

# Small Group Work Activity

## Verbatim Responses

### CEW #2 • February 24, 2026



#### ACTIVITIES

#### Task #1

After learning about what it takes to run a school, what does your group feel is the biggest challenge that needs to be addressed? Once your group has identified which challenge to address, discuss what action steps the district could take to solve for it.

Table	
1	<p>Qualified staff, as well as retention of present teachers.</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*inform community of needs in education</li> <li>* Increase pay for teachers</li> <li>*parents/community supporting education and teachers</li> <li>*visual information so public can see numbers (example: salary, benefits)</li> </ul>
2	<p>Pay/Salary:</p> <p>We cannot just increase pay. We must attract the population. - Incentives needed</p> <p>Action Set:</p> <p>Tax: i.e. similar to what the fire department did to help bring up pay- Truth in Taxation Tax Levee</p>
3	<p>Teacher pay, and money for extra support for resources. How to meet needs of students who are growing up in today's society. What can we learn from other districts. Create a compelling reason for the community to vote to pay more. Review retirement and benefit packages. Incentives to help pay for ongoing schooling or sign on bonus, and bonus money for terms of longevity.</p>
4	<p>Staffing- having the money to hire quality people.</p> <p>1. We would like to see a comparison between QPS and some other larger Illinois districts to understand where our money is going and compare numbers of everything. Students, buildings, buses, secretaries, BOE workers, etc. Once we know where the money is going we can decide if we need to manage the money differently or find new revenue sources.</p> <p>2. Build more community relations to provide more support for teachers; tutors, after school programs, companies to support student interests. (i.e. Could we partner with a local veterinarian so students can job shadow)</p>
5	<p>#1 way to retain faculty/staff</p> <p>#2 board/admin transparency - how do we rebuild the trust between the board/admin/staff/parents/students</p> <p>#3 how do we change the culture in our district so that educators feel heard/supported and better equipped to teach kids</p> <p>#4 what can we do to change the narrative that social media has painted of educators? (basically that being a teacher is a miserable job)</p>

Table	
6	<p>Parental Support - provide consistent access and transportation to come to school run family events. These events should have the intention to make families feel welcome, break barriers, create a sense of belonging and give that "peak behind the curtain". This hopefully would gain trust between parent and school relationships.</p> <p>Teacher retention - the tax rate needs to be increased so that we can pay our teachers and retain them.</p>
7	<p>Teacher retention. What is being done to retain good teachers and what incentives are available for new teachers? What benefits like personal time, maternity leave, sick time without guilt. More co-teachers. Veteran teachers training.</p>
8	<p>Staffing, Support for Current Staff, Communication, education and community engagement. Educating the community intentionally on how they can support. Individuals and local businesses alike. Make it easy for the community and businesses to see the needs that they could help out with! Then give credit as publicly as possible and watch the other companies follow suite.</p>
9	<p>Answer: Retention and recruitment of teachers is the number 1 problem with pay being the most obvious bandaid to that problem, but with a larger cultural shift needed underneath. QPS currently punches above its weight class, but the foundation seems to be crumbling underneath. Salaries need to go up and the community needs to embrace the school as the backbone of our community. Transparency is essential. There needs to be clear vision for the future of the community and the district.</p> <p>Notes: Retention and recruitment equals pay? Honors classes have a waiting list / no teacher no time for the teachers to spend with the students lots of demands on the teachers</p> <p>school system is at the core of the community, the schools need to be healthy for the community to be healthy Salaries across the board struggle Very few education students at colleges Salary is a huge driver of what jobs get taken Education used to be a more reliable employment option, now it's seen as being a stepping stone at best</p> <p>What are things the district could do to recruit/retain? make teacher's lives better in Quincy (money but also community connection and time) cultural shifts take a long time is the younger generation more money focused? is there a mission if we make the student experience better, more students will want to teach Tell the public these stories about the students needs going unmet</p>

Table	
10	<p>Staffing Shortage is biggest challenge. Actions Steps: raise salary &amp; increase benefits, explore 4 day work week,</p> <p>Focus on Retention as much as Recruiting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- improve classroom conditions</li> <li>- address behaviors that monopolize teacher time</li> <li>- encourage parent involvement - not just fun stuff - see what is actually going on in classroom &amp; also support classroom teacher</li> <li>- spread thin - no margin within school buildings</li> <li>- taking on roles that they are not equipped or signed up for</li> </ul> <p>* make environment more inviting</p> <p>Encourage our own kids to be teachers.</p> <p>* Tap into retired or elderly people - they are working part time</p>
12	<p>Staffing! Set up one on one appointments to support people filling out substitute paperwork. The paperwork takes a long time and is daunting. Many people give up without finishing the process.</p> <p>On the August registration days, open up for sub registration as well. This would give people an opportunity for assistance in filling out the online app.</p> <p>Hiring process is losing people as they jump through hoops. Paras are required to pay for testing, and other licensing requirements before getting hired. You are spending this money without knowing if you will have a job. We could offer a signing bonus to reimburse for the application fee and licensing.</p> <p>Flex-time for paraeducators: Allow them to take PD classes on their own time (offered by ROE) and flex that time during things like parent-teacher conferences.</p>
13	<p>Staffing challenges is #1 Concern, Salary and pay to attract more teachers- Getting firm metrics on why teachers are leaving, when they are leaving ect? Things the district can do now without more money- Put in place a more vigorous mentoring program and external coaches or councilors for all levels of teachers. Set up regular progress check ins with staff on how they are doing and if they feel they are making and impact and progress towards their career goals or personal goals. Set up room parents for teachers just like you would for student support.</p>
14	<p>The biggest challenge is teacher retaining and support. Action steps include-new staff training and support, support and help staff to find ability to find their passion again, discipline is easier and more managable with experienced staff to handle those issues. Finances!!! But money doesn't solve it all.</p>
15	<p>Supporting Staff - improving communication, transparency with curriculum, value the staff's time, including teachers at the career fairs to encourage potential candidates</p>

Table	
17	Recruiting and retaining teachers! This should be the district's main focus and area to problem solve! We need head quality CERTIFIED!!! teachers for our schools.
19	<p>Teacher salaries, benefits are the issue. If we can't compete, we can't recruit or maintain.</p> <p>Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pass a tax</li> <li>corporate sponsors</li> <li>encourage teacher support / moral</li> <li>other funding sources</li> </ul> <p>Educate the public / transparency</p> <p>If you want to better your chances of selling a tax that benefits the schools and community, present exactly what you are doing in these open forums and present to every group in Quincy (similar to how the bond issue passed in 2014. 43 presentations were made to every group and service club). Condense the presentation into understandable facts. The public will buy the idea if they believe what you are selling.</p>

**Task #2**

Based on what you learned tonight (or throughout the first two workshops), what else would you like to know more about?

Table	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*How can we get more money for salaries without raising taxes?</li> <li>*How are other districts structured differently than Quincy to allow them to pay their staff more?</li> <li>*Grant opportunities to help with school supplies, special program teachers</li> </ul>
2	<p>How does QPS standardized test score compare to districts that pay what QPS does?          What are the requirements of staff? How are they measured in meeting these requirements? How many staff are exceeding, meeting, below?          How many student teachers do we have in the district that we can recruit?</p> <p>Student motivation - i.e. Honors students want to be there and are motivated. Students who do not want to be there are not motivated and learning is forced. When learning is forced the outcome is not beneficial.</p> <p>i.e Class that is online and what happens to those that need help. Can there be a community partnership with corporations to provide tutors for students?</p>
3	What can be done for behaviors and discipline. How to get more mental health help from the community into our system.
4	<p>Same as #1- We want to see side-by-side comparisons showing what we and other districts spend the money on.</p> <p>We want full transparency regarding where the money goes, especially compared to other similar large unit districts.</p>

Table	
5	<p>Teacher resident program - what kind of incentives are being provided to make it more appealing/to draw people in? There was a lot of other things that we discussed that I was too busy to type about.</p> <p>Erin's speech was very heartfelt and I appreciated seeing and hearing how passionate she is about families and offering a perspective that most people in our community don't know about. That being said, I personally would like to hear more about why these programs/classrooms like deaf/hard of hearing are being shut down in some of our schools. Rooney Elementary for example.</p>
6	<p>More information about the tax rate and income reimbursements.</p> <p>How can we make teachers feel more appreciated and respected in the community.</p> <p>How can we help inform the community of the differing needs of students compared to what older generations think schools should involve.</p>
7	<p>Is the district tracking retention with teacher residents? What % stay and get their teaching certificate? Could they shadow a veteran teacher? Can they do a mid-year orientation?</p> <p>Can we find a way to have a sub template so teachers can actually take a sick day? Most teachers can't actually take a sick day. They get up in the morning to do a sub plan and check in often to ensure things are going well and that they even have a sub.</p> <p>What about building upkeep? Even the new schools have cracks, issues, no heat etc.</p>
8	<p>Dive into WHY educators are leaving education. Dive into exactly what the district would use money to increase trust, enthusiasm and willingness to vote yes. Finally, beyond the money, let's talk about somethings we can or need to do outside of money just to avoid appearance of a singular topic or motivation of these sessions.</p>
9	<p>What are the current funding sources for QPS? What does the public do about mandates that aren't being met? How can individuals support the school district? How does/can QPS communicate with the public about their needs? What does the community want to hear?</p>
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- retention rate of teacher resident program</li> <li>- place classroom mentors in addition to individual mentors</li> <li>- para recruitment &amp; retention</li> <li>- possibility of additional SSFL positions</li> <li>- what do exit interviews look like</li> </ul>
12	<p>We are interested to know about finances and what the health of the district looks like fiscally.</p> <p>What are the plans to expand parking at the high school?</p> <p>We would also like to learn about the history of the Blue Devil mascot.</p>

Table	
13	<p>How does teacher retention compare as a percentage to similar districts? At what point in role do teachers leave (how many years in role 1-10,10-20,20-30 ect)?, Looking at staff shortages can we get percentages of staff shortages by school and grade level? Are new teachers in role given a mentor or more senior teacher coach? Do teachers have regular check ins on how things are going beyond classroom metrics? Can we get data from exit interviews on reasons they are leaving? Can we create an external support line or system for more experinced teachers who are struggling to help retain them? Do we have a metric on how much time a teacher spends on instruction vs the other 25-30 things you mentioned they need to do? Do you measure this?</p>
14	<p>If we had adequate finances, what does admin/central office what is their wishlist. What are the state handcuffs/requirements that are holding us back? Could we rework a school year to year round schooling? 4 day work week? Think outside the box.</p>
15	<p>Are we conducting exit interviews?  If so, what information are we learning?  When are expulsions and suspensions occurring? At what grade level/ages?  How can we welcome parents into our schools?</p>
17	<p>What have they done to try and make the district more financially efficient? The only option shouldn't be to just increase taxes. What efforts will be done to retain teachers? Incentives for longer duration in district? Offer childcare? Student loan repayment program? Address discipline issues systematically with teacher feedback?</p>
19	<p>how are we dealing with discipline?</p>