



## SHAKER HEIGHTS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

*Imagine Shaker...*

*Together We Achieve*

### SUMMARY REPORT ON APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORT

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## Overview

During the 2009-2010 academic semester, the Shaker Schools District undertook an effort to engage community members representing a variety of stakeholder interests (resident, parent, student, teacher, administrator, staff, etc.) in imagining the ideal future for Shaker Schools. The District employed a process called Appreciative Inquiry for this community engagement activity. This effort aimed to provide useful input to the creation of a formal District Strategic Plan to be completed in 2010.

Briefly, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a strength-based approach to institutional development and transformation. It begins with an collaborative examination of a system's greatest strengths and "life-giving" properties [Discovery], in order to then imagine collectively new and bold possibilities [Dream], so that variety of stakeholders may then co-create their shared futures by designing actions to reach the most preferred or attractive future images [Design], thereby fostering self-organizing to implement new change initiatives and on-going learning [Destiny].

The proposed plan ( ) was to train a cadre of Shaker citizens to conduct the Discovery phase using AI questions and to engage as many District stakeholders as feasible in fall semester, do an initial summary of the data collected so that a Design Team of 20-40 could then convene in a workshop format to dive deeper into the data, create aspirations statements in key thematic areas and then to decide on whether or not to recommend to the District that an AI Summit method be used to convene larger groups of stakeholders to address key strategic areas (aspirations) in intensive "summits" that take a stakeholder group of any size through all the "4-D" stages described above. The expectation was that this group could decide to recommend several mini-summit activities around more narrow strategic opportunities, one large summit to actually frame the blueprint of the strategic plan, or no further

actions using the AI method. This potential action phase (Design & Destiny) would constitute a Phase Two of the AI work in the District if so decided.

The following outlines the actions taken to date:

#### Preparation Phase:

On July 16, 2009 members of the then strategic planning steering group met to be briefed on the AI process and proposed plan, discuss expectations and set dates for feedback of initial set of interviews (see Design Team Interview – Appendix A ). These interviews were with approximately 20 members of this group, including 2 Board members and the Superintendent. An initial draft of core AI questions was used for the protocol in order to be able to discuss afterwards whether or not to use similar questions in the Discovery Protocol.

On September 3, 2009 this group convened as the “Design Team” to hear and discuss the key themes arising from the preliminary set of 20 AI interviews (see Design Team Feedback – ppt file ). Upon reviewing key success factors and images for a preferred future for Shaker Schools from the interviews, they agreed on an Affirmative Topic for the community based AI interviews: *IMAGINE SHAKER: TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE*. They provided input on a proposed protocol to be used with community stakeholders, generated a list of stakeholders to be involved, and discussed strategies to connect with various stakeholder groups. Finally, they debated and recommended to include a more detailed set of demographic questions in the protocol so that if they wanted to at a future date, the District could go back and sort information by race, living area, specific stakeholder group, etc.

#### Discovery Phase:

Community volunteers were solicited to attend one of two, two-hour training sessions to prepare them to conduct AI Interviews with various District stakeholders. These trainings were held on the evenings of September 14 and 24 2009 in the High School Cafeteria. An additional training session was designed (by Colleen Longo, Boulevard School Principal) specifically to recruit and assist High School Seniors to participate in the project as interviewers. Overall, some 200 Shaker residents were trained and agreed to go out and interview more stakeholders over the next four months. (Interviewer Training Slides are attached in a ppt. file.) Guidelines for interviewers are attached in Appendix B and the final AI protocol they used is attached in Appendix C. Summary forms (Appendix D) from each interview were submitted to the Boulevard School Principal’s office where they were logged in and then sent to Case Western Reserve University for entry and analysis.

Beginning in November, 2009, a team of faculty and doctoral students in the Department of Organizational Behavior, Case Western Reserve University began to record data from the interviews in order to create an initial set of themes for the planned Design Team feedback workshop. The data entry lasted through February 15 when the last interview forms were retrieved.

Data entry and analysis began with sampling of 100 out of the initial 240 interview summaries turned in. Six individuals each read 12-15 interviews and summarized initial themes for each question. Subgroups then worked to define and agree on specific sub-themes for each question. This level of

themes represented “codes” for the mass data entry (see Appendix E). A Google Document spreadsheet was created for mass data entry and allows for overall summary displays. Over 900 interview summaries were entered.

On March 9, 2010 a group Board members, administrative staff and the Superintendent met to receive feedback on initial themes from the Discovery in preparation for a two hour community feedback session on March 15. This meeting represented a major shift in the proposed plan. The original “design team” had been disbanded and the request from the District was to have a general community meeting to feedback the data.

On March 15, 2010 approximately 100 community members (mostly interviewers in the Discovery process) convened in the High School cafeteria to receive a summary of the key themes from the Discovery interviews.

#### Dream Phase:

The summaries from the Discovery Interviews were intended to be the catalyst for a full-day Design Team workshop to dive deeply into thematic areas with original samples of interview summaries to then imagine together compelling images of the future District, to generate actionable ideas to reach the most attractive images, and then recommend to the Board key aspiration statements for the District based on the Discovery Interviews and whether or not to use the AI Summit Method to address some, all or none of those aspirations. This workshop to move the process from Discovery to Dream did not occur, given the disbanding of the Design Team and new request to have a community feedback session

#### Design and Destiny Phases:

These phases in the AI process were considered Phase Two of the overall project and subject to the decision of the District based on the recommendations coming out of the Design Team Workshop. In lieu of that (workshop did not happen) this report serves to summarize findings and themes from the Discovery Phase and to recommend future steps using the AI process if the District so chooses.

## **Findings from the Discovery Interviews**

### Who was interviewed?

- **919** interview summary forms were logged in to the data base
  
- Of this total:     **649** (70.5%) were **white/caucasian**  
                          **218** (23.5%) were **black/African American**  
                          **36** (4%) were **Asian, Latino or Multi-racial.**  
                          **16** (2%) **not reporting**

- **740 (80%)** were **Shaker Residents**

- **Residential Distribution:**

- Boulevard	198	(22%)
- Lomond	144	(15%)
- Onaway	145	(16%)
- Mercer	146	(16%)
- Fernway	114	(12%)
- NA/Missing	172	(19%)

- **Working in Shaker: 365 (40%)**

- Faculty	166
- Staff	86
- Other	113

- 

- **Age Distribution:**

Elementary School	25
Middle School	4
High School	106
19-29	43
30-39	125
40-49	235
50-65	281
66-	75

- **Parent?**      Yes (640)      No (274)

If Parent:

Children currently in Shaker Schools	343
Children not yet of School age	48
Children in Schools outside Shaker	91
Children Graduated from Shaker Schools	262
I attended Shaker Schools	79

- **Reason for Being in Shaker:**

- I live in Shaker so that my children can attend Shaker Schools	409
- My children attend Shaker Schools because I live in Shaker	89
- I live in Shaker but my children do not attend Shaker Schools	31

### Connecting to the Positive Core:

The key assumption underlying the AI process is that in order to gain collective agreement to bold and attractive possibilities, an organization or system first needs to reconnect with its greatest strengths, best practices, live giving properties; the things that help it be at its best thus far. In the Imagine Shaker discovery interviews the following questions were intended to surface these core strengths:

<b>Attractors to Shaker:</b>	Diversity	364
	Positive Sense of Community	291
	Reputation of Schools	274
	Quality/Pride in Schools	275
	Beauty	179
	Proximity	135
	Housing	113

The above factors explained 78% of the total responses to this question. Other categories included city services, friendship, recreational activities, and President Obama's visit, in that order.

### **Success Factors for Excellent Schools** (based on respondent's best past experience(s):

High Quality Teachers	304	Outstanding teachers who prepare students for the next grade and care about the students.
High Quality Curriculum	288	Excellent academic programs, strong advanced-level classes, breadth and variety of curriculum.
Inclusive Education	207	There is an appreciation for different learning styles, democratic pedagogy and commitment to teach all students.
Extra-curricular Programs	158	A lot of extra-curricular programs like music, sports and appreciation of the arts.
Community Involvement	143	The community is supportive and support the administration and teachers.
High Quality Students	141	Students are engaged hard-working and motivated. They achieve high test scores and have a thirst for knowledge.
Parental Involvement	141	Active parent involvement in child's education and relationships with teachers and the schools.

The above categories account for 72% of the total responses. Other categories included education for life skills, up to date facilities and technology, effective leadership, development standards for teachers, empowered teachers, financial resources and national awards, in that order.

**Most Compelling Story** to the Interviewee:

Each interviewer was asked at the end of the interview to single out the most compelling, passionate, or emotionally charged story told by the interviewee. Key themes in this question typically suggest what strongly attracts people to the topic of the interview or subject at hand.

**Individualized Attention to Learning** 165

Going above and beyond to meet the individual needs of students: “music teacher stayed after school to make sure she got it”; “daughter in poor health ...they anticipated our needs and made everything feel normal for her”; “accommodation made discretely”; “teachers should be continually trained to recognize learning style differences”

**Community Building Events** 152

School events that bring the community together – across grade levels and/or attract non-parents: “International night celebration...the whole school would gather and the children would perform native songs, dances and poetry dressed in costume. ...the whole event was a model for people accepting other people for what they were. What a community building event!”; “hockey program ....brought together broad range of people in community”; “senior project night at the high school blew me away... community see quality of our kids and school system”

**Reputation** 130

Pride in public recognition of quality of Shaker Schools: “we were showcasing what we do in Shaker to a statewide, national, & international audience”; “Shaker is known all over US & even in other parts of the world for its excellent schools”; “compared Lakewood to Shaker frequently & move here for the schools”

**Diversity** 128

Attracted to Shaker because of diversity

**Vibrant Neighborhood Life** 112

Crisis Support – community reaches out to those in need (ex. “a student in her class died in a house fire...the community looked out for the student’s classmates and friends”; “amazing community support that helped her family when she was very ill”); Enriching Social Experience – strong personal relationships (ex. “staying in Shaker b/c of attachment to people”; neighbors home during the day”; “walking kids to school”); “communication between police and children”); Ethic of Responsibility for Quality – people work hard to keep the community beautiful (ex. “physically appealing area...shows effort of community)

**Diverse Curriculum** 80

Stories include reference to elements of the curriculum (ex. field trips, recess, wide range of classes, community project)

**Strong Parental Involvement** 77

Parent assistance in schools (ex. “enthusiasm and desire to be involved was impressive.”); Strong parent-teacher connections (ex. “access to teachers”)

The above categories account for 72% of the total responses. Other categories included continuous improvement, music programs, in that order.

Imagining the Preferred Future:

The “dream” question in the AI interview asked people to: “Imagine for a minute that it is 2015. You are still living or working in Shaker and our Schools have become truly “world class.” The national press and professional educators are benchmarking our school district for the amazing transformation it has achieved since the recessionary times in 2009. All Shaker residents are benefitting from the quality programming at our schools. The entire community is actively linked to our educational and developmental agendas. We attract the best teachers and administrators and there is a renewed trend of residents moving in to Shaker because of the school system. *Together We Have Achieved!*”

Key images:	Individualized/Quality Learning Experiences	337
	K-level enter into equal environment; smaller classes; more field trips, flexibility to address different learning styles and needs; curriculum that encompasses vocational and college prep; attend more to the ‘middle’ students; keep reading requirements; help students become better decision makers; more volunteering activities; focus on improving WO and MS	
	No Achievement Gap	286
	All Students achieving; No or less Gap; More students in high-level classes, regardless of background; more programs for challenged students; college acceptances and admissions up overall	
	High Community Involvement	202
	More between school and non-student parents & families; community experts/leaders in classrooms; community involved in theatre, arts, volunteerism; more speakers, internships and role models; people without kids also attend events	
	High Quality Teaching	165
	More reviews/ tenure re-evaluations; better teachers; more access to teachers	
	Current and Accessible Technology	123
	In all classrooms; seamless in instruction and communication; infused in daily lessons; more accessible to entire community	
	Expanded/new Facilities	104
	Bigger schools, more playgrounds; summer school for K-12; Year-round school; before and after school programming; new HS Bldgs; more and current books; more lab space for exploration; more theatre arts; better sports facilities	
	Global/multi-cultural Focus	98
	International families attracted to SH for schools; interact with students in different countries; all SH students are bi-lingual; be a successful IB School; 21 <sup>st</sup> century learning skills	

The above categories account for 77% of the total responses. Other categories included safe and peaceful schools, effective leadership, new leadership, in that order. and other (un-coded).

Specific WOW Factors in the Ideal Future:

Respondents were asked, “Standing in your ideal image of 2015, what are 1-2 specific things that would make people say, “WOW” about the Shaker Schools?”

Academic Achievement	362
Excellent state report card, high rankings, all students (rich or poor) achieving, high test scores, high GPA, no achievement gap, more national merit scholars, students reflect excellent school reputation.	
Variety of Learning Opportunities	226
Students showcasing talents across all departments, lots of opportunities (e.g., band, theater, dance, choir, other extra-curricular activities), learning outside of school (e.g., internships or volunteering opportunities)	

<b>Community Involvement</b>	<b>127</b>
More school system involvement with the community, more connection between businesses and schools, ability of parents to reach non-parent community members	
<b>Supportive Environment</b>	<b>125</b>
Year-round schooling, more basic resources, a pool, better food, library open for longer hours, quiet in public spaces, better organizational structure, safer schools, cleaner schools	
<b>Accountable Teachers &amp; Administration</b>	<b>91</b>
Real follow-up, consistent implementations across the school district, more use of “progress books,” more accountability for admin and teachers	
<b>Diversity</b>	<b>91</b>
Balance diversity, celebrate diversity	
<b>High Graduation/Placement Rates</b>	<b>90</b>
High percentage (e.g., 90% to 100%) graduation rate, high college enrollment rate, acceptance into top colleges by more students, students go anywhere in the world to college, more college scholarships, more students get advanced degrees	

The above categories account for 72% of the total responses. Other categories included advanced courses, technology, global awareness, alumni involvement, in that order.

### Comments on Strategic Framework Pillars

Respondents were asked to comment on two of six strategic objectives from the current strategic planning framework being used by the District. Each was given the list of six – Community Involvement, Parent Involvement, Technology, Curriculum & Instruction, Climate and Leadership – and then asked to choose two of the six they would most like to comment on. The questions were then focused first on what was currently going well in that area and then on what they thought could/should be improved.

#### **Community Involvement**

<b>Going Well:</b>	<b>Community Events</b>	<b>58</b>
	Events that attract the community: “many people go to see football games and band”; “tour your schools day”; “R&W Gala”	
	<b>Volunteerism</b>	<b>24</b>
	Opportunities exist for community volunteers; Community members volunteer: “community involved but drop the politics which are involved”	
<b>Change:</b>	<b>Financial Support</b>	<b>14</b>
	History of passing levies and providing necessary financial support despite growing taxation <b>(73% of total responses)</b>	
	<b>Communicate Broadly</b>	<b>61</b>
	Suggestion to increase the effectiveness and breadth of communication: “communication to the community at large”; “establish face to face meetings with small groups in the community”; “allow for conversation between parents and school NOT during the workday”	
	<b>Engage Parents</b>	<b>48</b>
		Suggestion to specifically engage those who do not have school-aged children: “engage empty-

nesters”; “provide volunteer opportunities for people other than parents”; “tap into retirees”

**Partnerships 27**

References engaging community business & work opportunities: “implement professional partners, apprentice programs”; “more work opportunities needed”; “make use of great community resources – universities, hospitals, businesses”

(65% of total responses)

**Climate**

**Going Well:**

**Safety in Schools 132**

My child feels safe at school; visible and effective security in the buildings

**Learning Experience 64**

Variety of modes of learning; variety of opportunities for students; decrease class size

**Caring Teachers 49**

Teachers go out of their way; make extra effort to help each child learn; empowered teachers can be creative

**Attractive Facilities 26**

Well maintained buildings; attractive classrooms

(88% of total responses)

**Change:**

**Improve Student Behavior 124**

Set clear expectations; less verbal abuse and disrespect for each other; stronger disciplinary measures; disruptions in non-AP classes hold everyone back; enforce dress code; better manage cell phone use

**Safe and Secure Environment 65**

Address bullying

**Consistency across Schools 55**

**Parental Involvement 37**

Hire community worker to help parents understand shaker standards; more direct meetings with Shaker citizens; get parents on same page as teachers

**Better Prep for Higher Level Courses 23**

Begin in lower grades and ready minority students for AP Courses; make PreK or head start the norm for all entering students

(77% of total responses)

**Technology**

**Going Well:**

**Technology Resources 169**

Positive lab, software, and computer availability;

**Progress book 27**

Various mentions of Progress Book use and benefit;

**Computer Maintenance** 10  
 Computers are serviced in timely manner;  
 (95 of total responses)

**Change:** **Classroom Technology Use** 129  
 Smartboards; stay current with tech and application to education; teacher access to, training to use, and/or expectation to use, technology solutions; wi-fi

**Training** 82  
 Tech Training & professional development; for students and staff

**Laptops for all kids** 62  
 Mentions of providing students with individual laptops  
 (87% of total responses)

**Leadership**

**Going Well:** **Principal and Teacher Leadership** 139  
 Positive presence felt in schools; empowered to solve problems; working well together

**Student Opportunities** 31  
 Leadership opportunities for students through clubs & organizations

**Resources** 24  
 Support staff available for teachers; tutoring programs for students; classroom resources for teachers

**Student Academic Achievement** 16  
 Literacy promoted and emphasized; student achievements promoted by leadership figures  
 (90% of total responses)

**Change:** **Negative about Leadership** 73  
 Negative view of Principal performance; accountability issues; negative view of superintendent; desire for change in superintendent;

**Communication** 72  
 Open channels of communication between leadership, staff, and community; increase direct communication between schools and parents; communicate with community about issues and how being addressed; elicit feedback and ideas from community

**Teacher Development** 57

Mentoring/Leadership programs for teachers; empowerment of teachers; teacher administrative advancement opportunities; give patience and supportive suggestions to staff; raise hiring standards and expectations.

**Know the Students 43**

Personal relationships with students to know and understand them; understanding as prevention against “falling through the cracks”

**School-Community Connection 39**

Connect community professionals with schools; inform parents/students about community resources; help students connect learning with community

(79% of total responses)

**Curriculum & Instruction**

**Going Well: Diversity of Educations 188**

High quality standards-based instruction, teacher autonomy to use “unorthodox” methods, flexibility in some curriculum, Wide range of classes, Numerous advanced placement classes (opportunities to step down if having difficulty), adopts to current reality, foreign language doing well and need more

**Rigor & Standards 135**

Cohesion and knowledge transfer from grade to grade, follow-up to ensure students are learning, early access to technology, great “pull-out” enrichment opportunities, remedial classes, moving toward adopting IB curriculum, Reading tier 1 and tier 2, grades stressed

(94% of total responses)

**Change: Rigor & Options 177**

AP classes: more classes and more variety, foreign languages, math interventions, field trips, more theater and the arts, extra period for a course directed by students

**Curricular Alignment 127**

Number of initiatives, updating content, teacher meetings and team teaching, consistency between grades and buildings and the district, elementary instruction prepares students for higher grades, staff development and training

**Individualized Learning Plans 93**

Special needs students, transfer students, remedial, “enrichment pull-outs,” matching teacher styles with learning styles

(86% of total responses)

**Parent Involvement**

**Going Well: PTO 89**

active; many opportunities

**Communications 72**

Good; recognize student progress; asks for feedback; announces opportunities

**Overall Good 57**

good to very good; as is

**Opportunities** 38  
 Lots; Open Houses, conferences, events, teacher conferences

**Accessible** 20  
 Teachers and Administrators are accessible, exp. via email  
 (93% of total responses)

**Change:**

**Creative Outreach** 134  
 home visits; evening conferences; etc. to better connect with parents who currently do not support their kids as well; Shaker Rec Center;

**Communications** 60  
 Leverage technology better; use email more; use website more

**Proactive Teachers** 29  
 communicate through variety of mediums earlier about potential problems, before parent complains

**Consistency** 28  
 keep inviting, asking to attend; don't give up

**Family-focus** 28  
 create more family programs to attract parents; Family fun Night; etc...

**AA Families** 26  
 create special outreach efforts to these families

**New Families** 22  
 new programs to guide new families re. resources available in schools/community

**Community Leaders** 16  
 Invite more to mentor, speak in classes, etc.

**Best Practices** 14  
 Spread programs that work (eg Lomond and Mercer) to other schools;  
 (83% of total responses)

Overall, Most Valued or Important Issues of Opportunities

Interviewers we asked on the summary form to indicate in their words, or through quotes, what they felt was most important to the respondent in the entire interview:

**Quality of Education** 321  
 Schools provide world class education, don't dumb it down, a well rounded education, more college prep courses, preparing student for life, having a school system that goes beyond its students, students reflect good morals and values

**Diversity** 150  
 Diversity of all kinds and a community to support it, maintaining the diversity of the school community, diversity and integrity of students, celebrating diversity

**Learning Equality** 147  
 Addressing the learning needs of the "middle" student, offering educational opportunities to the disenfranchised, programs for struggling students, all children should be given equal opportunities, having a variety of way to help students learn

**Community Involvement** 124  
 Involving the community with the school system more, the school benefitting the community (and vice versa), better school relationships with businesses, more community partnerships, more community involvement with kids education

Achievement & Ach. Gap	110	Narrow the achievement gap, close the achievement gap, more student achievement
Teacher Standards	78	Teachers have higher standards, more support for teachers, teachers more responsive to student needs, more teachers with advanced degrees, more teacher dedication
Pride in School & Community	77	School pride, recognizing where Shaker schools has come from, recognizing the Shaker tradition
Parental Involvement	67	More parental involvement, more family involvement
Extracurricular Offerings	58	More clubs and extracurricular activities, better sports teams, more of “the arts”
(83% of total responses)		

### Quotable Quotes

Appendix F displays notable quotes taken from the first 100 interviews used to develop the coding scheme. (All entries of quotes noted on the summary forms can be accessed in the main google document spreadsheet for further reference.)

### **Summary Reflections**

These comments reflect the opinion of the author only. They are not meant to represent a scientific or statistical implications of the data reported above.

*The School District provides a sense of community for families.*

Shaker Schools and the community of Shaker are deeply intertwined. Whether people came to Shaker for the Schools or for other community features, the schools provide experiential verification of the appreciation for diversity, valuing of education, and vibrant neighborhoods that remain attractors to Shaker residents. People experience their pride, commitment, and attachment to Shaker through the schools, as much as though anything else.

*While the meaning of diversity is changing, the valuing of it remains a strong attractor*

The importance or valuing of “diversity” appears throughout the voices raised in this effort. For the older generations, it is the racial-based notion of diversity that was an attractor and a source of pride in how it was addressed and enhanced in the 60’s-80’s. Being in a classroom that had a multi-racial mix and learning that everyone is different with unique skills and attributes was a constant theme in the strengths/life-giving factors. To the newer generations, “diversity” has a different meaning, yet remains a strong attractor in terms of wanting to live in a community and attend schools with a diverse population that represents the world that our children will be entering as adults. This version of diversity pertains more to differences shaped by social-economic status, and while perhaps correlated to race origins, it manifests in wider differences in how children are prepared and supported to attend school.

A tension therefore emerges between those who feel Shaker has dealt healthily with racial

differences and those who feel the “new diversity” has yet to be really confronted and addressed. What connects the two camps is the desire and attraction to live, struggle and succeed in a community that values and “lives in” diversity of all kinds, and creates educational opportunities for all student to achieve.

*Excellent education At every level, For every level*

Quality of education through high standards for teachers, students and staff is a common priority and challenge for almost everyone. However, the data clearly shows different language being used of express the outcomes of such expectations. Higher achievement, placements, AP offerings, and better preparation for AP offerings capture the “high achievement” expressions. The other language is individualized learning, adapting to individual (or group, as in AA males) learning styles, educating for life skills, better preparation of students entering school, etc. Collectively, there is a simultaneous call to continue serving and supporting the high achievement students in the traditional college placement trajectory and a call to provide quality learning and preparation for any shaker student to succeed in life, even without pursuing higher level education; no achievement gap.

There are many voices in the data set that suggest Shaker is “riding on its laurels” in terms of believing that quality education exists for all student, at all levels. In particular, the middle school and grade 5-6 school (MS and WO) are mentioned as needing specific attention in terms of teacher quality, administration, student behavior and academic standards.

The opportunity is to create a “both and” solution; high achievement and achievement for all, at every level of the District.

*Shifting from dialogues for understanding and inclusion to conversations for action*

Shaker has consistently created forums and spaces for conversations about differences in order to better understand them and to foster a climate of inclusion where everyone has voice. Indeed, this reflects the high segment of Shaker residents who are well educated or who are attracted to a community that is truly diverse. Thus in this study the question has repeatedly been raised about further data analyses regarding what different stakeholder groups has to say, so as to better understand where the differences are. While this can unquestionably add depth to meaning and will surface more difference, it also hinders any real attempt to act as a whole. The topic of the appreciative inquiry in this effort was phrased as “Together We Achieve.” The norm observed is more like, “together we will discuss and clarify differences” as if the scientific model will then apply: thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

Another approach, represented by the theoretical foundation of the AI method is an analogical dialogue where stakeholders seek to find and understand their common strengths, connections in beliefs, shared interests, common wishes and use these connections to build or co-create change initiatives. This was the rationale for proposing that a design team spend an entire day swimming in the data represented in this report and in the related data base to collectively find the common ideas for action that had the most appeal and attraction to the most stakeholders. *One change for the District based on this report could be to continue the engagement of stakeholders to find shared images and*

*action ideas and to do so in such a way that they wish to work together, across the differences, for a common goal or dream.*

### *Leadership Transition: Continuity and Change*

Leadership at the High School and Elementary School levels received the most positive comments. Leadership at middle and 5-6 schools was seen as part of a larger problem with that level of the District system. It was also clear that some expressed the wish for changes at the Superintendent/Board level, while others simply worried about the aging leadership at that level and were in question about how natural transitions will happen over the next few years. Rather than focus on the differences between who is for or against current executive leadership, the message here may well be that people wish for continuity and change together. They want to know that leadership is being developed/mentored with an appreciation for who and what Shaker is, and that the eventual new leadership will be open to creative experimentation and innovation to address the knotty challenges and opportunities the District faces.

This is not to suggest that the current executive leadership is not open to creativity and innovation. One can observe throughout the data summary that communication about what the District is doing, why, and how can always be improved. While it is likely frustrating to current administration that their effort to communicate may not be appreciated as much as they would hope, there is a consistent call for more, and more. People (stakeholders) cannot be responsible without information. People with information cannot help but be responsible.

### **Actionable Ideas**

- In the areas of community involvement, parent involvement and climate, use the AI Summit method to convene larger groups of stakeholders to create real change initiatives. Build on the energy of those engaged so far and turn them loose on creative projects to address at least these three strategic pillars (while other systemic or policy changes may be going on). The community is calling for actions and many are ready to get involved or willing to try new ways to get others involved.

- Find highly visible and collaborative ways to address the 5-6 and middle schools. Maybe they need their own "Imagine" project. The move from elementary to these schools appears to be rocky and thus a cause of children being taken out of the system.

- Whoever moves ahead with strategic action, please take the time to actually read the Quotable Quotes in the data set. They convey the common interests, strengths and differences better than any sorting of groups.

- Create and announce a Succession Policy (guidelines) or plan to help the community address its anxiety over who will be in charge over the next ten years, will they represent our diversity, and will they invite and support creative innovation? While some of the respondents clearly wish for a personnel change at the top, most appear simply to be concerned that there will be a major disruption. A plan or set of guidelines can help foster a sense of continuity, while changing.

- Whatever task forces, committees or even summit groups may be formed as the strategic planning moves ahead, invite them to read the data entries related to their topic focus directly. It is impossible to capture or honor the ideas, suggestions, and observations of over 900 people in abstract summary form. When groups read and make sense together of their and their peers' ideas, they can connect in such a way that they are propelled to want to work together on some collaborative action. This is the cooperative capacity that Shaker can unleash, having taken this first large step in community engagement.

## APPENDIX A

### DESIGN TEAM AI PROTOCOL

#### Shaker Schools Appreciative Inquiry Project

##### Design Team Interview Protocol

###### Introduction of the Interviewer and the process....

Students might need to do a quick overview of AI and its intentional focus on the positive.

1. Collect general Interviewee info:  
Name, role/relationship with the Shaker School District, how long in relationship.... how long in this role.... other roles....
2. [If you grew up in Shaker] Think back over your life in Shaker to a time when you felt particularly excited or proud to live in this community – a time you recall feeling like this was a great community to be a part of. Please describe that time or situation where you felt particularly attracted to shaker Heights.

Now, today, what still attracts you most to Shaker Heights; what still makes you feel like this is a great place to be living in?

[If you moved into Shaker] think back to the time you decided to move into Shaker Heights. Tell a story about that decision; what attracted you, what factors lead to your deciding to live in this community?

Now, today, what still attracts you most to Shaker Heights: what still makes you feel like this is a great place to be living in?

3. Vibrant communities typically have high quality schools that provide clear contributions to the life and feel of the community. Please reflect back to a time when you felt that the Shaker Heights School District or school(s) within the District [or schools in another community you have lived in] made a positive difference ... for children, for families, or for neighborhoods in the community. Tell me about it.
  - a. When this occurred, were you a student, a parent, staff, other...
  - b. What makes this stand out in your mind?
  - c. Given the story above and others like it that you may have experienced, what do you consider to be the three most valuable characteristics present in any excellent or world-class school district anywhere?
  
4. Which of the following statements best applies to you? Probe for details.
  - a. I live in Shaker Heights so that my children can attend Shaker Schools.
  - b. My children attend Shaker Schools because I live Shaker.
  - c. I live in Shaker but my children do not attend Shaker Schools.
  
5. Image for a minute that it is 2014 – five years from now. You are still a Shaker resident and the shaker Schools have become truly “world class.” The national press and professional educators are benchmarking our school district for the amazing transformation it has achieved since the recessionary times in 2009. All shaker residents are benefitting from the quality programming at our schools. The entire community is actively linked to our educational and developmental agendas. We attract the best teachers and administrators and there is a renewed trend of residents moving in to Shaker because of the school system. What do you see going on? Who is doing what? What has changed so much since 2009? What challenges did we over come? What innovations have occurred? Please share the images you see in this 2014 picture.
 

Probes:

  - what new initiatives were launched?
  - how did we overcome our greatest challenges?
  - in what new ways have the Schools specifically engaged the entire Shaker Community
  
6. Given your images of 2014:
  - What are one or two specific individual or collective contributions that citizens (or others) can make to support the legacy of the Shaker Heights Schools and community?

- What do you want the world to know and think about the Shaker Schools and the Shaker Community?

7. What other comments would you like to add?

**APPENDIX B  
IMAGINE SHAKER INTERVIEWER GUIDE**



## SHAKER HEIGHTS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Imagine Shaker...

Together We Achieve

### **Appreciative Inquiry Interviewer Guide**

Welcome to the IMAGINE SHAKER initiative. We are deeply grateful that you have chosen to take a central and active role in mobilizing our community voices to help shape the future of our schools and their positive impact on our students, families, neighborhoods and the entire Shaker community.

Over the next few months, you and a cadre of other volunteers will surface the variety of voices and perspectives in Shaker to help determine the current strengths in our schools to be nurtured and leveraged further, as well as creative and bold suggestions for how to improve our schools to enable all of us to Achieve Together. This strength-based approach to strategic planning and system development promises to be exciting and contagious. Remember that the first questions we ask are fateful; these initial interviews will set the tone and direction for ultimate strategic priorities and action plans to emerge in the Spring. We hope you enjoy surfacing stories of Shaker Schools at their best and the bold and creative future images and innovations that can make our schools and community all that we wish for.

This Interviewer Guide includes a sample opening statement to make when beginning your interviews and Tips for conducting Appreciative Inquiry interviews.

In your interviewer Training, you will also receive the Imagine Shaker Interview Protocol (interview questions) and Imagine Shaker Summary Forms. After interviews are completed, you will need to submit

your Summary Forms in hard copy to The Administration Building in envelopes provided to you. Specific instructions will be covered during the training session.

Sincerely,

Ron Fry, Ph.D., Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University

Charlyse Pratt, Ph.D., Cleveland State University

## **Sample Opening Statement**

I'm (name), thank you for meeting with me and participating in our IMAGINE SHAKER – Together We Achieve initiative. These interviews are part of a community wide effort to include as many voices as possible in shaping the future direction and positive impact of the Shaker Schools. Specifically, we are looking to identify and understand all the things that help our schools to be their best already, and then to use these and new, creative ideas to further enhance our schools' ability to help all of us achieve together; students, staff, teachers, families, neighborhoods and Shaker as a community.

The notes I take will be combined with all the other interviews to build the most common themes about our current strengths, what makes our schools a positive asset to the community, what we most wish for in terms of the future school system in Shaker, and specific ideas about how to change and improve so that Together We Achieve. After getting input from as much of the Shaker community as possible over the next few months, the most common and innovative themes will become input to a strategic planning process in the Spring. This process to set our Schools' priorities and direction for the next five years is designed to optimize community input and engagement throughout.

Before we begin, I would like to explain just a little more about what we're going to do because these questions may be a little different from what you probably expected to be interviewed about. I'm going to ask questions about times when things were going at their best. You may be more familiar with interviews that ask question about things that aren't working well – the problems – so we can fix them. In this case, IMAGINE SHAKER, is about learning when and how we do our best through our schools and then using that information to imagine what more we want to do, or become, in the future. This positive change approach (referred to as Appreciative Inquiry) has been widely researched and proven effective in a variety of situations (i.e. corporate transformation efforts, education, parenting, athletics, community development, team-building, coaching, health care, etc.). The end result of the interview will help us to understand the positive building blocks which will increase our vitality, effectiveness, and success going into the future together.

Do you have any questions before we start with the questions?

OK, let's begin.

## TIPS FOR CONDUCTING APPRECIATIVE INTERVIEWS

- Let the interviewee tell his/her story - stories and descriptions of situations or images are most important.
- Take notes and listen for great quotes, phrases and examples.
- Be genuinely curious about their experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- Allow for silence – some will take longer to think about their responses.
- If someone doesn't want to, or cannot answer any of the questions, try rewording and if that does not help, that's OK – move on.
- Questions should be used as guidelines. Reading them verbatim helps, but you may then discover helpful ways to adapt them; find what works best for you and helps the interviewee relate to their experiences.
- Be prepared to adapt the most for kids.
- Feel free to join in a *conversation* – you may have similar experiences or perspectives. It is fine to comment or add your own thoughts to help the interviewee go deeper with their stories and ideas.
- Mine for the Gold in the interviewee's story!

## Tips for conducting Interviews (continued)

### What to do with “Negatives”

With the introduction provided in this Interviewer Guide, you can generally get the interviewees to identify things at their best; things to be valued. However, people should not feel like they do not have permission to talk about things that need fixing. Depending on your reading of where the interviewee is, there are several ways to handle the so called negatives.

- **Postponing:** Say that you would like to make a note of what the person has said and come back to it later. When you get to the question about what s/he would wish for the organization in the future, this is the time to discuss the “negative” data.
- **Listening:** If the person has some real intensity about problems, let him or her express it. If it is the major focus of the person’s energy, you are not going to get any positive data until s/he gets it out. This may mean muddling through quite a bit of negativity, and the biggest threat is that you will take it in and lose your capacity to be appreciative. Keep a caring, affirming spirit.
- **Redirecting:** If the person is adamant about dealing with the negative, or if you have listened sufficiently to understand the negative issues being raised, find a way to guide the person back to the positive: “I think I understand a little bit about some of the problems you see (paraphrase a few), and now I would like to guide us back to looking at what is happening when things are working at their best. Can you think of a time, even the smallest moment, when you saw teaching (for example) at its best?” If the person says it never happened here, find out if the person has had the experience of something working well in *any* organization or work context.
- **Using Negative Energy:** Everything that people find wrong with a situation represents an absence of something that they hold in their minds as an ideal. From this perspective,

one might even argue there is no such thing as negative data. Every utterance is conditioned by affirmative images. If the interviewee cannot reframe his or her statement into a positive image, use the negative information and reframe it yourself into a possible wish or vision statement and then confirm if that statement is valid for the interviewee.

**APPENDIX C**  
**IMAGINE SHAKER AI INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**IMAGINE SHAKER**

*Together We Achieve*

**Interview Questions**

Part 1: Celebrating Shaker's Rich Heritage and Greatest Strengths

8. To begin, I'd like to learn about what it is that most attracts you to live (or work) in Shaker. Please think back over your life in Shaker to a time when you felt particularly excited or proud to live and/or work in this community – a time you recall feeling like this was a great place to be a part of. Please describe that time or situation when you felt most attracted to Shaker.

Now today, what attracts you most to Shaker Heights; what still makes you feel like this is a great place to be living or working in?

9. Vibrant, thriving communities typically have high quality schools that provide clear contributions to the life and "feel" of the community. Please reflect back to a time when you felt that the Shaker Schools [or schools in another community you have lived in] made a

positive difference ... for children, for families, or for neighborhoods in the community. Tell me a story about that positive contribution from the school(s).

Probes:

- When this occurred, were you a student, a parent, staff, other...
  
- How do you recall feeling at that time; why is this meaningful to you?
  
- Given the story above and others like it that you may have experienced, what do you consider to be the 2-3 most valuable characteristics present in any excellent or world-class school district anywhere?

## Part 2: Visions of the Ideal School System

Imagine for a minute that it is 2015. You are still living or working in Shaker and our Schools have become truly “world class.” The national press and professional educators are benchmarking our school district for the amazing transformation it has achieved since the recessionary times in 2009. All Shaker residents are benefitting from the quality programming at our schools. The entire community is actively linked to our educational and developmental agendas. We attract the best teachers and administrators and there is a renewed trend of residents moving in to Shaker because of the school system. *Together We Have Achieved!*

What do you see going on? Who is doing what? What has changed so much since 2009?  
What challenges did we overcome? What innovations have occurred?  
Please describe the images you see in this 2015 picture.

- Probes:
- what new initiatives were launched?
  
  - how did we overcome our greatest challenges?

- in what new, creative ways have the Schools engaged the entire Shaker Community?

Standing in your ideal image of 2015, what are 1-2 specific things that would make people say, “WOW” about the Shaker Schools?

1.

2.

### Part 3: Co-creating the Schools We Most Desire

In order for all of us to achieve – students, teachers, staff, families, neighborhoods and Shaker as a whole – our school system continues to focus on six major areas or strategic priorities to help achieve Excellence:

*Leadership*

*Curriculum & Instruction*

*Technology*

*Climate*

*Parent Involvement*

*Community Involvement*

I'd like to learn more about how you see current progress and future opportunities for improvement in some of these. **Please choose 2 of the 6 that you would like to comment on and I have specific questions to ask of you in those areas.**

[Move to the related questions. If time permits, you can cover more than 2]

### **3A. Leadership**

Our aspiration is to provide coherent leadership and structures to implement effective practices to increase student achievement for all students.

- What do you see us doing particularly well in this area? What do you see as best practices or examples to build upon in the future?
  
- What ideas or recommendations do you have for how we can do better in this area; how school leadership can better help us All to Achieve Together?

### **3B. Curriculum & Instruction**

Our aspiration is to provide curricula and instruction that promote the attainment of 21<sup>st</sup> century skills for all our students.

- What do you see us doing particularly well in this area? What do you see as best practices or examples to build upon in the future?
- What ideas or recommendations do you have for how we can do better in this area; how we can best enable our students to equip themselves with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills necessary to realize meaningful lives.

### **3C. Technology**

Our aspiration is to support student learning and organizational efficiency through the effective use of technology.

- What do you see us doing particularly well in this area? What do you see as best practices or examples to build upon in the future?
- What ideas or recommendations do you have for how we can do better in this area; how technology can better help us All to Achieve Together?

### **3D. Climate**

Our aspiration is to establish a school environment that is safe, secure and conducive to learning.

- What do you see us doing particularly well in this area? What do you see as best practices or examples to build upon in the future?
  
- What ideas or recommendations do you have for how we can do better in this area; how our school climate can be improved to better help us All to Achieve Together?

### **3E. Parent Involvement**

Our aspiration is to establish ongoing home/school partnerships to support a high quality education.

- What do you see us doing particularly well in this area? What do you see as best practices or examples to build upon in the future?
  
- What ideas or recommendations do you have for how we can do better in this area; how can we foster more parent/home engagement to help us All to Achieve Together?

### **3F. Community Involvement**

Our aspiration is to foster and build upon the foundation of public support for and confidence in the Shaker Schools.

- What do you see us doing particularly well in this area? What do you see as best practices or examples to build upon in the future?
  
- What ideas or recommendations do you have for how we can do better in this area; what can ensure high even higher confidence in our schools and actively engage the community to help us All to Achieve Together?

Part 4: Concluding Remarks

Are there any other comments would you like to add?

We are trying very hard to include all the rich diversity of voices and experiences that make up our community in this IMAGINE SHAKER effort. To help us track how well we are doing in reaching all the perspectives in our community, we would like to ask a few more demographic questions. This is entirely optional – if you do not feel comfortable responding to a particular item, please tell me and we will skip it.

Shaker Resident?      Yes      No

If yes: Elementary School area I live in:

Boulevard \_\_\_

Mercer \_\_\_

Lomond \_\_\_

Fernway \_\_\_

Onaway \_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Work in Shaker?      Yes      No

If yes: Work in Shaker Schools?      Teacher? \_\_\_\_      Staff? \_\_\_\_

General Age:      Elementary School \_\_\_\_      30 - 39 \_\_\_\_  
Middle School \_\_\_\_      40 - 49 \_\_\_\_  
High School \_\_\_\_      50 - 65 \_\_\_\_  
19 - 29 \_\_\_\_      66 - \_\_\_\_

Parent?      Yes      No

If yes:      No Children \_\_\_\_  
Children in Shaker Schools currently \_\_\_\_  
Children not yet of school age \_\_\_\_  
Children in school other than Shaker Schools \_\_\_\_  
Children graduated from Shaker Schools \_\_\_\_  
  
I attended Shaker Schools as a child \_\_\_\_

If Parent with children, which most applies?

- a. I live in Shaker Heights so that my children can attend Shaker Schools. \_\_\_\_
- b. My children attend Shaker Schools because I live Shaker. \_\_\_\_
- c. I live in Shaker but my children do not attend Shaker Schools. \_\_\_\_



If Parent with children, which most applies?

- a. I live in Shaker Heights so that my children can attend Shaker Schools. \_\_\_\_
- b. My children attend Shaker Schools because I live in Shaker. \_\_\_\_
- c. I live in Shaker but my children do not attend Shaker Schools. \_\_\_\_

## II. General Summary

**A. WHAT WAS THE MOST QUOTABLE QUOTE THAT CAME OUT OF THIS INTERVIEW?**

**B. WHAT WAS THE MOST COMPELLING STORY OR EXAMPLE THAT CAME OUT OF THE INTERVIEW?**

*(Write on back or attach extra sheet if you need to)*

**C. OVERALL, WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS MOST IMPORTANT TO THIS INDIVIDUAL?**

**III. Key Themes and Ideas** (Use back of page if you need more space)

**Part 1 - Attractors to Shaker**

**Part 1 – Characteristics of Excellent Schools**

**Part 2 – Images of Ideal Future**

**Part 2 – Specific WOW Factors**

**Part 3 - \_\_\_\_\_**  
(fill in question number they chose)

**Part 3 - \_\_\_\_\_**  
(fill in question number they chose)

**Doing well:**

**Doing well:**

**Ideas for change:**

**Ideas for change:**

Space for additional comments:

We ask that all forms be completed in hardcopy, enclosed in an envelope provided to you, and dropped off or mailed to our Administration Building. From the Admin. Bldg. they will be logged in and forwarded to the Weatherhead School at CWRU for summary and analyses.

**APPENDIX E**  
**IMAGINE SHAKER DATE ENTRY CODEBOOK**

<b>B. Most Compelling Story / Example</b>	
Community-building Events	<p>School events that bring the community together – across grade levels and/or attract non-parents.</p> <p>Example quotes: “International night celebration....the whole school would gather and the children would perform native songs, dances and poetry dressed in costume. ...the whole event was a model for people accepting other people for what they were. What a community building event!”; “hockey program ....brought together broad range of people in community”; “senior project night at the high school blew me away... community see quality of our kids and school system”</p>
Vibrant Neighborhood Life	<p>This theme has at least three subthemes:</p> <p>(1) Crisis Support – community reaches out to those in need (ex. “a student in her class died in a house fire...the community looked out for the student’s classmates and friends”; “amazing community support that helped her family when she was very ill”)</p> <p>(2) Enriching Social Experience – strong personal relationships (ex. “staying in Shaker b/c of attachment to people”; neighbors home during the day”; “walking kids to school”; “communication between police and children”)</p> <p>(3) Ethic of Responsibility for Quality – people work hard to keep the community beautiful (ex. “physically appealing area...shows effort of community)</p>
College Preparedness	<p>Students are prepared for college-level work</p> <p>Example quotes: “students are prepared for college and life”; “well prepared for college courses”</p>
Reputation	<p>Pride in public recognition of quality of Shaker Schools</p> <p>Example quotes: “we were showcasing what we do in Shaker to a statewide, national, &amp; international audience”; “Shaker is known all over US &amp; even in other parts of the world for its excellent schools”; “compared Lakewood to Shaker frequently &amp; move here for the schools”</p>
Value of Strong Parental Involvement	<p>(1) Parent assistance in schools (ex. “enthusiasm and desire to be involved was impressive.”)</p> <p>(2) Strong parent-teacher connections (ex. “access to teachers”)</p>
Individualized	<p>Going above and beyond to meet the individual needs of students</p>

Attention in Learning	Example quotes: “music teacher stayed after school to make sure she got it”; “daughter in poor health ...they anticipated our needs and made everything feel normal for her”; “accommodation made discretely”; “teachers should be continually trained to recognize learning style differences”
Music Program	Music program inspires pride and promotes diverse interactions  Ex Quotes: “annual evening of jazz – sense of togetherness”; “band trip to Paris... pride when people listened to diverse, 200+ band”; “music night at Woodbury – vibrant event involving socioeconomic levels”
Diverse Curriculum	Stories include reference to elements of the curriculum (ex. field trips, recess, wide range of classes, community project)
Diversity	Attracted to Shaker because of diversity
Continuous Improvement	References a commitment to ongoing growth and improvement (ex. “schools have taken action”; “administration constantly assessing”; “schools have to be reflecting on their strengths and weaknesses”)
Other	

<b>C: Most Important to Interviewee</b>	
Community Involvement	Involving the community with the school system more, the school benefitting the community (and vice versa), better school relationships with businesses, more community partnerships, more community involvement with kids education
Administration Accessibility	Consistency and accountability in distinct, better transparency in district spending decisions, more “real” follow up on district initiatives, more accessibility to leaders, more administrative professionalism, more administrative accountability
Teacher Standards	Teachers have higher standards, more support for teachers, teachers more responsive to student needs, more teachers with advanced degrees, more teacher dedication
Educational Quality	Schools provide world class education, don’t dumb it down, a well rounded education, more college prep courses, preparing student for life, having a school system that goes beyond its students, students reflect good morals and values
Achievement and the Achievement Gap	Narrow the achievement gap, close the achievement gap, more student achievement
Learning Equality	Addressing the learning needs of the “middle” student, offering educational opportunities to the disenfranchised, programs for struggling students, all children should be given equal opportunities, having a variety of way to help students learn
Diversity	Diversity of all kinds and a community to support it, maintaining the diversity of the school community, diversity and integrity of students, celebrating diversity
Parental Involvement	More parental involvement, more family involvement
Extracurricular school offerings	More clubs and extracurricular activities, better sports teams, more of “the arts”
Pride in School and Community History	School pride, recognizing where Shaker schools has come from, recognizing the Shaker tradition
Other	For Example: <i>More technology, “student behavior,” school safety, etc.</i>

<b>Part 1 – Attractors to Shaker</b>	
Diversity	Multi-cultural Diversity of the schools and community.
Beauty of Shaker	The beauty of the neighborhoods, homes, lakes.
Positive sense of community	Strong sense of community, where everyone knows each other and there is a great deal of civility.
Reputation of Schools	International and national reputation of schools.
Quality/Pride in schools	Pride in the schools, the staff and students and how they all work together.
Community's value of education	The emphasis the community places on the schools and on education. Also the high level of education of the Shaker community residents.
Proximity	Close proximity to work, schools, downtown, parks and other recreational areas.
Housing	Housing stock and zoning.
City Services	Rapid transportation, libraries, parks.
Friendship	Friendship between students and within community.
Recreational Activities	There are many things to do like "ice-cream socials, carnivals and Friday night skate at Thorton".
Pres Obama visit	Pride around President Obama coming to speak at the Shaker schools.
Other	

<b>Part 1 – Characteristics of Excellent Schools</b>	
High Quality Teachers	Outstanding teachers who prepare students for the next grade and care about the students.
High Quality Curriculum	Excellent academic programs, strong advanced-level classes, breadth and variety of curriculum.
High Quality Students	Students are engaged hard-working and motivated. They achieve high test scores and have a thirst for knowledge.
Diversity	Diversity of students
Community involvement	The community is supportive and support the administration and teachers.
Parent Involvement	Active parent involvement in child’s education and relationships with teachers and the schools.
Helpful People	People and children are helpful.
Extra-Curricular Programs	A lot of extra-curricular programs like music, sports and appreciation of the arts.
College Preparation	Prepare students to study in college.
Inclusive Education	There is an appreciation for different learning styles, democratic pedagogy and commitment to teach <b>all</b> students.
Education of Life Skills	Education focuses on preparing students for life and its challenges. The education goes beyond just giving tests and measuring students.
Standards & Development for Teachers	There are high standards for teachers and they are held accountable. There is continuous professional development for teachers.
Leadership	Leadership and vision & leadership of principals.
National Awards	National Merit Awards
Facilities/Technology	Technology and appropriate use of technology.
Empowering Teachers	Empowering teachers and administration to educate rather than be confined by rules.
Money/Compensation	Money and total compensation.
Other	

<b>Part 2 – Ideal Future Images</b>	
Community Involvement	More between school and non-student parents & families; community experts/leaders in classrooms; community involved in theatre, arts volunteerism; more speakers, internships and role models; people without kids also attend events
Achievement Gap	All Students achieving; No or less Gap; More students in high-level classes, regardless of background; more programs for challenged students; college acceptances and admissions up overall
Safe, Peaceful Schools	More kind students- no mean kids; joy and sense of purpose among students; mutual respect among students; students feel safe to express themselves
Technology	In all classrooms; seamless in instruction and communication; infused in daily lessons; more accessible to entire community
Learning Experience	K-level enter into equal environment; smaller classes; more field trips; flexibility to address different learning styles and needs; curriculum that encompasses vocational and college prep; attend more to the 'middle' students; keep reading requirements; help students become better decision makers; more volunteering activities; focus on improving WO and MS
Leadership Change	New leadership at higher levels; forward thinking leaders
Expansion	Bigger schools, more playgrounds; summer school for K-12; Year-round school; before and after school programming; new HS Bldgs; more and current books; more lab space for exploration; more theatre arts; better sports facilities
Effective Leadership	Forward thinking leaders; real follow-up on Plans; "fun" school principals
Quality Teaching	More reviews/ tenure re-evaluations; better teachers; more access to teachers
Global – Multi-cultural Focus	International families attracted to SH for schools; interact with students in different countries; all SH students are bi-lingual; be a successful IB School; 21 <sup>st</sup> century learning skills
Other:	

<b>Part 2 - Wow Factors</b>	
Academic Achievement	Excellent state report card, high rankings, all students (rich or poor) achieving, high test scores, high GPA, no achievement gap, more national merit scholars, students reflect excellent school reputation.
Depth and Breadth	Students showcasing talents across all departments, lots of opportunities (e.g., band, theater, dance, choir, other extra-curricular activities), learning outside of school (e.g., internships or volunteering opportunities)
Advanced Courses	College credits in high school, AP classes, International Bachelorette (IB) program in place and working well
Graduation and Placement	High percentage (e.g., 90% to 100%) graduation rate, high college enrollment rate, acceptance into top colleges by more students, students go anywhere in the world to college, more college scholarships, more students get advanced degrees
Global Awareness	School with global focus, international exposure, students actively using more than one language, every student travels internationally, linking with schools in other parts of the world
Technology	Wireless connection, e-books, students strive to be tech savvy, more computers
Community Involvement	More school system involvement with the community, more connection between businesses and schools, ability of parents to reach non-parent community members
Organizational Environment	Year-round schooling, more basic resources, a pool, better food, library open for longer hours, quiet in public spaces, better organizational structure, safer schools, cleaner schools
Teachers and Administration	Real follow-up, consistent implementations across the school district, more use of "progress books," more accountability for admin and teachers
Alumni Involvement	Bring back alumni, keep former students involved
Diversity	Balance diversity, celebrate diversity
Individual	[For example, naming of specific individuals as WOW factors]
Other	

<b>P3: Community Involvement</b>	
<b><u>Well:</u></b>	
Community Events	Events that attract the community  Example quotes: “many people go to see football games and band”; “tour your schools day”: “R&W Gala”
Volunteerism	Opportunities exist for community volunteers; Community members volunteer  Interesting quote: “community involved but drop the politics which are involved” (AP: that’s a loaded statement!)
Financial Support	Passing levies
Other:	
<b><u>Change:</u></b>	
Engage non-Parents	Suggestion to specifically engage those who do not have school-aged children  Example quotes: “engage empty-nesters”; “provide volunteer opportunities for people other than parents”; “tap into retirees”
Communicate broadly	Suggestion to increase the effectiveness and breadth of communication  Example quotes: “communication to the community at large”; “establish face to face meetings with small groups in the community”; “allow for conversation between parents and school NOT during the workday”
Partnership Development	References engaging community business & work opportunities  Example quotes: “implement professional partners, apprentice programs”; “more work opportunities needed”; “make use of great community resources – universities, hospitals, businesses”
Other	

<b>P3: Climate</b>	
<b><u>Well:</u></b>	
Safety in Schools	My child feels safe at school; visible and effective security in the buildings
Attractive Facilities	Well maintained buildings; attractive classrooms
Caring Teachers	
Learning Experience	Variety of modes of learning; variety of opportunities for students; decrease class size
Other	Example: <i>Start On Time Program at Middle School</i>
<b><u>Change:</u></b>	
Improve Student Behavior	Set clear expectations; less verbal abuse and disrespect for each other; stronger disciplinary measures; disruptions in non-AP classes hold everyone back; enforce dress code; better manage cell phone use
Parental Involvement	Hire community worker to help parents understand shaker standards; more direct meetings with Shaker citizens; get parents on same page as teachers
Safe and Secure Environment	Address bullying
Better Prep for Higher Level Courses	Begin in lower grades and ready minority students for AP Courses; make PreK or head start the norm for all entering students
Consistency Across Schools	
Other	

<b>P3: Tech</b>	
<b><u>Well:</u></b>	
Progress Book	Mention of Progress Book use and benefit;
Computer Maintenance	Computers are serviced in timely manner;
Technology Resources	Positive lab, software, and computer availability;
Other	
<b><u>Change:</u></b>	
Training	Tech Training & professional development; for students and staff
Laptops for all kids	Mention of providing students with individual laptops
Classroom Technology Use	Smartboards; stay current with tech and application to education; teacher access to, training to use, and/or expectation to use, technology solutions; wi-fi
Other:	

### **P3: Leadership**

#### **Well:**

Principal & Teacher Leadership	Positive presence felt in schools; empowered to solve problems; working well together
Resources	Support staff available for teachers; tutoring programs for students; classroom resources for teachers
Student Opportunities	Leadership opportunities for students through clubs & organizations
Student academic achievement	Literacy promoted and emphasized; student achievements promoted by leadership figures
Other:	

#### **Change:**

Negative @ leadership	Negative view of Principal performance; accountability issues; negative view of superintendant; desire for change in superintendant;
Increase Black community leadership	More Black leaders communicating w/Black parents; Black churches upholding education as value
School-Community Connection	Connect community professionals with schools; inform parents/students about community resources; help students connect learning with community
Know the students	Personal relationships with students to know and understand them; understanding as prevention against “falling through the cracks”
Communication	Open channels of communication between leadership, staff, and community; increase direct communication between schools and parents; communicate with community about issues and how being addressed; elicit feedback and ideas from community
Teacher needs	Mentoring/Leadership programs for teachers; empowerment of teachers; teacher administrative advancement opportunities; give patience and supportive suggestions to staff; raise hiring standards and expectations.
Other:	

### P3: Curriculum & Instruction

#### Well:

Delivery of Education	High quality standards-based instruction, teacher autonomy to use “unorthodox” methods, flexibility in some curriculum, Wide range of classes, Numerous advanced placement classes (opportunities to step down if having difficulty), adopts to current reality, foreign language doing well and need more
Rigor and Standards	Cohesion and knowledge transfer from grade to grade, follow-up to ensure students are learning, early access to technology, great “pull-out” enrichment opportunities, remedial classes, moving toward adopting IB curriculum, Reading tier 1 and tier 2, grades stressed
Other	For Example: <i>Committed staff, continuously upgrading, consistent, students graduate</i>

#### Change:

Individualized Learning Plans	Special needs students, transfer students, remedial, “enrichment pull-outs,” matching teacher styles with learning styles
Curricular Alignment	Number of initiatives, updating content, teacher meetings and team teaching, consistency between grades and buildings and the district, elementary instruction prepares students for higher grades, staff development and training
Rigor and Options	AP classes: more classes and more variety, foreign languages, math interventions, field trips, more theater and the arts, extra period for a course directed by students
Other	Examples: <i>Raises and purposeful rewards, training for adult mentoring, open “MAC” scholars to other students, communication between home and school</i>

## APPENDIX F

### QUOTABLE QUOTES

"I want African American students to see themselves when they look at their teachers."

Parent became emotional as she described surviving Katrina and then moving to Shaker Heights. While parent is sad that her family left their long-time home, she thinks Katrina may have been a blessing in disguise as her daughter is receiving excellent special education services in Shaker Schools -- African American parent:

"It's not the places here, it's the people that make the places valuable."

- Elementary age student.

"a community is know by the schools it keeps...there's no place like Shaker"--High School Student

I remember when I was younger our teacher used to play on the ground with us. It made me feel like me and my teacher are friends. It made me feel like we were connected.--High School Student

"The Renaissance has to start with the parents" - White Shaker resident, does not work in Shaker, 50 to 65.

"I love the diversity in shaker, it adds spice to my life."--Faculty of Shaker school

"Like its known...Shaker is a community for schools."-- High school student

"We need to bridge the parental involvement gap" - White resident, 30 to 39

" I came to work here because it ad the connotation of being someplace special. One of the finest places in the country because of homes and the people who live in those homes. I still love working here because I am in a building and I see the children and its great to see the different types of kids and the kids' needs we serve. I love it when people come back from private school and love what we have to offer"--School Staff, 66+

"When i was asked to consider joining the Shaker Schools I was honored. It is a privilege to work for Shaker. Treatment of employees is exemplary. We are given the best equipment and support."--School Staff, 66+

Parent telling about his/her son "If I don't become a policeman, I want to be a teacher like (his third grade male teacher at XXX)."

Of most importance to this individual was "addressing the needs of the middle learner. Her children feel left out because they are not benefiting from enrichment activities, and the students all know who is in enrichment classes and who is getting remediation. Her own children already (in elementary) perceive that they are 'not smart'." --White, female parent.

Attending choir performances makes me feel like Shaker is looking at the whole child.--Parent, 40-49

"The school system is more than a school. Its a community center." Source: Parent; 50-65

The ideal future is not about new programs, initiatives, or taxes. It's about greater school-parent-community involvement. - Parent of 3 alumni; 50-65

"I see students in my neighborhood having bake sales and lemonade stands and donating the proceeds to various charities and organizations. It makes me feel proud of my neighborhood to see even its younger members care about the community."-- High school student

Shaker enabled me to win an award for my teaching Mandarin Chinese to the elementary students. I am so proud of Shaker Heights. It is known all over the US and even in other parts of the world for its excellent schools. Others have told me that I am lucky to work in Shaker! -- elementary Teacher

Our schools are world-class. We should continually recognize ourselves for it and reinforce it with the community, particularly with groups who don't have kids in the system---Parent, 40-49

there is nothing like being at a Shaker Football game and watching hte amazing band and looking into the homestands into a sea of humanity with all its diversity. -- shaker parent

the kids on free/reduced lunch plans, the kids in mansoins, and the kids in between are all learning together. -- shaker teacher and resident

It's a great place to work because I'm given the resources I need, and I'm respected as a professional who is aable to teach and focus on the making sure studetns are succeeding -- shaker Teacher

Too many teachers at Woodbury do not have high expectations for their students. Teachers are not world class and do not work hard enough to make learning active. Too many teachers teach to the test without making meaningful to students' lives. In fact, too many tachers at 5th snf 6th grade do not know their subject matter well enoughj to challengte students. Our reputation is much better than the education that many students are receiving. shaker Teacher

We've lived off of Shaker reputation and the performance of our declining number of top students and not reacted fast enough to serve our changing population. We are losing too many middle class African American families leaving a much higher proportion of lower SES students who we are not organized to serve.-- Caucasian Shaker Resident

Remember ing the SH Class of 1969 Senior Day, during which students ran the city for a day. During this day they outlawed DDT showing a social conscienceness that is not apparent in today's students -- Shaker Resident

Treat kids as smart and they act that way. shaker resident and alum

The diversity of Shaker creates this protective layer for kids. It eases the pressure to be just like everyone else. shaker Parent

Disappointing to have this process skewed by focus on the positive - there is no judgement piece to discern how to move forward. What good will this do if they aren't getting the full picture? It insulates and isolates the schools rather than spurring things up. Improvement would be to have a citizen's group - not experts, just regular people that takes a look at all these things and makes recommendations.  
Shaker Parent

Many don't understand why we show up poorly in the Plain Dealer reports of school rankings. I understand because I went to a meeting

"I believe Shaker is a place that opens doors. It's truly a dream maker."--High school student

"My most positive memory is 1966. The 1st African American was elected president of the student body at Shaker Heights High School" -- White Shaker resident age 50-65

"Shaker, its a community, family oriented with a focus on school" --- White Shaker resident age 50-65

"When I visit colleges and talk to admissions officers they ask where I go to school. When I tell them I go to Shaker, they know what that means" -- SHHS student

"Shaker schools are the foundation of our community, not only because they attract new residents but because they are cauldron for bringing together all parts of the community."Parent, 50-65

"I was moved by the hand print event, created by Bev Coyne, to show the children that all our skin tones are different and color of skin relates to where their family originated." Parent, 40-49

I remember the first day of Kindergarten walking to school with my daughter and how everyone with older kids were so welcoming to us.  
Shaker Parent

I'm pretty ignorant of the School system other than the fact that Fernway is a good school. Parent - children not yet school age

Education goes further than reading a book and listening to a teacher. You've got to get kids out in the community to open their eyes Works in Shaker

Many parents have told me they have come to Shaker because their child did not fit in well, or lacked outlets for their ability. It seems like kids have an easier time finding their niche in Shaker.  
Shaker Parent

What has really made a difference for our children in the schools is a handful of superior teachers.  
Shaker Parent

Shaker schools do very well at involving families who have children in the schools but poorly for others in the community. Resident with 3 former students who have graduated from SH.

We are a community of people tht emphasize education  
Resident Grandparent and graduate of Shaker Schools

I want to come back and raise my kids here. Resident and Recent Shaker graduate.

The school needs to find what it will take to engage every child. Some kids its sports, sone its some other extra-curricular activity. Someone needs to take the time to figure it out with each child, especially whtn there is not a parent to do it.

shaker resident with children who have graduated from Shaker.

Recent graduates are an untapped resource we could use to help orient new and current parents. For example, a recent graduate could explain the "divided lunchroom" to a nervous HS parent in a way that their own child might not e able to. Resident; children graduated from Shaker

The Schools sould profile "average" students who just "plodded along" in their school days but have become very successful in life. Resident; children graduated from Shaker

"Shaker is a model community ... I mention where I live and people have an image of a coherent, diverse community with great services." African American Parent, 50-65.

"I previously worked on both the East and West coasts. When my children arrived, my wife and I searched the country for a diverse community with a reputation for excellent schools. We selected Shaker." - Parent in bi-racial marriage, 30-39

What makes an excellent school? It 'gives you an education and tells you never give up.' - elementary student, Boulevard