are not being met?

- Kids need to feel a part of school – need to want to learn, feel important
 - Need a personalized experience (not just the top kids)
 - Needs to provide a broad-based education to middle group of students
 - Weaknesses in basics
 - Teachers overworked or not caring
 - Students get turned off
 - More connectedness to learning and to each other
 - VSW adds another transition
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- Test out program, especially in science
 - Teachers don't let students know what is on the test...no direction
 - Test out teachers feel all students accelerate at the same level
 - Tests materials that is different from what is on the test
 - Scheduling difficulties/limited time prohibits some students from participating in co-curricular activities
 - Self-scheduling-kids need ownership of their academic career
 - Cross-curriculum for fine arts – make an attempt for theatre/vocal/jazz/band to combine
 - If 10% of students are not participating...why not? Let's get an answer.
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- Find more facets for individualization
 - Improve communication
 - Improve transportation between schools
 - Parking spaces
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- Technology and library issues – computer server problems
 - Hallways are crowded (comment from student)
 - Coaches/activity leaders are not flexible to allow cross participation
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- More creative ways to provide specialized offerings to decrease class size in core courses
- Not always a textbook available for students to have their own copy
- Needs of 9th graders are not being met – courses are not always offered to 9th graders and the test out are more difficult than actual class
- Not allowed to map out own route to graduation
- 9th grade environment on paper is great – but kids do not like the isolation

3. *How should programs and services be restructured to better meet the needs of our students in grades 9-12?*

- Need to create community environment at Valley
- Smaller secondary school size
- Look at all options – possible sharing of courses
- More interdisciplinary instruction

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- Cafeteria/lunch period times could be improved
 - Valley Southwoods –pod system either viewed as really good (if your friends are in your pod) or really bad
 - Students like Valley experience better than VSW
 - Need technology issues and safety issues concerned

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- Transportation from Valley to Southwoods isn't a short trip. Personal experience shows you lose 15-20 minutes and miss out on class time
 - Inability to talk to teacher that is in the building other than your base school – poor communication
 - Offer more curriculum offerings at VSW - like World Civ at VSW **not** World Cultures to help with scheduling problems in the future

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- Flexibility to meet individual students needs
 - Flexibility to allow more students to participate – students are forced to choose one area of expertise
 - Allow students to get a broad-based exposure to several activities – remove exclusions that contribute to limitations
 - How can we be more personalized and have a more well-rounded school?
 - Would we need all of the things (like PAA) in a smaller school or would you inherently get that kind of personal touch

Additional comments:

- Dropping AP classes will lead to open-enrollment out
- How can you duplicate programs like band/orchestra/chorus/radio/drama, etc. at both schools – the quality of the teachers and programs will be severely damaged?
- What impact will operating two high school have on our K-8 education? Explain the cuts there and the impact that will have on quality
- Freshman cannot drop out (unless they are 16 at the beginning of the year) and the drop out rate for Valley does not include Walnut Creek figures
- You need to talk to students who are open enrolling out or at Dowling or at Walnut Creek to really see why they left – not just a one work answer on a telephone survey for open enrollment
- Confusion in communication regarding the Design Down Process and the three plans on the table
- Why are we not getting more student input?