



Lippman Day School Parent Focus Groups Summary Report July 9, 2009

Background: Two focus groups with parents of previous or current Lippman Day School (LDS) students were held on July 7 and July 8 at the Northwest Family Recreation Center in Akron. Parents were randomly selected and invited to attend from the LDS database. A total of 56 parents were invited from a database of 109 parents. A total of 12 parents participated in the focus groups. Co-facilitators were Katie Wells Goodwin and Barb Greene, co-facilitators of the LDS transition process; and Jennifer Bucheit, an environmental educator at Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center.

Questions Addressed by Participants:

1. What qualities do you think define a successful elementary or middle school?
2. What skills will our students of today need to be successful in their futures?
3. Why did you choose to have your child (children) attend Lippman Day School?
4. Lippman Day School officials are redesigning the school to prepare students to successfully navigate in a world with many cultures, traditions and beliefs. How would you go about doing that? What do you like about this idea? What concerns do you have about this idea?
5. Do you think it's possible to attract and maintain a core base of students interested in Judaic studies and Hebrew language classes within a school with a broader academic focus and more diverse (Jewish and secular) student body? What do think are some of the advantages of this structure? What do you think are some of the disadvantages of this structure?
6. What features of Lippman Day School do you think should be retained or continued within the redesigned school? What features do you think should be added?
7. How would you describe or market a school that that will embrace a multicultural curriculum and appeal to a broader student population?
8. There are a lot of schools in Summit County. How can Lippman Day School distinguish itself from all of the others?
9. What suggestions do you have for the future name of the school that conveys its future intent?

Key recommended features/outcomes of Lippman Day School with general agreement among focus group participants:

- JCC Pre-K program and Lippman all day kindergarten were strong factors in parents' choice of LDS. The proximity of the programs to LDS, as well as the culture and quality of the programs, made the choice of LDS an easy one for parents.
- The quality of the curriculum, the dedication and skills of the teachers, and the reputation of LDS were factors in selecting LDS or keeping their children in the school.
- A welcoming, inclusive school culture that embraces and demonstrates universal Judaic values (e.g. respect) and develops the self-esteem and individuality of each student is sought by parents.
- Parents value that spirituality is nourished and developed at LDS.
- A small teacher-to-student ratio is valued, but there must also be opportunities for social interaction among students.
- Parents feel that its possible to cover a broader curriculum inclusive of Judaic studies and Hebrew language. The key will be how the curriculum and student choices will be structured.

Key skills, knowledge and competencies to be developed within students: arts and sciences, reading comprehension, problem-solving and critical thinking skills, communication (presentation, interpersonal, writing) skills, technology skills, appreciation for diverse cultures and views, and second language skills were cited to be essential outcomes of an LDS education.

Key components of LDS to retain in the future: core curriculum, performing and visual arts enrichment, music, Hebrew play, Judaic studies and Hebrew language, inquiry-based learning opportunities, community service opportunities and knowledgeable, passionate teaching staff. Parents suggested that LDS retain its own values and culture, but educate about other cultures and their values

Key components to add: after-school sports and enrichment activities (e.g. soccer team, flag corps), curricular depth (e.g. second language, comparative religions), an integrated approach to teaching about and putting values into practice (e.g. study of other cultures: use community resources and weave throughout academic disciplines; linguist in-residence). Parents noted that after-school activities and/or an after-school program would alleviate child care concerns. They would like opportunities to participate with their children in some enrichment activities. They also want the school to develop and communicate the learning standards by grade, as well as for the school to determine academic assessment method(s) that are comparable to other state and national assessments. Finally, it was suggested that there be guidance and resources to support student career awareness.

Marketing/marketing messages: marketing is a critically needed resource to promote the current strengths of Lippman Day School, to determine how the future LDS will be positioned in Summit County, and to communicate the key distinctions of the school to current and prospective parents. Suggested marketing messages: highlight alumni success (academic, careers, leadership and service), preschool and all-day kindergarten, small teacher-to-student ratio, universal values of school; strength of curriculum and building of independent and critical thinking skills, quality of facilities (e.g. science lab, pool), holistic development of child, interface with the community

Suggested names for the future school: Lippman Community Academy (reflects inclusion, reinforces academic focus), Lippman International School/Academy (reinforces global focus), Lippman Jewish Day School (there is still support by some to be overt about the Jewish foundation of the school).

Other: there is resistance to the term multicultural; there may be a need to restructure holiday schedule.