

June 24, 2014

To | Diana Avery and CLC Mid/High Bridge Committee
From | Jay Breslow, Jacqueline Fuentes, Jill Kornelis
SUBJECT | CONNECTED LANE COUNTY LISTENING SESSION REPORT

BACKGROUND

The Connected Lane County (CLC) Mid/High Bridge Committee contracted with the Community Planning Workshop at the University of Oregon to conduct a series of listening sessions with middle school aged youth across Lane County. The goal was to gather information regarding:

- Students' post-secondary aspirations.
- The support students felt they were getting from their school.
- What they felt they needed from their schools to achieve their goals.

The team was made up of three facilitators. Jay Breslow is a doctoral candidate in the College of Education. Jill Kornelis is working on a Master's degree in School Psychology and Jacqueline Fuentes is working on a Master's degree in Family and Human Services.

While various listening sessions were recommended (including affinity groups for students of color and retrospective sessions with students in high school), the team felt that capturing the breadth of Lane County Middle School students would create a stronger baseline from which to compare the experiences of other groups.

Thus, the team conducted 11 listening sessions at five schools across Lane County. Two of the schools were located in the greater Eugene/Springfield area and 3 were from more rural parts of the county. Based on information from school report cards, in comparison to schools with similar demographics, two of the participating schools were Below Average, two were About Average, and one was Above Average¹.

Over 250 students participated in the one-hour long sessions. Many of the listening sessions took place during class periods and thus represent a broad cross-section of students. Some classes were for high performing students; others for low-performing students and in some

¹ This data is gathered from the schools' Report Cards. The report cards explain, "The overall state rating is intended to summarize this school's particular successes and challenges. It is based on a combination of up to five factors. Three of these factors come from standardized test scores in reading and math: student achievement, student growth, and the growth of underserved subgroups. Please be aware that this rating is based mainly on high-stakes testing and accordingly, represents a limited view of student performance. Other aspects of this report card are designed to put this rating in the proper context."

cases facilitators were able to interview entire middle school classes (i.e., all 8th grade students in the school). While no demographic data for participating students was gathered, some information based on averages for the five schools is reported in Table 1.

Table 1

Average demographic information for schools participating in Aspirational Listening Sessions

	Percent Students of Color	Percent ELL	Percent Economically Disadvantaged
Average	31%	5%	70%
Range	26-35%	0-8%	60-82%

This report summarizes research on aspirations, the methodology used to schedule and conduct the sessions, the over-arching themes that came out of the sessions, actual student voices collected in writing, and suggestions for future listening sessions, policy and intervention.

DEFINING “ASPIRATIONS”

According to Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonsalves, and Howell (2004) aspirations are “educational and vocational ‘dreams’ that students have for their future.” Student aspirations form and change throughout their lifespan based on the information they obtain about certain jobs and careers (Super, 1984; Akos, Lambie, Milsom, & Gilbert, 2007). As students obtain more information about their specified educational aspirations, their aspirations to attend college or pursue a vocational degrees change depending on the new information they have learned about their proposed professions (Blackhurst & Richard, 2005). In addition, student’s aspirations can be shaped by the values and beliefs of others (parents, teachers, peers)(Akos et.al, 2007). Overall, student aspirations influence their long term educational and personal goals. In order to understand student aspirations, we must acknowledge that schools are an important source of college and career information. The information they receive in the school setting will affect their development and persistence toward their aspirations.

One way to understand how students are able to reach their aspirations requires an understanding of students’ self-efficacy. Self-efficacy defines students’ beliefs on their ability to successfully perform tasks related in achieving their aspirations and highlights how this can aid in understanding student aspirations (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001). Research regarding student aspirations contains variables related to students’ academic and careers goals, and includes socioeconomic status, family education level, level of families’ engagement in their child’s education, ethnicity, and level of parental education (Hill et al., 2004; Marjoribanks; Sirin et al.). Marjoribanks (2004) reports students’ academic achievement is positively related to higher aspirations and occupation attainment.

Recommendations regarding helping first-generation students reach their educational aspirations affirm the need to actively intervene to help students investigate college and career interests prior to high school (Bui, 2005). Specifically, research indicates middle school is a critical time in which students are exposed to new information that influences the ways that they perceive both themselves and their educational potential (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).

Therefore, it is necessary to investigate, understand and develop programs focused on students' aspirations. Schools should engage in a rigorous and comprehensive process to determine assets, limitations, current strengths and gaps in service that help students investigate their college and career goals and the steps necessary to achieve them.

Numerous educational interventions exist in both the middle school and high school levels to increase students' academic preparation and provide students with additional resources that prepare them for life post high school. These programs include the Federal TRIO programs, such as GEAR UP and Talent Search, which provide services to first-generation and low-income students in sixth to twelfth grade (Gullatt, & Jan, 2003; Jones, 2003). Quasi-experimental designs studying the effectiveness of GEAR UP illustrate that participating students show modest and positive outcomes related to academic performance by the end of eighth grade (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013).). Furthermore, Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) motivates middle and high school students from underrepresented ethnic minority groups or low-income students from any ethnicity to seek postsecondary education by creating classroom environments that promote career exploration and foster community between students and counselors and families (Bernhardt, 2013). AVID has been shown to be most beneficial during middle school or as they enter high school (Bernhardt, 2013). In addition, Venezia & Jaeger (2013) recommend that schools develop programs that help:

- Build a college going culture based on early college awareness by nurturing in students the confidence to aspire to college and the resilience to overcome challenges along the way
- Maintain high expectations by providing the necessary supports, building social capital and conveying the conviction that all students can succeed in college.

Consequently, it is imperative to understand middle school students' aspirations in order to help students learn the various steps needed to achieve their goals.

METHODOLOGY

The easiest way to access the most students was to conduct listening sessions during class periods. This process eased scheduling as we found schools to be more amenable to allowing listening sessions that did not disrupt the school day. This also placed unique challenges for us. Most class periods range from 50 to 60 minutes. This is a very short time in which to build the trust necessary to get students to open up to us about their experiences. Additionally class size ranged from 15 to over 30 students. This made it difficult to ensure that all student voices

would be heard and acknowledged. Thus, the listening session was designed to be interactive and personalized, consisting of both large group and small group discussions and written feedback from session participants. The written feedback concluded each listening session. Facilitators asked students to write a letter to their school telling teachers and administrators what they needed in order to achieve their aspirations. Specific instructions can be found in Appendix 1 and all of the letters have been transcribed and included in Appendix 2.

Our approach to the listening session evolved based on the immediate feedback from students. For example, some groups have been very open and willing to share their thoughts and ideas, others have been more reticent. In the quieter groups we spent more time in small group activities and with the personalized writing components of the session. Appendix 1 demonstrates the protocol that served as a framework (though not a script) for the listening sessions.

The size of classes presented a challenge that was overcome by splitting large classes into 3 smaller groups. Each of the facilitators worked from the same session protocol (Appendix 1). However, we placed an emphasis on a conversational approach to the sessions that often led us away from the protocol as students provided new avenues for investigation. Following student interest allowed the facilitators to probe the unique contributions of students and uncover experiences that helped and hindered their paths toward their aspirations.

After each session, the facilitators met to discuss our findings. As we shared and compared our notes, common themes began to emerge from these sessions. As the common themes became clearer we probed these themes in future listening sessions. Many of the themes discovered during the listening sessions were further supported in the writing that students were asked to provide. In the following section excerpts from student writing samples support the findings of the team.

THEMES

Through the focus group sessions, the CPW was able to identify over-arching themes that were present in multiple middle schools.

Finding the Gaps

During the beginning parts of the listening sessions we asked students to move around the room based on their level of agreement with a number of statements. The statements were as follows:

1. I have a good idea (or ideas) about what I want to do after high school.
2. I think I know the steps I will need to take to achieve these aspirations.
3. College is an important thing for the work I want to do in my future.
4. Colleges/Universities teach the things that I want to learn to achieve my goals.
5. I know how to locate the resources I will need to pay for college.
6. I feel supported by my middle school to explore the things I want to do later in life.
7. Coming to school makes me happy and excited for my future

There were stark contrasts between levels of agreement of students having an idea of what they wanted to be and the support they felt they received from the school. Most students had an idea (or ideas) about what they wanted to be. While most students recognized the importance of post-secondary education for their futures, their levels of agreement began to change as questions arose regarding their knowledge of how to get there and the support they felt they were getting from their school. Few students reported feeling supported by their school and even fewer reported that school made them happy and excited for their future. While these findings are not scientific and there are multiple variables (such as social pressure to dislike school) that may have influenced choices, the levels of agreement for these statements were later reflected in the group discussions and student letters.

Students Want to Talk

Many middle school aged youth seemed eager to share ideas and criticism when asked about their goals and aspirations and support provided by schools, regardless of whether they had given these topics much thought before. Many of those who did not have an immediate answer gave the questions some thought and were able to identify some goals and share ideas by the end of the focus group session. Middle school students appeared to like that adults were asking them these questions and taking their answers seriously.

"I would greatly appreciate if we actually do stuff about a future and colleges, like ASPIRE. We need more of it. On advisory we barely do stuff that will actually help us in the future. Teachers need to have open arms for their students.

I think you need to help us out more to be successful in our future. I think we should have careers as an elective. I also think we should have college students and professors come to a school and talk to us about what it will take to get into college and tell us how difficult college can be." -- 8th Grader

"There is so many things you can do to support my dreams like; talk to me about it and encourage me along the way to success. I want to be a writer, put me through it and help me with it. One thing that would really help me would be being able to talk to a teacher or the principal about my dreams and get support for choosing a college. I would love it if you would help me through it all. I want to be a singer and would really like it if you would support my dream. I would really like that." -- 7th Grader

Seeking to be Understood

Many students are looking to be understood by people at the school. Often, students were able to eloquently examine their positions in middle school and the varied and variable interests they have. It is not surprising that the interests of middle school students cover a range of possibilities and are subject to rapid change. Many students seem to realize this as well, knowing that there are many possibilities yet to discover. Career exploration at the middle school level should reflect the capriciousness of student interests as they search for and discover new interests.

"I just need you to accept my frustrating, mind changing career choices. I know that it may be like an uncomfortable roller coaster ride, but all I ask is that you'll stick with me till the end. Oh my gosh, it sounds cheesy, but that's all I want. Plus, being flexible with my spontaneous actions wouldn't hurt too."
-- 8th Grader

"We should have more elective options based on what the students want. I like how there is drama now, thanks to Mr. White but I need more because I'm not exactly sure what I want to do yet, so I can try things. I kind-of want to be a pilot, actor, engineer, mechanic, salesman but I just don't know! I just need help finding out what I really want to be. Something that pays good too, like something that can make a little more than my father makes so that I am successful." -- 8th Grader

The Case of the Exceptional Teacher

When asked whether they felt like teachers cared about their aspirations and goals for the future, students often said no. But upon further probing, it was common for students to identify at least one exceptional teacher that they felt connected to. They described this teacher as someone who made them feel like "real people" and acknowledged them, who took time to listen and supported their ideas. This teacher tried to understand and relate to them and get to know them outside of their performance on academic tasks.

"I feel as though you can help me when I want to be an 8th grade math teacher. I feel that you can support me by helping me learn how to be a teacher. Math is an important part of my life and without Ms. Sanchez, I don't think I could." -- 8th Grader

"In order to reach our goals will need help from you. I need a program to find out what jobs are right for me and how much education it will require. Then we need to know how to get to college and how to pay for it. We'll need to plan for every step of our future, make sure we get there. We also need more people like Ms. Johnson, who is seen the most in me and help me achieve a 10th grade level math class at eight grade. We need help. To make sure we are the best that we can be and need more of the opportunity that Ms. Johnson has given me." -- 8th Grader

Clubs and Extracurricular Activities

When asked what they spent their time doing outside of school, many students mentioned sports. Sports teams seem to be the main activity that students are participating in when not at school or at home. Some students report that they would be interested in other clubs or types of non-sport activities that are not currently offered. At some schools, other organizations (Kiwani, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club) offered activities that they were somewhat interested in. After school programs and during school clubs offer avenues for personalized exploration in smaller affinity groups. The exploration of what students do after school and where they do it can also provide assets to Connected Lane County for future collaboration.

"I believe that there are limited amounts of classes/clubs to take. This school would be a better place if there were activities that the students were excited to do. Such as photography club. We have a whole room dedicated to photography but NOBODY USES IT! Make children happy to come to school because as a result, it would just be so much BETTER." --7th Grader

"I personally think that the school needs more afterschool activities to help us prepare for college or our future. Like cooking classes, or have a career day or something like that. Because in the school we don't have things that prepare us for our future we need more sports because all we have is track and field, cross country, basketball, baseball, football, volleyball. So we need more things that will prep us for our future." --7th Grader

Some Exploration of Colleges and Careers

Some students noted that they had taken a class or participated in an activity that facilitated career exploration or helped them to start thinking about goals for the future. Types of activities that middle school students had participated in include: a career day at the high school, a class period where they used a website (CIS Jr) to explore careers, a once a week advisory class where they occasionally talk about goals and plans for the future, a one-day ASPIRE event in connection with the high school. Middle school students have knowledge of programs that high school students participate in (such as the ASPIRE program) and are interested in doing similar activities. They are excited to explore possibilities and have more choice in the classes that they take.

"I think to help our school to show students more about education is to have more programs like ASPIRE. But instead of making it more like an assignment, make it more like a talk." --8th Grader

"You need more options available for us. We have one class period every couple of weeks to help figure out who we want to be and what we want to do and that's not enough. We need more days like field trips and hands on stuff. Books and paper won't help us decide between mechanics and medical. We need more electives and explanations. How do we know if we want to do something if we never try it? What is college going to be like? Is it just a grown-up high school? What about our jobs? Most jobs require communication. There are a lot of shy people who won't be able to do that communicating. How about you help us with that stuff?" --8th Grader

Support from Multiple Places

Many students reported that they feel some support from school counselors and other school staff, but that in general the counselors are not at school or present in the classrooms enough to make a big difference. Some students reported that they wished that schools helped to develop their social and interpersonal skills in addition to academic subjects.

"I don't like talking in front of people that are not my friends like jocks or preps because they will make fun of you for what you say, do, wear. So I never raise my hand to ask questions. Put us in groups that we want to be in and are interested in. People say your not good enough to hang around certain people." -- 7th Grader

"To achieve my career goals I need more support. Support such as classes, or counseling. I want someone who can focus on me and leads me or shows me the steps into what I need to do. I just need information about what colleges I could attend. I need a teacher in middle school who can tell me what high school classes I need to take in order to help me learn about what I want to be." --8th Grader

School Support and Connection

Many middle school students feel a lack of support from the school and feel unsure that teachers, counselors and administrators really care about their aspirations for the future. They feel that teachers are concerned with their homework and grades, but that they do not take the time to get to know and understand them. The majority report that they have never been asked about their goals or talked about their future plans with a teacher. Some students report that teachers "separate students into groups" or "pick favorites" and that this has a negative impact on their performance. They feel that teachers should care about all students equally. Some also feel like teachers have low expectations for them and for their futures. It was hard for some students to identify what their school could do to support them; they identify school as a place mostly focused on completing academic tasks.

"I feel like our teachers are cramming too much information into one class period. Our teachers have no spare time to talk about what matters to their students. They skip important details and make things harder to understand. When kids say that teachers don't care, they are right and wrong. I think that teachers care, but only about homework and lessons for their class. I would also like more electives! Thanks for trying to help." --7th Grader

"The school does not support me one bit. It's all my brothers and my mom. The school doesn't talk to me at all but this is why I don't tell the school anything because I feel like they don't give a shit about what people want to do in life. They don't come up and ask, "hey what are your goals, and what do you want to do or be when you grow up?" That's why kids don't feel like they have anyone to talk to you because this stupid school don't go up to kids that are upset for any reason. I also feel that no one here cares about their dreams because dumb ass school doesn't care to ask. So they feel that nobody is there for them to ask. I am taking this very seriously by the way. I hate this school. It sucks. Because the counselor doesn't do a very good job at what she's supposed to do. The school cannot support me because I don't talk to them because I feel they don't care." -- 8th Grader

Academic Support

Many students feel that they are not getting the preparation that they need to be able to succeed post high school, especially for college. Many students feel like they don't have anyone to go to if they are failing a class or need extra help with difficult homework; they

would like to have more academic support at their school. Some students report that they feel like they need more training using new technology and that the existing technology at their school is outdated; not all students have access to computers or the opportunity to learn how to use new technology at home.

"I feel like I'm not really learning because I am a more hands-on worker and we only do paper assignments. So I don't really learn anything and plus the whole school rushes in and out of lessons. I also feel shy when asking questions around new teachers but you don't take that even remotely into account. And I also feel like you are expecting way too much from me and I feel highly uncomfortable doing lessons by only reading, doing an assignment, then expected to automatically get it, and if you don't? Oh well, that train left the station. We also should have art class." --8th Grader

"I need for you to set high standards for us. I need you to give us options for electives. I need you to prepare me for high school, college and life. I need you to support my life decisions. I need you to give me tools to set goals and tools to meet them." -- 8th Grader

Systematic Exploration of Goals and Aspirations for the Future

Although some middle school students noted that they had taken a class or participated in an activity that facilitated career exploration or thinking about goals for the future, this is not happening systematically in schools. A majority of students have not had the chance to explore different careers. They expressed interest in participating in classes that facilitate exploration of possibilities for the future. They also would like to have more choice in the classes they take; most middle school students can only choose from two electives and would like to have more options.

"I feel that we need some more career classes in order to make students on track for success in middle school. We need to have longer units in the field, as well as better activities involving the subject. If we had activities such as learning the requirements to get a scholarship and so on we would become very knowledgeable about how to pay for college and succeed in life. We also need classes to teach us how to achieve our goals and make those goals better."-- 8th Grader

"This is what I need from you to start pursuing my goals/dreams for the future. I need advice on where to begin. What college is best for me? I need help figuring out what exactly do I want to be. Someone I know I could rely on if I needed help or advice for my future. You know how many years I have to go to college for. What subject in school do I need to focus more on? How much money will I make if I succeed and become what I want to be? If my dreams/goals are right for me? This is what I need to know and I need help finding out."--7th Grader

College/Career Readiness

Many students have aspirations for the future but are not sure of the steps that they need to take to reach their goals. This includes knowledge of financial aid, application requirements, preparation during high school and other barriers they will confront as they progress in their education. Students feel like the strong emphasis on reading, math, and test taking limits the

time that could be spent studying subjects that are more engaging and let them explore possibilities.

"I need scholarships, lots of them and student loans because I know that we don't have money to support just my college funds. Which is fine but I'll ask for support from my acting career or my medical career. Acting is really just a dream and I've been taking classes for a few years now but as you know it's a tough business and being a doctor is a reality. It's possible for me to do that and to be successful at it."
-- 8th Grader

"I understand the college is important. I get that for you to achieve your dreams, we need to go. I just don't get how we're supposed to pay for all of this. But my teacher said to become a surgeon I would need at least five years of school. Am I supposed to have another job on the side? How much should I save for? Just where in general do I get this money? When I grow up I want to have a good life, have enough money for a nice house and some vacations. But I'm still a little confused on how to get there. It just doesn't add up. How could someone pay for it? For 8 years of school?" – 8th Grader

Lack of Choice

Some students seem to feel a lack of agency; they feel that they are always being told what to do and do not have any choice in their education. In some of the schools we visited the only electives available were band, choir, and P.E. There were also advisory and enrichment periods in some schools but the students decried the lack of effectiveness of those periods to inspire them to investigate academic possibilities. The students seemed exasperated and dispirited by the lack of choices available to them. Some placed the blame on the test-taking culture of the school for decreasing electives while increasing booster math and reading classes.

"You are a good school but you're not teaching us what we need to know. You don't really teach us what we need but you expect us to pass tests without fully understanding what it is. We need different classes that might help us on the subject we want to go into. We need to have more sports so we don't feel like we're being packed with information that we might not need. We need people talking to us and helping us understand why going to college and finding a career is important." -- 7th Grader

"To achieve my dreams and aspirations we need better classes and encouraging teachers. Yeah, our teachers are alright, But they don't motivate me to do better. They don't encourage anyone. It's it is for you, it's never the teachers fault. I disagree with that. Teachers need to stop teaching by the book and let students think creatively. They need to let students grow. They can't have them chained down when it comes to their projects and assignments. Let us roam free a little. Let us show you what we can do by ourselves." – 8th Grader

Anger and Disenfranchisement

This report would be incomplete without the recognition of the high levels of anger and disenfranchisement heard from a significant number of students. Participants were encouraged to go beyond their immediate feelings and probe the parts of their experience that could help schools improve programs. We asked them to not say *that* they hated school, but explain *why*

they hated school. Many tried very hard to accomplish this and were willing to share difficult and angry experiences at their schools. We ensured their anonymity and permitted their open use of their words to express themselves. Their responses are edited only to the extent that they protect the anonymity on the student, others mentioned by name and the school they come from. The following quotes demonstrate the depth of feeling that many students have toward their school.

"I believe this program insists that you must have a dream or aspiration. Personally, I feel the college system is corrupt along with the rest of society. I would guess that at least 50% of people hate their jobs and do it simply for the money. I refuse to be a slave to the system. This program does not inspire us to follow our dreams; it forces us to stress over our future, which is irrelevant. You need to focus on inspiring us to be happy, because that's all that actually matters. You most likely think I am an ignorant little child, but at least I'm not blinded by the illusion society has created." - 8th Grader

"Why must you cause us so much stress. We are children, not adults. Stop treating us badly! You teach us nothing that we'll need in the future. Why not teach us home ec? Why not teach us art or mechanics? History, Science? When will we EVER need that? Why not teach us what we want to learn? Anime, poetry? Why not that. Also, you do NOTHING about bullying, or drugs, or violence, or sex! This is not a safe environment to learn in. And your food sucks. As a matter of fact YOU SUCK!" - 8th Grader

"I am flat out embarrassed to say I go to this school. Instead of telling me to sit down and shut up let me discuss with a friend if I need help. If you want to hear more bring in students to tell you what we want and off that topic, STOP JUDGING!!!! Let us be who we want to be, give us respect! You tell us to respect each other when YOU don't even respect us like really stop talking about it and change things all your doing is pissing us off to the point where I don't even want to come to school at all. One time I stayed home because I was scared of being judged by a TEACHER. So fuck you all!" 8th Grader

Students' Ideas for Improvement

In response to questions about what types of support they needed to explore and realize their aspirations, many students had specific ideas. Ideas included:

- A career day with a wider variety of people to talk to and types of jobs represented;
- A class where they got to try out different types of jobs in some way and reflect on what they liked, didn't like and were interested in knowing more about;
- More ASPIRE type activities and exploration of goals;
- Integration of more hands-on activities in their classes;
- Opportunities to talk about how what they are learning could help them in a future career;
- Once students have identified goals, having someone work with them on the specific steps that they would need to take to reach those goals;
- Giving them a place that they can go to hang out and connect with "cool adults and older kids";
- Having more clubs for students that aren't into sports; and
- Elective classes that would let them explore new things (art, mechanics, cooking, woodshop, theater, creative writing, leadership, etc.).

The students' eagerness to offer suggestions demonstrates the depth of their knowledge about the gaps between the support they feel they need and the support being currently offered. It also offers the possibility of including students in the development and implementation of programs designed to ameliorate such disparities.

"I would like it if we had more choices in school like to have a more interactive periods. Like a class that has animals so we can figure out how to dissect them. And figure out what they eat and how they sleep and where they live and how to take care of them. Well, because I want to be a veterinarian when I grow up. And some of my friends and me would like it if we could be able to pick out what classes we would like to go to each period. And sometimes we need more time to go use the restroom and get a drink of water and get our lockers open. So we need more time in between to get from one class to the next." - 6th Grader

"I want a class that can teach me things that I will use for the future. Something that would really be helpful for adults, like a home ec class or a cooking class. The two enrichment classes and choir and band are not enough. A class or elective that would help you with career options and steps to help you get the education you need for that aspiration would be great. The class could help you get financial aid for the college/university you want to get into. There should be a class where you can practice doing aspiration like a doctor, or lawyer, so they have future references if they get their dream career.

From you, all I need is a medical program of sorts. Something to help me get into biology, medical terminology etc. I know there are teachers who are qualified, they just need to do something. I don't care if it is after school, before school, in school, even on weekends! I just want something to help me get closer to reaching my goals, but a little kickstart would help immensely." 8th grader

SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAMS, POLICY AND PRACTICE

What follows are brainstormed ideas for programs, policies and practices based on student suggestions, team experiences and group discussion. The collaborative nature of Connected Lane County provides a unique opportunity to examine the strengths and limitations across a number of schools, communities and service providers. This list is necessarily limited and represents a starting point for discussions of what might be possible as the work of Connected Lane County continues.

- 1. Use findings for In-service training with teachers and administrators:** Utilize this report to begin discussions with decision-making administrators to discuss findings, examine student voices and develop institutional strategies for aspirational exploration. All efforts at institutional development of student aspirations are predicated on buy-in from educational professionals. Thus, the efforts of Connected Lane County should focus on working with school personnel to activate findings from information gathering efforts.
- 2. Examine schools that focus on College/Career Readiness:** There are multiple school sites (often charter and/or alternative schools with an explicit focus on college and career readiness. Local examples include ECCO in 4j, A³ in Springfield and Kennedy High School in Cottage Grove).

Interviews with teachers and administrators in those schools may give insights into pedagogical and curricular approaches that lead to student engagement with career and college readiness.

3. **Investigate other countywide initiatives:** Examine countywide initiatives such as the SUN Service System in Multnomah County. While not specifically designed for career and college investigation the SUN Service System aligns the educational and social service fields to support academic achievement. Lane County could seek to emulate the collaborative design in ways that leverage the assets of institutions toward a common goal.
4. **Continue gathering qualitative data:** Expand data gathering protocols in CLC to include the qualitative experiences of students, families and teachers to uncover local, cultural, institutional, and community conditions that help and hinder exploration of post-secondary aspirations. Use this data for in-service training with teachers and administrators to design locally relevant exploration of post-secondary possibilities.
5. **Create a comprehensive college and career exploration program:** Use existing organizations (such as Oregon CIS, EPIC, Connected Lane Pathways etc.) alongside more local community assets to build a comprehensive and community based approach to career and college exploration. Conducting listening sessions with families and community members might provide a set of participants willing to assist in students' exploration of post-secondary possibilities.
6. **Build a travelling college readiness team:** Support schools across the county by building a traveling team of individuals that visit schools throughout the county for small group discussions. This team could include current college and university students, representatives from labor unions, small business owners and others who can provide support and encouragement to middle school students.
7. **Host a Creative College and Career Summit:** The limited findings of this report represent an opportunity to now expand the conversation on ways to move forward. There are many tried-and-true methods of career and college readiness yet the students we spoke to were not experiencing the benefits of these methods. Bring together students, families, local business, school and community personnel to generate new ideas for college and career readiness.
8. **Invest in counseling:** The lack of comprehensive school counseling programs at the middle school level is readily apparent in the findings of these listening sessions. Few of the schools have more than 1 school counselor and many students report having no one to talk to about their plans for the future.
9. **Invest in electives:** The increased focus on reading and math has created a narrowing of the curriculum to the exclusion of more exploratory subject areas. Schools should prioritize electives that help students explore subject areas that complement and expand on the learning in their math and reading classes.
10. **Increase high quality after school programming:** Use the time after school to generate creative and engaging learning opportunities for students. Expand on programs such as Full STEAM Ahead and other initiatives that explore the intersections of school work, career programs and post-secondary possibilities.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE LISTENING SESSIONS

The listening sessions during this iteration of the process focused on garnering a wide range of experiences and student voices. In short, we went a mile wide and an inch deep. More intensive listening sessions might focus in the following areas:

1. Teachers/Educators: Students across these listening sessions reported feeling a lack of care coming from teachers other educators in their schools. Listening sessions with teachers and other school personnel regarding how they communicate their support for students might uncover strategies, practices, barriers and gaps in service for student aspirational exploration. Teacher listening sessions should be conducted across a variety of school structures (i.e. comprehensive middle schools as well as alternative and charter programs) to examine how various pedagogical, curricular and programmatic approaches impact teacher led efforts toward aspirational exploration.

2. Students of Color: While many students of color participated in these listening sessions there was not a purposeful investigation of the needs and barriers they encounter in their schools. Additionally demographic data was not gathered so no disaggregation of information based on sociocultural status is possible. Focusing on this area might provide valuable information regarding the barriers to postsecondary aspirations faced by students of color.

3. Parents/families: One of the themes that we uncovered in this work was a possible disconnect between the goals that parents and families have for their students and the goals the students have for themselves. A series of listening sessions with parents across the county might provide information regarding the barriers to support that families face in regards to their middle school students.

4. 6th vs. 8th vs. 10th vs. 12th grade Aspirations: Interviewing students across grade ranges would allow us to examine how visions of aspirations are impacted as student progress through schools. These sessions could specifically address: the role that elective classes in high schools play in broadening postsecondary aspirations; the gaps and strengths involved in the transition from middle school to high school; the pipelines (or lack thereof) from middle school to postsecondary options; the impact of high school programs like ASPIRE.

LIMITATIONS

While the data gathered in this report attempts to represent the information gathered during the sessions there are some important limitations that should be acknowledged and addressed if similar tasks are undertaken in the future. First, the short duration of the listening sessions did not provide enough time to probe deeply into all aspects of what the students reported to us. Longer sessions would allow for a more thorough investigation and perhaps provide increasing levels of depth. Second, the conclusions that we reached are filtered through the experiences and perspectives of team members. Rigorous qualitative data analysis including coding of responses and recording of conversations was not done. Future research should use

rigorous standards for data gathering and analysis in order to make more concrete assertions and possibly begin to build frameworks for generalizability.

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Appendix 1

Agenda for Aspiration Listening Sessions

These listening sessions will focus on middle school students' aspirations for post-secondary life, their perceptions of the importance on college/university study and how the adults in their lives support their dreams.

The first activity will be designed to introduce the intent of the listening session and asks students to participate in a physical activity designed to elicit participation. Using some activities developed by Augusto Boal (1992) students will move around and create human sculptures that demonstrate the dreams they have for themselves. **7 Minutes**

The second activity will ask students to move around the room based on the degree to which they agree or disagree with the following statements. We will not ask deeply probing questions during this segment unless there is something remarkable that happens. **5 minutes**

1. I have a good idea (or ideas) about what I want to do after high school.
2. I think I know the steps I will need to take to achieve these aspirations.
3. College is an important thing for the work I want to do in my future.
4. Colleges/Universities teach the things that I want to learn to achieve my goals.
5. I know how to locate the resources, I will need to pay for college.
6. I feel supported by my middle school to explore the things I want to do later in life.
7. Coming to school makes me happy and excited for my future

In the next activity we will split the group into three smaller groups. One group will focus on the adult support systems both in school and out of school that support student aspirations. The second group will explore students' understanding of academic and financial support systems both currently and in the future. The third group will focus on the community and peer networks that support or inhibit student aspirations. Sample questions for these groups include: **25 minutes**

Group 1

1. Who do you talk to about your aspirations/ what you want to do in the future?

Identifies key people in students' life in regards to aspirations.

Probes:

- *What makes you feel you can share your aspirations with this person?*
- *What do you talk about?*
- *(Tell me more about that? Do you have a similar experience?)*

2. Do you get lots of opportunities to share your dreams with adults in your life?

Uncovers students feelings and thoughts on what makes it difficult to share their aspirations to adults in their life.

Probes:

- *When do you get those opportunities, how do they come about?*
- *What does a conversation with this person look like?*
- *How about teachers?*
- *Do the adults in your life know what your dreams are? Why/why not*
- *Are the goals you have in your life the same as the goals in your family have for you?*
- *Why is it difficult to seek out adults' support?*

3. What type of support do you feel you need to reach your goals/aspirations from those around you?

Explores the support systems students feel is most important to reach their aspirations.

Probes:

- *Emotional (motivation)*
- *Academic (tutoring)*

4. Adults in my life know what my dreams are for my future.

Establishes connections to adults and investigates relationships between participants and adults in their lives.

- *How do you decide who to talk to about your dreams?*
- *Does anyone inspire you to follow your dreams?*
- *What do conversations with those adults look like?*
- *Are there dreams you have that you haven't shared with anyone? Why not?*

5. The goals that I have for myself are the same as the goals my family has for me.

These statements get to the potential aspirational disconnect between students and the adults in their lives.

- *Are the goals you have for yourself the same as adults in your school have for you.*
- *Do people in your school know people in your family? Do they work together at all to support you?*
- *If they are separate, how do you deal with that difference?*
- *Who encourages you the most when it comes to school and your future goals?*

Group 2: COMMUNITY

What are students doing outside of school?

Questions.

1. My friends and me encourage each other to follow our dreams.

Investigates peer networks and how peer culture influences their post-secondary thinking

- *How do the people at school or at home try to encourage positive peer relationships? Does it work?*
- *What activities do you participate in that you consider positive? Negative?*
- *Is there space in school/out of school where you are your friends get support to follow your dreams?*

2. What do you usually do after school?

Investigates what students are doing after school and with whom.

- *Do you participate in activities with your friends outside of school?*
- *What types of activities are you involved in?*
- *In what ways do they encourage you when it comes to school and future goals?*

3. Where are your favorite places to spend time outside your home and school? What organizations are you involved with or would like to be involved with?

Tries to get a sense of where students are hanging out and what organizations they come in contact with.

- *Church? Community center? YMCA? Sports team?*
- *Who do you go there with?*
- *What do you like about going there?*
- *In what ways do they encourage you when it comes to school and future goals?*
-

4. What stops you from participating in activities outside of school?

Trying to get a sense of barriers to student engagement in community activities.

5. Is there a space outside of school where you and your friends get support to follow your dreams?

Trying to identify community supports that are already in place.

- *Are there ways that the people in these places give you support or could give you support to follow your dreams?*
- *Where is this place?*

- *What are the activities you do there?*
- *Career class/ career day*

Group 3

1. I have taken classes in School where I learn about colleges, universities and careers after high school.

- *Are these mandatory for all students?*
- *What are the classes like?*

2. I know what financial aid is and how it might help me with my post-secondary plans.

- *Who taught you?/How did you learn about them?*

3. I know about opportunities for internships or apprenticeships that I can participate in before I graduate.

4. Is there a space in school where you and your friends get support to follow your dreams?

Identifies school support systems in place that fosters student aspirations.

Probes:

- *Where is this place?*
- *What are the activities you do there?*
- *Career class/ career day*
- *If you there is no space, what would you imagine this place to be like?*

As a closing activity, students will write a letter to the adults in their lives asking for the things the students need from the adults in order to achieve their dreams. This will be an individual reflective exercise. The letters will be collected from the students when they are done. If they want to keep them, we will ask if we can make copies of them for analysis. **10 minutes**

Appendix #2

Student Letters

The closing activity of the listening sessions asked students to write a letter to their school asking for the types of support they would need to help them reach their aspirations. All of the the letters are printed below edited only insofar as they protect the anonymity of students, staff mentioned by name, and school. All proper nouns have been replaced with pseudonyms.

School #1 8th Grade

I need my teachers to give me the best education they can because I will need it later on in life from my job options.

From you and need support and you being with me with any career I choose. I would need money getting to college for whatever I choose.

I hope that no matter what I do when you are all support me and help me through what I do with my life.

I need monetary support and also have family support I will need to be understood and given strict lines to follow and without this I will not be quick with deadlines.

What I think I need is more support and still need a lot more education till I get done with school and high school and maybe college but that would cost too much money that we don't have an loans will have to be paid off but that will take too long to pay off.

I want to be a sniper in the Marine Corps. I need support and encouragement from the adults in my life. If I don't get the necessary things for my goals in life. Also, if I don't get what I need and I think it would be more difficult to accomplish the things I want to accomplish in life.

Dear dad, I need you to support me more by helping me practice, bye talking about what I want to do, Things that you never do is it that you don't like what...

After high school I plan on pursuing a career in nursing. I think that in order to achieve this goal, I need to get into college which will take a lot of money. If I have good grades in high school, I could get a scholarship, Especially since I am a Latina. What I need from you is encouragement and help staying on track.

After high school and during high school I need you to help achieving my aspirations. Become professional and need to travel great distances to get two training sessions I can leave me there. I need transportation money and support to do the programs that lead to the professional career I would like to achieve.

What I need from you to help me achieve my goals is encouragement. I don't need money to get this job but I need you and the rest of the family to believe in me and to encourage me to do what I do best.

What I need to succeed at my aspiration is to have people who can support me. This support is given to the emotional side is someone who thinks I can succeed in the resource side the money to go through college and resources like access to the Internet to succeed. I think I need these as having something who thinks I'm going to fail is going to affect me.

I just need you to accept my frustrating, mind changing career choices. I know that it may be like an uncomfortable roller coaster ride, but all I ask is that you'll stick with me till the end. On my gosh, it sounds cheesy, but that's all I want. Plus, being flexible with my spontaneous actions wouldn't hurt too.

After high school I want to become a filmmaker or director. Also after hearing about what my classmates want to be I think being in the medical field would be cool too. I also know a little bit about that because my stepmom is a respiratory therapist and I just think being in the medical field would be good.

What I need from you guys to support and love and just listening. I want those things but don't need it because without all of those things I'm doing fine now and because that's how you guys learned. Plus, I learned to give my hundred percent support to someone and how to grow up faster. So sure, I want a lot of things from you guys love, hope, trust, support, compassion... I don't need them now I'm better.

Parents or teachers I just want money so I can afford a place to stay and get some stuff that will be fun. But most of all I need to be in contact with my friends. Without friends life would suck! Why like to have friends Numbers and see them often. But with money you can get what you want and money sort of doesn't make you happy.

After high school I will need your support to follow through with my aspirations support like being proud of me for following my dreams. Even though these dreams may not be ones you totally agree with helping me on my path it would make a world of difference. Things like helping me pay for college or helping me find a job so I can slowly raise the money for college.

I need support and for you to provide the resources for me to be successful I need to love me, Cherish me, want me, feel me and respect me with whatever I want to do.

For me to be able to go to college and reach my goals after high school is your endless love and support. I will need you to not stress me out more than I already will be. I need you to understand I will be busy and starting my life. I want you to keep me on track with everything but let me live. Most importantly, I just need you

I feel that all I need is your full support and that you don't try to make me do something I don't want to.

I need scholarships, lots of them and student loans because I know that we don't have money to support just my college funds. Which is fine but I'll ask for support from my acting career or my medical career. Acting is really just a dream and I've been taking classes for a few years now but as you know it's a tough business and being a doctor is a reality. It's possible for me to do that and to be successful at it.

You guys need a PE class. Some kids don't need all the other dumb stuff. The principal and vice principal both suck. They are the worst. And none of the kids really like them. Other than that the eight grade teachers are cool but we need a PE class.

This school isn't the best. A lot of people get in trouble. None of the kids like Vice Principal and Principal. They have cameras but they don't do anything. I also don't know what I want to do later in life.

I need you guys to support me through what I want to do. Not what you think I can't do what you think I can do. What I want to do and what I know I can do. Thank you for the world you broke, like broke and it ain't no joke.

There is so many things you can do to support my dreams like: talk to me about it and encourage me along the way to success. I wanted to be a writer, put me through it and help me with it. One thing that would really help me would be being able to talk to a teacher or the principal about my dreams and get support for choosing a college. I would love it if you would help me through it all. I want to be a singer and would really like it if you would support my dream. I would really like that. Thank you for taking some time in reading this.

What I need from my school to do my goals is for them to not do the homework club thing because we don't need to know every little thing about school to pass the tests. I don't like the fact that I have to have every little homework assignment be 70% or higher. And we get a print out sheet of all our grades but I don't like the fact that one point homework assignments we have to redo if we have a 50 point test. Like one point versus 50. I'd much rather not have any homework at all and just do well on the tests. Would make my life a whole lot easier and keeping the thought that school hold you after school to do a homework assignment.

School can do nothing because they're not going to give me or buy me new skateboards. The school sucks and I can't wait to get out of it next year. The school especially sucks because we did this kindness campaign.

My goal is to be somewhere in the athletics department. But just get doesn't apply anything for that. If I'm going to do that I seriously need more support on it. And you're trying to prepare us for high school? They can wear hats every day, we can't. They have no homework club, we do. They have cell phones allowed in the hallways, and class, and at lunch; we can't. And if you really want to prepare us for life/ life goals, give us training. We won't be in school our whole life. And we need to have beneficial electives.

Thank you schools and teachers for pushing me to become smarter than I already was. Thank you for teaching me stuff.

What I need from you to get somewhere in life is to be in school as a positive environment I don't want to come to school if there is a bunch of negativity. It shows no hope. To get to my goals I just need people to believe in me.

You need to do your job and talk about what we want to do not your crap. School is for us to learn about what we want to do and for you already had your chance but you blew it. We all know that this is not your dream job. So why don't you actually focus on our dream not yours?

The school does not support me one bit. It's all my brothers and my mom. The school doesn't talk to me at all but this is why I don't tell the school anything because I feel like they don't give a shit about what people want to do in life. They don't come up and ask, "hey what are your goals, and what do you want to do or be when you grow up?" That's why kids don't feel like they have anyone to talk to you because this stupid school don't go up to kids that are upset for any reason. It's also feels that no one here cares about their dreams because dumb ass school doesn't care to ask. So they feel that nobody is there for them to ask. I am taking this very seriously by the way. I hate this school. It sucks. Because the counselor doesn't do a very good job at what she's supposed to do. The school cannot support me because I don't talk to them because I feel they don't care.

To achieve my career goals I need more support. Support such as classes or counseling. I want someone who can focus on me and leads me or shows me the steps into what I need to do. I just need information about what colleges I could attend. I need a teacher to tell me what high school classes I need to take in order to help me learn about what I want to be.

In order to reach our goals will need help from you. I need a program to find out what jobs are right for me and how much education it will require. Then we need to know how to get to college and how to pay for it. We'll need to plan for every step of our future, make sure we get there. We also need more people like Ms. Johnson, who has seen the most in me and helped me achieve a 10th grade level math class at eight grade. We need help. To make sure we are the best that we can be and need more of the opportunity that Ms. Johnson has given me.

I need many different supports and the big support I would need is financial support. I need all the information for grants, scholarships, and just ways to help pay for college. I want to go to a very good college and also need a lot of academic support to get excepted to the college that's right for me. I also need the support from my school to get into college classes in high school. If I pass college classes in high school I get money and credits towards college. I need to have information from my future high school on how to pay for college. I also need to have good writing skills for the college application.

To reach to my goals I will need a PE class. I want to be a gymnast/coach or some sort of personal trainer. To do that I need some sort of acting class. Maybe a health class too. In middle school is when kids should start learning to make healthy choices. I think they should have a career course or elective because at this age you start look more into who you are. Having a plan set out with goals would be good also. And about what you need to go after to achieve those goals.

The support I need to achieve my goals is more mental support. I need people to help encourage me. It would also help if some people could help me find programs or classes to support my skills and have a better chance of becoming what I want to be. I know the school can't help a lot (mainly middle schools) but it would make me feel a lot better about actually achieving my goals and dreams.

The support I need to go to college is mostly just financial. Also, it would be nice to have someone to help me understand my choices and help me realize what I really want to be and what would be a good college for me that could help me achieve my goals. It would help to have someone to talk to about some questions so that I can understand my interests for certain jobs better.

I understand the college is important. I get that for you to achieve your dreams, we need to go. I just don't get how we're supposed to pay for all of this. But my teacher said to become a surgeon I would need at least five years of school. Am I supposed to have another job on the side? How much should I save for? Just where in general do I get this money? When I grow up I want to have a good life, have enough money for a nice house and some vacations. But I'm still a little confused on how to get there. It just doesn't add up. How could someone pay for it? For years of school?

I feel that we need some more career classes in order to make students on track for success in middle school. We need to have longer units in the field, as well as better activities involving the subject. If we had activities such as learning the requirements to get a scholarship and so on we would become very knowledgeable about how to pay for college and succeed in life. We also need classes to teach us how to achieve our goals and make those goals better.

This is what I need from you to start pursuing my goals/dreams for the future. I need advice on where to begin. What college is best for me? I need help figuring out what exactly do I want to be. Someone I know I could rely on if I needed help or advice for my future. You know how many years I have to go to college for. What subject in school do I need to focus more on? How much money will I make if I succeed and become what I want to be? If my dreams/goals are right for me? This is what I need to know and I need help finding out.

I'm a student going to your school. I'm here to tell you what I want. To begin with we need a wider choice of elective classes like Art, PE, or at least something new. I want to know that I can get help here and know that it's a great community. Most of all I want to have fun while learning what I need and not feel so restricted. This is what I want and how I feel about the school. All these suggestions will help make the school a better place for students and staff members.

It would be very helpful if I knew how to save up for college or where I could get loans are for help. Also, it would be really helpful if I could participate in electives. Something fun like art or cooking. Something that focuses on science would be really awesome to. Maybe we could learn about investing, taxes and bills because most of us don't have any clue about that.

I want an electronic music program. Makes things songs without computers/headphones. A sort of DJ music program in which kids mix and create their own music. I press only would love a program like this and it would be a great way for us to see if we like it.

I want to have an actual PE class. A real class instead of an enrichment class because then we can get in shape and stay in shape for the rest of the school year. Also some kids have a weight problem and they could lose weight if they wanted to. Some other people in the school may be happy with it too.

If you could fix the sink in the boys bathroom in the eighth grade wing I'd appreciate it very much. Other than that there's not much else I can say.... I'm not asking for any community center or anything, just give me the tools that I need to be successful.

This is what I need from you: more electives like computer tech classes, cooking classes or art classes. And it will help me for the goals that I want to have.

For me to be successful in life I need your support. I will not be able to get to my dreams if you don't help me the only thing I ask is that you inquire what I want to be and help me achieve it. You should also help other kids not only the ones in the highest classes. To me that seems like a grave injustice.

In order to achieve my goal (not only mine but also everyone else's in the school) electives are needed. Personally, my goal is to be a pediatrician or a veterinarian. Medical electives are something that I would have, if I were to be able to actually choose what I wanted. The basic elements we learned may help me but it's not exactly what I need for my goal. Most of the electives you've given us are not very helpful and maybe are fun, but they're not what all of us need.

I want a class that can teach me things that I will use for the future. Something that would really be helpful for me as an adult. A home ec class or a cooking class. The two enrichment classes and choir and band are not enough. A class or elective that would help you with career options and steps to help you get the education you need for that aspiration would be great. The class could help you get ready financially for the college/university you want to get into. There should be a class where you can practice doing an aspiration like a show, or lawyer, so they have future references if they get their dream career.

From you, all I need is a medical program of sorts. Something to help me in biology, medical terminology, etc. I know there are teachers who are qualified, they just need to do something. I don't care if it is after school, before school, in school, even on weekends! I just want something to help me get closer to reaching my goals, but a little kickstart. It would help immensely, helping me reach my medical field goals.

In order to achieve my goals I may need a few things. A computer class would be helpful. Technology is becoming more and more relied upon. It might be helpful for students to learn how to use it.

This is what I need from you to achieve my goals. I need to be pushed more to do better in class. I need more electives with options and things that interest me. It would really help if you could ask what we have aspired to do and help us with the steps on how to get there. Talking to us about good colleges for the jobs we want and what we have to do to get into these colleges. How many years and what classes we would have to take. Only one of my teachers actually knows what I want to do in the future. I want to share with teachers and get tips on how to achieve my goals for school or job. Give us more opportunities to explore.

We need PE back. I know it's enrichment but they choose the activities and most people stand on the side and watch. I need someone to teach me or I cannot become a professional athlete. We could go to the track and run. I just really need something to help me into that. Then

working out hard and running hard but I need more. I need to come to school wanting to come to school, not just because I need to. We could play any type of game but in enrichment the teacher chooses. The obesity rates are climbing and maybe we could lower them if we try, we may inspire other schools in Bethel, and Eugene, then Lane County, then Oregon, Then eventually national. So please just consider bringing back P.E.

I need for you to set high standards for us. I need you to give us options for electives. I need you to prepare me for high school, college and life. I need you to support my life decisions. I need you to give me tools to set goals and tools to meet them.

There are many things that can help me to help me achieve my goals for the future. In elementary school, I had a dream of becoming a writer. Today, I still like the idea of it, and I am looking for someone to help me prepare. There's Language Arts of course, but it doesn't always help me to go through something that I already learned.

School #3 6th Grade

This is a good school and I would like to learn about animals and we should be able to eat in the class.

I would like to learn more about animals for my career. I would like if we could choose our class and if we could have more free time to have fun would be great and have better chairs because this is a hard chair.

Better education, extracurriculars, new textbooks, need to spend money on kids needs not on the bus or for showing off our school. Our school likes to show off and they buy stuff that we won't need. More support so people can really think about what they want to be in life, more support on what we want to be. More school events, our school needs to be more welcoming to people and stuff like art and shop so people that might like art and shop and that might be what they want to be when they grow up.

What I think you should do is put more sports classes such as soccer or more specific classes, for example, science could be put into smaller classes like biology, earth, etc. Then that could be a class about what you want to do when the student grows up. We can survey the kids on what they want to do for a living and search throughout Oregon to find an adult who studies or works for that job. Then the school would bring these people to the school and make these people teach.

I think we need to get more extracurricular activities to help some people figure out what they like to do and let them do what they actually like. So I want to be a music producer and I think if we should have computer programming for beginners. Help other kids and I figure out how to do what we love and how to get to what we love.

My school spends money on things that are not needed. Like instead of new textbooks it by sculptures. Instead of taking the time to discipline the students it lets things go or keep happening. What I would need to have and a lot of other students would like to have would be

to set up more elective classes some of the classes that would be helpful would be home ec, woodshop, and biology. If it was my choice I would add those classes for school. That can help me another students achieve our goals. Also career day for middle schools would help us a lot. Our text books are from 2002 or 2003 and this 2014, we need new textbooks instead of decorations.

It would be cool if you had many specific classes that students could choose between to get more focused training on a particular subject. That way they would have more knowledge on what they might want to be as well as overall knowledge of many subjects so that if they get a new job they will at least know a little bit about it.

I think you should help us on our goals in life.

Help me achieve my goals and dreams. You could get new textbooks because they're so old and outdated most of the things are wrong. You could stop spending on decorations and buy things we need. Maybe buy a little less things you want but things we need. But it's kind of okay so yeah.

I think there should be a specific person who you can go to see so you can speak to them about your job, and the way you can raise enough money to go to college. I also think that there should be more time for breaks for thinking about your specific job to maybe think about your job, or maybe to go to the computer lab and research about your jobs. I also think that during the class times when you have no work to do they should allow phones to do research about these jobs. While the teachers keep watch on their phones to make sure they're not texting. I also think there should be art class because art is used in every way. It could help with any job.

More sports, sports fees less expensive, more field trips, get kids ready before the first bell rings, art, more time outside, more break time and comfortable chairs.

I think that instead of having an oil boiler you should replace it with an electric boiler. You should also, instead of buying new calculators each year, put some doors on the stalls in the boys bathroom. You should also have some extracurricular activities for middle schoolers. You guys should let us have a longer break.

I would like it if we had more choices in school like to have more interactive periods. Like a class that has animals so we can figure out how to dissect them. And figure out what they eat and how they sleep and where they live and how to take care of them. Well, because I want to be a veterinarian when I grow up. And some of my friends and me would like it if we could be able to pick out what classes we would like to go to each period. And sometimes we need more time to go use the restroom and get a drink of water and get our lockers open. So we need more time in between to get from one class to the next.

My dream is to be a pro athlete, but it is hard because there are not enough sports to accomplish that goal like lacrosse or field hockey or even soccer! Some kids like to play sports and sports we don't have. It is hard to sign-up in Thurston, and then drive to Thurston to play sports and there should be classes for kids' dreams. Like if someone wants to be an engineer and a bunch of other kids want to be an engineer and there should be an engineering class

I believe that our school needs more support for our dreams to help us achieve our goals in life and to have more inspiration. Maybe we could have an Aspire period and begin to achieve before we start high school. And I wish we could have more support to help our dreams and goals to be achieved.

School #3 Grade 7

You are a good school but you're not teaching us what we need to know. You don't really teach us what we need but you expect us to pass tests without fully understanding what it is. We need different classes that might help us on the subject we want to go into. We need to have more sports so we don't feel like we're being packed with information that we might not need. We need people talking to us and helping us understand why going to college and finding a career is important.

I would like to learn more about animals to become a veterinarian.

I would like it if you would start earlier with lower grade levels and have more of a choice in classes at this level. Maybe start showing ideas of college and what you want to be earlier too so we have more time to think about it. Possibly give shorter assignments but have them be a little bit harder so we have to think more about it because in real life we won't have easy problems all the time.

I think that we should have more afterschool activities. All we have are sports. They should have cheerleading, soccer, woodshop, mechanics, and dance! Our school doesn't teach us anything. I'm in seventh grade and I learn fourth-grade math. Our science teacher doesn't teach us anything and then he gives us a test and expects us to get at least a 75%. Most of us only get the 30-65%. I don't think that they are preparing us for college.

You're a good school but you need to get us ready for college, like more sports. Letting all the teachers finish the whole section when we are learning something. Don't just stop because we're being bad. We need to learn more stuff for college, not stuff we got taught in fourth grade or sixth-grade. We need books that we will understand not just the teachers. I think the school needs to get us ready for college and give us more information so we can get more knowledge for college.

I want you to help me play baseball, football, and basketball and teach me how to make my muscles big. I want to learn about electricity and energy because they're fun. I want to learn about cars and how to make them go. I also would like to learn about DNA.

I think that this school needs more activities! Like cheerleading, woodshop, mechanics, soccer, dance, swimming and clubs. The school is not teaching us what we need to learn for college. Like, we are learning fourth-grade stuff and I'm in seventh grade. The teachers need to explain things more.

Our teacher expects us to remember everything he talks about. We write notes when he talks about things but we can't use them on the tests! And last year we did! It's stupid. I really want

to do cheerleading! It's not fair for us not to have it. Because 2 years ago we could!

I personally think that the school needs more afterschool activities to help us prepare for college or our future. Like cooking classes, or have a career day or something like that. Because in school we don't have things that prepare us for our future. We need more sports because all we have is track and field, cross country, basketball, baseball, football, volleyball. So we need more things that will prep us for our future.

It would be very helpful to the students to allow at least some electives in seventh and eighth grades. Some chances to get field time working in a place that could support students for their future career because you apparently have no interest in the benefit of the students placed in your care. To educate you must at least take some time to connect in ways they will remember and understand.

I think it would be better for the school to have more types of classes and have electives. You should introduce some classes to middle school students that you wait to introduce in high school. You should bring back some electives that most schools have gotten rid of, like cooking and art because a lot of people have dream jobs that they want to do and schools are not helping them get there. They need to know how to get to their dream jobs and lives and need to know the steps or they will be lost and not know what to do.

It would be helpful if the teachers don't give homework every day and more free time. Teachers are rude sometimes and the school is dirty. Like the mold on the ceiling in the bathrooms. More sports in the school would be nice and activities. Or dragons please, I want to slay some.

Do your job. Teach your students. Get extracurricular activities. Sports, educational, and fun ones. This school is below average. Get us back up there. Make teachers teach every student and not just blow them off. Use your brains and think. There's more to school than just the basics. So why do you do it? This is barely enough to pass for an actual school. Because in life you can just do enough. Don't ruin our future.

I would like to have more extracurricular activities because we're kind of secluded from town. I would also like electives because I don't like music as much as I like getting active in PE. Classes like technology and cooking and more would be better for later in life. Home ec would be better for everyone so they would at least be able to cook and do laundry by themselves.

I think that we have very little support and I want Home Ec. Stuff that will apply in life. At the career fair it was a lot of stuff like firefighters or stuff with the military, which is kind of downgraded. They made it seem like it was the only option because our school is below average. But I think we can do more than just die in the wars. I want to be a lawyer not a soldier.

This school needs to work on getting different classes for college.

So, I want to be a US Marine, but I'm pretty sure there're no elective classes to help with this goal, well, besides PE. Also another good thing would be to have teachers that know in-depth what they are talking/teaching about. Plus some of the teachers have a lot of bias about what the students think and what they want to be, so they don't encourage you obviously.

I think we need to focus more on getting our classes up to standards. Our classes are way out of date. Our teachers try to rush through and we end up not getting it.

I think that our school should emphasize having fun at school and not be so serious. I know the school is serious and we need a good education. I think a key point that Jay pointed out is you're not learning if you're not having fun. I think the school is the worst school in the county, and maybe state, and that our superintendent should be fired.

The school needs more science projects because some kids really like science.

School #3 8th Grade

I think we need electives. Being forced to do band or choir is not okay. And having no math support sucks horribly. And no athletic support at all. Not very many teachers are supportive or open as they should be. For me, I'm not happy at all so therefore the school sucks.

Not enough support. They have none of the classes that we need. My family is more supportive. The school never talks about having a career besides a teacher. It is very annoying. Judgment! The people, as in teachers, are very judgmental. We have probably two teachers that are very open and are also not judgmental.

I feel like I'm not really learning because I am a more hands-on worker and we only do paper assignments. So I don't really learn anything and plus the whole school rushes in and out of lessons. I also feel shy when asking questions around new teachers but you don't take that even remotely into account. And I also feel like you are expecting way too much from me and I feel highly uncomfortable doing lessons by only reading, doing an assignment, then expected to automatically get it, and if you don't? Oh well, that train left the station. We also should have art class.

I think this school needs to have more activities and clubs like singing, art, acting, etc. So other people are involved. Not all of us are interested in sports. I also think we should be able to choose if we want to do band/choir.

I feel as though we need more of a variety of electives not just band and choir in middle school, but different sciences, maths, maybe start on a different language. I want to have more dissections in a science class! I want more classes that will help me understand how to become an excellent surgeon. I would like more way to get scholarships to get into better, more educated schools. I would even more so like more teachers like Mr. Lewis Mr. Jackson and Mr. Duffy that aren't very judgmental.

I feel a school pays more attention to teachers than they do to students. I think the teachers should start listening to students more and see how the students feel.

I believe this program insists that you must have a dream or aspiration. Personally, I feel the college system is corrupt along with the rest of society. I would guess that at least 50% of people hate their jobs and do it simply for the money. I refuse to be a slave to the system. This program does not inspire us to follow our dreams; it forces us to stress over our future, which is irrelevant. You need to focus on inspiring us to be happy, because that's all that actually matters. You most likely think I am an ignorant little child, but at least I'm not blinded by the illusion society has created.

I would like for you to get us better passing time activities like art classes. One thing I would like to say is that we need less busy work, perhaps a bit of class work but no homework. Because that small time once in a blue moon, we get off we don't know what to do with ourselves, we forget how to be spontaneous, willing to sit at a desk and focus. We are taught to indulge in time fillers, rather than what we really want. As we grow older, we are taught to put homework first always. We are taught to set aside our interest to complete busy work. So maybe we have new classes?

This school is pretty much hell. Should be electives, field trips, more fun activities, and a better education. We can't have fun or do anything fun without getting in trouble. The teacher should be able to talk to you about what you want to do in the future without being judgmental. There should be shorter days, shorter class periods and more classes where you get to choose what you want to do, not what's mandatory. The math teacher should learn how to actually teach the math. Teachers rush things way too fast and they give us 2 to 3 assignments a day. School should be fun. Not where you're a miserable teenager.

It would be nice if we could have an Aspire room in the middle school. More field trips and more options for classes.

School 4 7th Grade

Why must you cause us so much stress. We are children, not adults. Stop treating us badly! You teach us nothing that we'll need in the future. Why not teach us home ec? Why not teach us art or mechanics? History, Science? When will we EVER need that? Why not teach us what we want to learn? Anime, poetry? Why not that. Also, you do NOTHING about bullying, or drugs, or violence, or sex! This is not a safe environment to learn in. And your food sucks.

As a matter of fact YOU SUCK!

Make us have longer lunch and get rid of history. Give us good lunch.

Maybe if you cared about our problems , we would respect you a little more.

I honestly think you should let us be able to express ourselves the way WE want..not the way you do. Most of us have our own ways. Don't act like you know how our brains think. You're not even teaching us right. You give us homework, we're not learning anything. There's so many things that YOU should learn about us.

I think you should have yearly meetings and stuff like that. Also, two vending machines- one for snacks

and one for drinks. Gabriel should be fired and the old counselor back!

I don't think you give us enough time to work on things like homework. I think you should give us time to work and time to relax. And have classes that prepare us for the future. Just think about it.

This school is so bad. I'm moving schools next year because it's so bad. We need more electives and we should have to do PE. And the kids here are so mean. Half of them do drugs! I don't wanna get pressured into doing drugs! We need more classes about how drugs are bad. I'm a straight A student and I'm pressured into drugs so MUCH. You guys are all old and racist! Get some younger teachers would you? You give us no freedom. I HATE THIS SCHOOL! You never help kids when they get bullied! TOO MUCH HOMEWORK! You expect us to do 7 hours of school work and then send us home with more.

PLEASE FIRE MS. GAINEY! Get a better vending machine, bigger lockers, better lunches, and more electives. Please have younger teachers that understand us. FIRE GAINEY!

I would greatly appreciate if you would do something about Ms. Gainey. She keeps losing our assignments and blaming it on us. NOT COOL. I also would like a snack vending machines, and more elective classes, such as gymnastics, swimming, and football. Also, bigger LOCKERS. Also younger and nicer teaches who care about us! Better classes, better teachers, real food for lunch, longer lunch time, better at taking care of bullying for us, use our music for class, 11am to 5pm for school. This is what I think you can do better.

You have horrible lockers and teaching staff. I think some of the teachers don't care. They have a way of not caring about our knowledge, it's more based on the whole class. This last trimester I missed about 30 or more days of school and I tried my best to catch up but I still got 3 B's (which I deserved) but in Language Arts I got an F!

I feel like our teachers are cramming too much information into one class period. Our teachers have no spare time to talk about what matters to their students. They skip important details and make things harder to understand. When kids say that teachers don't care, they are right and wrong. I think that teachers care, but only about homework and lessons for their class. I would also like more electives! Thanks for trying to help.

How can you help me improve in doing what I want when I'm older is give more choices in classes, and try making more of the basics like math, reading, etc more fun. And try giving more examples of certain things. So I can understand on what I'm learning.

I think that you should have kids take a test for their job and get the students on the right track to do what they want to do. Us as student need good education to get the job we want because if we just do what we want just in college we might not be able to learn it all and if we start at a young age we are more experienced.

I think that this school needs more options for classes that we WANT to take. You need better food. You should have better education because the MATH BOOKS ARRE SOOO OLD! Same thing with science and history books.

I think there should be more classes, less homework, and better food. There should be less people in each class, more electives, more hands on activities , and better teachers.

More classes, better food, less homework, more hand on stuff. Class we want to take not the things they make us. Not enough food. I'm always hungry and then I can't learn. The more homework we have the less I learn because I cant do all the class at once. Then I get confused.

I think that everyone here could do a way better job especially when picking out teachers and most adults pick favorites. Your kind of racist and lunch should have way better food. Way more electives needed and more freedom for students.

I know that you try to help us, but you're not doing a very good job of it.

You need:

More \$

More room

Smaller classes

More electives

Career evals

Specialized classes (students of a certain level are with students of that level)

Better food

Better schedule

This school needs better food, new staff. This school needs more electives and this school needs cheaper lunch prices.

It would help a lot if you shortened the classes and have more and smaller classes. It would also help if you gave us off campus lunch. There should be more of an education that WE form around US, not the rest of the student body.

Thanks for your time!

I think you should fire Mrs. Gainey. She is very rude and mean and cruel to students. You should have better counselors and social help, longer lunch, better teachers, art classes, and better lunch.

Please give us lockers. Please have teachers that care when we are having a hard time in our subjects, more electives, less homework, younger teachers that understand us, have more people to talk when feeling bad, have teachers not be so RUDE!

School 4 8th Grade

In this school I believe that the students need to be respected more by teachers. We also need to be with people that we trust or are comfortable around so we can actually get the "discussion points" we need instead of just lowering our grade because you may not realize it but people do have social anxiety which stops us from talking in class. And telling us to deal with it and move on. And judging us, it's a big deal, you may not think about but it is. Teachers who understand.

I'm an 8th grade student, I'm going to high school next year so thank you for NOTHING. Have a nice day.

I think this school is horrible. The school spends money on pads for gym wall and popcorn machines . Instead of wasting money on things like that why don't you spend the money on things the student can use to learn like electives or more after school programs because those prepare students for life more than popcorn or pad walls

I don't like talking in front of people that are not my friends like jocks or preps because they will make fun of you for what you say, do, wear. So I never raise my hand to ask questions. Put us in groups that we want to be in and are interested in. People say your not good enough to hang around certain people.

I absolutely hate you. Our teachers need to respect and understand these kids more. We need a principal who doesn't judge and stereotype kids. And don't deny it because everyone knows you do. We need more teachers who are like you Mr. Nelson, who know who to have fun, but are also serious at the right times. We need more classes that will help us get where we need to be in life. I don't know how to do taxes but I sure as hell know how to use the quadratic formula. Our school system needs to be fixed. We have kids with depression, and girls walking around in half shirts, but I have to change when I wear a knee length skirt! NO! This SCHOOL SUCKS! I HATE ALL OF YOU.

Thanks for absolutely nothing!

You need to not care about the dress code let us wear what we want. Get the teachers to actually pay attention to struggling students instead of letting them fail. Get the 8th grade students ready for high school instead of doing the same thing we learn in 7th grade.

I think that this middle school should have a class to talk about our future and have a class that helps us with our future.

High School should put back the other foreign languages and the mechanic shop back because in the future of our life those skills could come in handy if our car breaks down, and or if we meet someone from a different country!

I don't like this school get a better program and teachers that aren't sexist!

I hate feeling like my goals are unreachable because the classes I take aren't preparing me for it. Teachers should be supportive of our career choices no matter what they are. If one kid want to do something that requires a lot of math and that isn't their best subject, you can't put them down. Who cares if they want to be a rockstar? That's a kick-ass career. SUPPORT US!!!

We should organize workshops to help with figuring out the career we are most interested in. it could be after school so you wouldn't have to worry about our other classes.

The front office is probably the worst of all when someone walks in you say hi and not just talk to your friend because that is the worst. Everyone hates it. I don't know how you still even have a job, because you would / should get fired. Really get it together! Find teachers who can actually teach not just make class have fun. I come to school to learn not play games.

I am hoping the high school will let students see what their "dream job" will be like and maybe give some more information on it. And maybe it will help them see what they like and don't like. I am very glad I got to give my opinion on this. It was a good experience.

To help me achieve my goals in life, the school could provide a better opportunity to learn about my interests. A way to do this is to have electives.

So many people really don't like this school! I think you should make more periods so the classes are smaller, also more one on one with more independent studying. No one is preparing us for high school, please do! We need it. Give us more chances to learn, slow down, let the whole class understand before you finish up the class.

You were very good at trying to include people and asked very good questions. However, the school very rarely asks those question and when they do, they don't keep us drawn in. They don't stay on the topic long. They expect us to do the research and find the details, but we could still use a little help.

This school needs more supportive people to help us support you go through a young life and in like coming in the future.

I think that this school has helped me become a good person with a good work ethic. However, I don't think that we need more than four basic classes. We should have different field of science, history, and language arts. The more classes we have, the more we can focus on skills that will help individuals achieve their future career. Thanks for everything.

I think that the school needs more options for electives like art and being creative. I also think that it would be more helpful if the classes were smaller so students would get more attention because my math class is small and I learn the best in that class.

To make this school better maybe try and have one class once a week go over jobs and colleges. Or have a guest speaker.

I think are school is okay but we have a teacher that is so mean to the class and publicly humiliates you in class and also probably every teacher in the school doesn't care at all about you or your well being.

You need to learn to stop stereotyping and learn our life from our perspective. Some people have different beliefs, and they want to be pressured about it!!! I want to be put in classes with people I'm comfortable with, not people I feel dumb around! I want to be accepted for me!! So get a clue and ask us what we want! THANKS 4 NOTHING

I hope that there are more opportunities at the high school to figure out what I want to do because this school kinda sucked at it. But otherwise your ok.

This school sucks because it has very crappy education, it doesn't take care of bully situations and that is something that is needed. Work on it!

I'm going homeschool cause you suck!

Make school more interesting cuz it sucks.

I absolutely hate this school, you judge us, you don't let us learn what we wanna learn you stereotype us and you favor people grow up and at least try to care.

I hate this school I hate how you don't care whether we know something or not. All you care about is that if we turn our work in or not. You focus on responsibility more than education. I hate your dress codes. MY CLOTHES DON'T PROVOKE PEOPLE! My shoulder is not inappropriate. My legs aren't inappropriate and my arms aren't inappropriate. If it's hot and I want to wear a tank top and shorts don't try to stop me from it. You guys don't have enough classes that help us with life and what we want to do when we graduate. We don't focus in our classes because there are too many people! We need less people in the classes.

I am flat out embarrassed to say I go to this school. Instead of telling me to sit down and shut up let me discuss with a friend if I need help. If you want to hear more bring in students to tell you what we want and off that topic, STOP JUDGING!!!! Let us be who we want to be, give us respect! You tell us to respect each other when YOU don't even respect us like really stop talking about it and change things all your doing is pissing us off to the point where I don't even want to come to school at all. One time I stayed home because I was scared of being judged by a TEACHER. So fuck you all!

School #5 8th Grade

I need more education. I wish you would put more education into the school. I need nothing from you.

I would greatly appreciate if we actually do stuff about a future and colleges, like ASPIRE. We need more of it. On advisory we barely do stuff that will actually help us in the future. Teachers need to be more open arms for their students. I think you need to help us out more to be successful in our future. I think we should have careers as an elective. I also think we should have college students and professors come to a school and talk to us about what it will take to get into college and tell us how difficult college can be.

I want you to take the seventh graders out of eighth grade electives because its unfair for kids in eighth grade who wanted that elective. I want a little more help with getting mad higher for college standards. Other than that we do pretty well with getting kids to their goal.

I think we need more classrooms and we need less people per class. We need to have more sports like soccer. We need teachers to care enough to help every student no matter what. I also think we need better principals. We also need a music room that supports all kinds of music.

Please have more electives, please. I feel like there's not enough electives to help me choose my job. Can you please be a code/programming elective or photography?

I would need more math and more computers science and computer programming.

I would really like it if the teachers would teach something new every year. Also make it a challenge but also make it fun.

I would like more to help from the teachers to achieve my goals because some of the teachers seem like they don't care

I enjoy coming to school. But, the school does lack a few things. 1) Spirit. The school is boring. We rarely have exciting events. The school looks like a prison or hospital. When you walk in all you see is white walls and clean tiles and gloomy kids. 2) Teachers and staff don't listen. The students here have lots of good ideas but the staff don't even want to hear about it. Its like they don't care. I do enjoy this school, somewhat, because I like my friends. People usually find me as a class clown. But I like making people laugh and smile. The teachers are very understanding and helpful when it comes to schoolwork.

To achieve my dreams and aspirations we need better classes and encouraging teachers. Yeah, our teachers are alright, But they don't motivate me to do better. They don't encourage anyone. It's it is for you, it's never the teachers fault. I disagree with that. Teachers need to stop teaching by the book and let students think creatively. They need to let students grow. They can't have them chained down when it comes to their projects and assignments. Let us roam free a little. Let us show you what we can do by ourselves.

We also need more creative and specific classes, and specific Science classes. We don't have those. Make learning fun. Incorporate art or music or sports into the lessons and assignments. Students will learn better this way and also enjoy the assignments more. In order to do the things we'll probably need a higher budget. But apparently that's too much to ask. This school is kind of pathetic sometimes. WE NEED ROOM AND OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW AND SUCCEED. LET US EXPRESS OURSELVES AND LEARN WITHOUT RESTRAINT.

To achieve my goals in life I would like for school to offer more classes, Not just classes we have to know. Also, teachers need to stop being so boring or kids will be rude to you. You need to be happy, funny, exciting etc. Just something else that won't make us want to break our legs so we can go home and not come back. I mean, the reasons kids get in trouble is because we need to entertain ourselves, and we don't want to be stuck in that class with you. Also, don't give so much homework. If you give us too much we will throw it away and most likely not learn about that subject. Most importantly, what we need is support and more scholarships when we become seniors because if we don't we may not get to become what we want to become and we won't achieve our dreams. I mean, this school is pretty pathetic sometimes. Stop reading

from the book and let us think creatively.

You need more options available for us. We have one class period every couple of weeks to help figure out who we want to be and what we want to do and that's not enough. We need more days like field trips and hands on stuff. Books and paper won't help us decide between mechanics and medical. We need more electives and explanations. How do we know if we want to do something if we never try it? What is college going to be like? Is it just a grown-up high school? What about our jobs? Most jobs require communication. There are a lot of shy people who won't be able to do that communicating. How about you help us with that stuff?

Kids are easily distracted these days. We need more involving activities and lessons. I know I always space out 3 of my classes and don't hear a thing.

The classes go too low for me. I would like different levels in each grade so kids can learn more if they are fast learners or slow learners. I know it would be difficult to organize and pay for.

I think we don't have enough electives to help us reach our goals. So, I think we need a law class to help us learn about law and order. I'm planning to join the FBI and I would like some advice.

Frankly, I don't trust any of you. Not even my "friends." Yeah, they're fun to hang out with but...I just don't trust them.

And y'know, this isn't your fault. All your teachers are great people who care a lot.

I've gained some confidence even if I still can't spell or write cursive. But hey! That's what typing is for.

It isn't the kids' fault either.

I don't know what this has to do with anything, sorry if I wasn't any help. Also, before I forget, fear of failing is a problem.

Although some may say that going to school is a drag, to others it's not. School is part of our society's stepping stones to having a well-thriving future. Some teachers here need to realize this. They're our role models, our inspirations. When they show up grumpy to work every day and show us disrespectful attitudes, that's how we think we should act. They need to learn that yelling at us and being smart to us doesn't make us want to try any harder. That's just not how middle school students' minds work. They should instead make us excited to learn. Excited to pursue our careers! To make us realize that we are the future and we need to make the best out of our resources.

For the sake of all others (including myself), I ask you to help me to reach my goals in the performing arts. Sure, we have a drama class but its not enough to satisfy my crave for a certain knowledge that will get me through life. This school is practically determining how I will live after high school. If we can somehow react positively to this, such as the solution to add more freedoms in electives for this subject it will help tremendously. So please, convey my attitudes towards my goals to perpetrate a more depth meaning. Make a solution, I'm begging.

I think that teacher at this school should explain job options. I know the obvious jobs but I also know that there are many other jobs that I don't know about. Also, tell us about different colleges.

I think to help our school to show students more about education is to have more programs like ASPIRE. But instead of making it more like an assignment, and more like a talk.

I appreciate that you are preparing the 8th graders for high school, but I feel that you are missing some of the important classes.

For instance, we have been doing many activities in advisory, like drug presentations. I like what you are doing but we never got to present them. We put in a lot of effort, but we never even got a grade.

Also, the study hall/fun time days. I think that teachers should enforce more, to students, that we need to do our work when assigned, and not at the end of the quarter. The "fun days" are a bit boring. I appreciate the ice cream and soda and all of the other privileges, but they can get boring.

I do enjoy the "self managers" in elementary school, that if you are doing good, you can have your teachers sign it and you can have more privileges. I think we should do that in middle school.

Also, students who do tests to see your weaknesses and strengths. Sometimes, students are good at things that they don't want to be. So, could you try to strengthen our weaknesses?

Alas, I have run out of time, so I must stop here but please take these ideas into consideration. Thank you.

I think that we should have teachers who come into the school every Friday and talk to all of us individually about careers and about college and scholarships.

I feel as though I am not getting the help I need to achieve the best future. I think it would be possible to have an ASPIRE class like the high school at an early age. It seems as though I don't have enough information about college or how to get there. I think focusing on the future rather than a lot of electives is more helpful. The students need a guide to help them participate in school and put themselves out there. Kids think its cool to not do work and a guide would be helpful. Some kids don't have the supporting family that they need.

I believe that there are limited amounts of classes/clubs to take. This school would be a better place if there were activities that the students were excited to do. Such as photography club.

We have a whole room dedicated to photography but NOBODY USES IT! Make children happy to come to school because as a result, it would just be so much BETTER.

You need classes to help you learn about military or stuff like that. It will help for all the people who want to go into special forces or something like that.

I think that this school is trying so much to give to us and like that! I also feel like I am not getting enough education. I want meaning classes for the future. Some kids, like me, like to start planning for what they want to do. I'm into the arts and audio. I want to be an actress/singer. Director, and artist. How can I be able to get that head start if there is no one here for me to teach me it. I'd like to get a head start on what I want to do for the future. I want classes that will help me with it.

I want to be an EMT, so I need a health class.

This is what we need you to do to help us students achieve our goals. Open up clubs that fit what we want to do after high school. Teachers, talk with us more about what we want to do. Help us more on this journey through high school and beyond.

This is what I need to achieve my goal:

- A sewing/costume design class.
 - Art class
 - Biology class
 - Toxicology studies
 - Less crowded classes
 - More than 4 minute passing time
 - Teachers to actually enforce some rules
 - People to not be such jerks and teachers to be more understanding
 - Every teacher to be a mix of Ms. Brown and Mr. White
 - Longer lunches
 - A student lounge
 - A student private phone for emergencies and calling the suicide prevention hotline
 - Have ASPIRE a twice a week thing, not just once a week.
-

I would like to have a photography class.

I think the school and staff need to pay more attention to the students' wants and needs. Like, actually sit down and talk to students about their plans for the future. Not some pamphlet or career quiz on the computer. Actually talk to us about future and career stuff. About tips and opportunities for colleges and explore different jobs and careers.

This school is pretty pathetic. You guys need to get more classes that are actually useful. And you need to make people actually want to go to school. And make them more excited for their future.

You leave me worried. We never talk about life outside of school and its given me no idea about what is going to happen. I want to become a surgeon but the teachers only give us required lessons. I need to know what may happen and I need to be prepared. But you do nothing. I really do want to be confident but I have no base for that reason. You didn't even explain high school! I need to know what I'm getting into for me to be successful. Its like I have a blindfold on while walking. Not very comforting, eh?

I need this school to make a better music program. Instead of classical and jazz. If you guys taught us how to play drums and hard-core instruments, that would really help for my career.

You need to get more electives so that more kids can get a better idea of what they want do after high school. Like, get a class to help us learn to fix a sink or build a house. And, in high school you need to offer more foreign languages, besides Spanish. Or, you can also set up internships. Let the kids teach your class, make it fun, teach us what we will actually use.

I would like to have a more diverse selection of activities so that we may be able to explore different options of what we'd like to do after we graduate.

This school makes a lot of effort but to some kids it isn't enough to motivate them to be successful or make them want to come to school. More details need to be given about what it will take for students to achieve their goals. The details of college courses and expenses should be talked about more. Even students who aren't very social need to feel more comfortable asking questions and having conversations with teachers. Teachers should make more of an effort explaining lessons, even when no one asks flat out. More rewards should be given to students that try hard, and help should be given to students who need it. Explain to students why the rules are important, not just what the rules are. Thank you for my education.

I feel as though you can help me when I want to be an 8th grade math teacher. I feel that you can support me by helping me learn how to be a teacher. Math is an important part of my life and without Ms. Sanchez, I don't think I could.

I need you guys to offer ore physical education classes. Like more intense and physical PE classes.

I would like it if the teachers at our school would be more enthusiastic about what we learn. I also believe they need to take more time to teach us.

I think that we should have more individualized classes. We should pick a career that we think we might want to do and then learn the things that apply to that specific career. Because then if we decide that we don't really want that career, we will already know, instead of trying it as adults and then having to decide to try something else. We should also have classes that talk about colleges and scholarships and how career options have an impact on what colleges you should go to. Instead of having things that we a required to know even though they won't help us later in life.

Too much homework.

If the teachers know what we want to do, then they can tell us how that class will help us in our job. Then, maybe they can be nicer and not so angry all the time. And if I have a bad grade, give me more, harder work so I can fail the class even more.

This school is very poor. We should have more elective options based on what the students want. I like how there is drama now, thanks to Mr. White but I need more because I'm not exactly sure what I want to do yet, so I can try things. I kind-of want to be a pilot, actor, engineer, mechanic, salesman but I just don't know! I just need help finding out what I really want to be. Something that pays good too, like something that can make a little more than my father makes so that I am successful.

What I need to be successful is for you to be more active on how we live and lives in the future. I would also like someone to work with somebody.

I would appreciate if you could give us an opportunity to get to talk to people about our future. Then we could learn about financial aid and scholarships.

I see our middle school as a guideline to high school/college. I see our school as a boring school. There's no sports that are fun with boys and girls. I see that our middle school is poor but I want more sports and more education for the 8th grade.

You're all pathetic, worthless, dirty rotten bastards who don't give a damn about anything besides your paychecks. You should never have been born. I wish you would all die.

I really do not like this school. I don't like a lot of things about it. There's nothing. It needs A LOT of improvements. Such as, teachers need to stop picking favorites. The school needs to burn down to the ground.