



Executive Summary

QPS Quincy Together
Community Engagement Workshop #1
January 27, 2026

OVERVIEW

On January 27, 2026, more than 130 attendees participated in the Quincy Together community engagement workshop at Quincy High School. The session provided an overview of Quincy Public Schools and the challenges the district is currently facing. To view the presentation, visit quincytogether.org. Following the presentation, the participants worked together in 22 small groups to complete the following tasks:

- **Task #1** - Based on the information you learned tonight, what are your group's biggest surprises and concerns about QPS?
- **Task #2** - What are the top five priorities that need to be addressed by our long-range plan? (Please rank them in order with one being the most important.)
- **Task #3** - Does your group have any suggestions for the district to overcome the challenges presented tonight?

Following is a summary of the responses from the groups.

Biggest Surprises

What stood out most at Workshop #1 was just how often groups expressed surprise at the district's position in teacher pay. More than 15 groups noted that Quincy ranks "dead last" or lowest among comparable districts. One group summed it up plainly: "*Lowest paying LUDA district – Yikes!*"

Another major surprise, raised by about 10 groups, was the reality of students being transported out of town for specialized services, including young children traveling to Jacksonville. Groups also highlighted unexpected facility needs and space limitations, especially around the vocational center. Several groups were surprised by how many opportunities in trades and career programs are constrained by room, equipment, or staffing.

Biggest Concerns

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of supporting educators. Roughly 18 groups pointed to teacher salaries and retention as the most pressing priority for long-term stability. As one group noted, staff can't fully focus on the work when they're worried about their own livelihoods.

Another strong theme, mentioned by about 12 groups, was the need for facilities and maintenance improvements—from HVAC systems to overall building conditions. Groups also expressed interest in expanding student supports, including behavioral, mental health, and special education services. Discipline and classroom management came up frequently, framed as an area where teachers need stronger systems and staffing to help students succeed.

Top Five Priorities that Need to Be Addressed by the Long-Range Plan

Across the responses, five priorities rose to the top:

1. Competitive salaries and staff retention — the clearest consensus, named by nearly every table.
2. Recruitment and building a stronger applicant pool — groups want qualified educators, not "warm bodies."
3. Facility upgrades and space planning — especially for Vo-Tech and aging buildings.
4. Expanded student services and support systems — including special education, interventions, and mental health resources.
5. Career, college, and life readiness opportunities — many groups want stronger pathways in trades, CTE, and workforce preparation.

Suggestions for District to Overcome Challenges Presented

Participants offered practical, forward-looking ideas. More than 12 groups suggested exploring new revenue options, including tax referendums, a sales tax increase, or creative funding models. Several groups emphasized partnerships with local businesses, from donations to supporting vocational expansion. Others encouraged transparency and communication, with one group calling for “consistent communication of the district’s needs.” There was also enthusiasm for community engagement—keeping conversations going, educating residents, and highlighting both challenges and Quincy’s pride in its schools.

Statements of Consensus

Points of general agreement across the work activity include:

- Teacher pay and retention must be the foundation of the long-range plan.
- Quincy needs stronger recruitment strategies to attract qualified educators.
- Facility and vocational space improvements are critical for future growth.
- Community partnerships can play a key role in expanding resources.
- Clear, ongoing communication will build trust and shared momentum.

For a complete listing of all responses, see the Community Workshop #1 Verbatim Response Document.

Small Group Work Activity

Verbatim Responses

CEW #1 • January 27, 2026



ACTIVITIES

Task #1: Surprises and Concerns

Based on the information you learned tonight, what are your group's biggest surprises and concerns about QPS?

Table	Biggest Surprises
1	Suspensions/expulsions Inability to provide SE services (transporting children to Jacksonville) Salary – especially M.Ed. or Dual Masters
2	Employee aspect: know salary was low but not that low. Why am I still in Quincy?
3	Teacher salary discrepancy/retention/applicants Top 20% of suspensions/exclusionary discipline
4	Lowest pay/largest class size # of people who have resigned this year Tax rate has not changed since the '80s Conditions of the buildings and facilities
5	Teacher wages – we knew it was bad but didn't know it was that bad Staff: student ration is higher in our district, but teachers make less
6	Money-wage discrepancies from other districts compared to ours What a large employer QPS is
7	Salary 3 year olds that go to Jacksonville for DHH Vo-tech department (maintenance & upkeep)
8	Quincy's inability to provide proper services for all students (transport to Jacksonville)
9	Students being bussed one hour away Limited space for learning experiences- understand we need to be realistic with spaces Salary being so much lower than surrounding areas Class size and amount of students
10	Salary gaps Busing children to Jacksonville Retention of teachers

Table	Biggest Surprises
11	We serve students outside Adams County Lowest base salary around
12	No math teacher Very surprised about our salary being the lowest State of some facilities How can we explore getting local contractors to donate/get tax breaks for it Prioritize cycles of building projects
13	Teachers who leave profession and don't return to education 3 yr olds traveling to Jacksonville Turning away students who would excel in trades or other contents because of lack of space, facilities, equipment Didn't know that QPS was at the bottom of large districts for teacher salaries
14	Lack of applicants, need more info on non-certified teachers Support staff per school didn't increase when elementary schools consolidated/grew per building
15	Vocational classroom limitations Lowest paying LUDA district – Yikes! Bussing students an hour away for an education
16	Lack of funding for teachers Underfunded budget How few applicants last in LUDA
17	That QPS is dead last in teacher salary and close we are to the small school districts around us. Tax levy not passed since the 1980s Space issues district-wide
18	Federal grant for QJHS/QHS extended day cut Busing students to Jacksonville No discussion of academic outcomes
19	Suspension rate Maintenance needs
20	Teachers' salaries are the lowest (not just low) Amount of services provided to Quincy non-public Kids & surrounding counties (Vo-tech)
21	Where Quincy stands in pay for surrounding areas Retention State of facilities
22	Dead last as far as salary – influences our ability to hire & retain (staff can't focus on the work because worried about their own life) Keep up with the facilities

Table	Biggest Concern
1	<p>Students pulled out for specific academic support, during that subject's instructional time. (Can this be scheduled in blocks building wide?)</p> <p>Consistent administrative support for staff/teachers</p>
2	<p>Pictures: what have we actually done to fix everything</p> <p>Seems like too many excuses</p> <p>Seems like a lot more options</p> <p>Why didn't you take kids to the tractor</p>
3	<p>Financial make-up for teaching staffing issues</p> <p>Student discipline issues related to staffing shortages</p> <p>Support for discipline issues</p> <p>Community needs and parenting and family to support schools</p>
4	<p>Retain staff</p> <p>Behavior of students</p> <p>Support for students and staff</p>
5	<p>Quincy tax rate has not been increased since 1988 – other districts have raised theirs</p> <p>Voters think their taxes are already too high so they may not support an increase</p>
6	<p>Where is the gap? Some rate from state per student so where are other districts getting the money to pay their staff so much more</p> <p>Sending students to out-of-town facilities</p>
7	<p>Salary – people will not be drawn to QPS</p> <p>Building upkeep</p> <p>Vo-tech – lack of readiness, not having the teachers, space, programs available</p>
8	<p>Staffing- student discipline- being a team teachers and parents</p> <p>Upkeep and maintenance on building and facilities (sports complexes)</p>
9	<p>Space concerns with learning</p> <p>Behavior top 20%</p> <p>Extended day/summer school being cut</p>
10	<p>Reading levels</p> <p>Grant funding</p> <p>Salaries</p> <p>Social emotional support for teachers</p>
11	<p>Facilities in poor condition</p> <p>Staffing: special ed., STEM, mid-year resignation</p> <p>Classroom management, cultural shifts</p>
12	<p>The teaching profession is unionized</p> <p>Building conditions</p> <p>Teacher salaries</p>

Table	Biggest Concern
13	Tax rate not changing since the '80s Teachers having the lowest salaries in 55 districts Lack of applicants for openings
14	Salary, lack of applicants, lack of support for teachers
15	Salaries and pay for school staff Applicant pool – unqualified applicants
16	Lack of recruitment and small pool of applicants Need quality What else is appealing to new staff Rigid structure to funding
17	Retention/hiring new teachers Facilities/space
18	Teacher pay Disconnected QPS leadership No discussion of student outcomes Need to know what has been tried to fix problems so far Communication in the district and community Special ed, it's easier to get the endorsement yet we don't have them Candidate teachers are not up to snuff
19	Teacher salary and retention Lack of services (ex deaf and hard of hearing program) Lack of behavioral services and mental health services/programs
20	Teachers' salaries are the lowest (not just low) Lack of options in addressing building concerns Teacher retention
21	Support for educators Unfunded mandates-how does that compare to surrounding areas How to retain staff
22	Travel for some students due to available services (3 yr old for hearing) Turning \$ away due to space HVAC – Can it be recycled?

Task #2: Top Priorities

What are the top five priorities that need to be addressed by our long-range plan?
 (Please rank them in order with one being the most important.)

Table	Top Priorities
1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Salary 2. Retention 3. Provide appropriate services – interventions, transportation, para-professional, equipment 4. workforce readiness – expand CTE (buildings, Equipment, materials) & incorporate Jr. High 5. Developmentally appropriate curriculum & lack of coaching (coaches are subbing in classrooms) coaches in curriculum, academic & behavioral methods
2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discipline protocol they have to go through is insane. Teachers feel their hands are tied with what they can do 2. Staff support over income. They deserve more money but there is more they need to keep teachers staffed 3. Actually taking action 4. Communication/transparency
3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Funding for teacher salaries 2. Staff recruitment/retention 3. Community involvement/buy-in/engagement 4. Family awareness and encouragement of supports and resources to improve quality of life/issues from home 5. Funding for facilities
4	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support with behavior/discipline 2. Teacher pay 3. Class size / para in each class (k) 4. Retain teachers/new hires
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff salaries & retention 2. Tax rate referendum/facilities rate increase 3. Adequate staff to manage classroom behavior – more support staff 4. All students get career & life readiness skills before graduation 5. Increase reach of the mentoring program
6	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality education-being prepared for life after school 2. Attraction and retention of staff-salary gap is startling 3. Quality of facilities and how that impacts people moving to Quincy and staying in Quincy 4. Student support-making sure ALL students get what they need 5. Teacher/staff support and professional development
7	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employment/retention 2. Salary 3. Maintaining buildings 4. Career readiness 5. Funding of academic programs (grants)

Table	Top Priorities
8	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Additional funding sources staffing, facilities, retention 2. Staff retention-environment/culture, salary and benefits, retirement, inspiration (Ron Clark Academy) 3. Educational space-maintain and upgrade spaces to benefit educational offerings 4. Attracting staff 5. Continued community engagement
9	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Money 2. Space 3. Hiring staff-more classrooms and support 4. Family support 5. Maintaining facilities
10	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competitive salaries 2. Competent teachers vs. warm bodies 3. Creating environments that are conducive to learning 4. Community/school relationships
11	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support existing teachers 2. Support families to train parents 3. Funding to promote recruiting teachers 4. Increase tax referendum 5. Update facilities – VOCTEC CEN
12	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Salary for teachers/environment for work 2. Building plans 3. Pathways for students to prep for careers/college 4. Vo-tech center/trade positions/building updates 5. Cultural health to meet the needs for families
13	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase district salaries (certified, support and admin 2. Work toward filling district vacancies 3. Improve facilities and make more efficient for class and storage
14	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher retention 2. Teacher support for academic and discipline (especially if not certified) 3. Class sizes in high school (30 minimum) 4. Consumable curriculums – (How do we fund that annually?)
15	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing revenue for our schools 2. Retaining and hiring good, qualified staff 3. Pathways from education to financial security for students 4. Facility improvements 5. Community engagement opportunities & partnerships
16	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruitment (staff) 2. Development/retention (staff \$) 3. Need to fund programs 4. Student readiness for all students 5. Basic maintenance of current facilities

Table	Top Priorities
17	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher recruitment and retention, salaries 2. Aging facilities, corrected in an appropriate manner 3. More social/emotional and behavioral support 4. Creative funding opportunities
18	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competitive salaries 2. Communication within the district and community 3. Special Education- structure/framework needs improvement 4. Discipline/alternative schooling options 5. Academic outcomes
19	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher salary 2. Teacher retention 3. Strong programs (vo-tech, special education, etc.) that support varied student needs 4. College and career readiness 5. Staff for behavioral/mental health K-5 6. Challenge the status quo (professional development and retention)
20	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher salaries/retention 2. Building maintenance/updating Vo-tech; QJHS 3. Program offerings/opportunities 4. Maximize use of grants/audit – Do we need grant specialists since we are so reliant?
21	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff support 2. Salary 3. Extra PTO 4. Childcare for staff 5. Para salaries
22	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student to staff ratio 2. How do we market the openings? 3. Support staff – salaries, finance 4. Financial literacy (credit score) 5. Qualification – art example 6. Reducing top 20% for exclusionary discipline

Task #3: Suggestions

Does your group have any suggestions for the district to overcome the challenges presented tonight?

Table	Suggestions
1	<p>Tax referendum (sales, property, etc.) Improve messaging to convey QPS reality to Quincy residents – address misconceptions Utilize staff based on their skill set – administrative support-stop allowing selling of planning periods (leads to burn out) Collaborative relationships with business/community partners to expand services (i.e. manufacturing businesses contribute to help solve their workforce shortages) Teachers & administrators that understand child development (if you don't incorporate developmentally appropriate practices & expectation, the curriculum won't add any value/benefit for teachers or students) Inform the public that aren't here about these issues.</p>
2	<p>Resource options: feel like there are more avenues to use before accepting no Fundraising Committee Grant committee? Why can't we have help with departments to write grants? Day care for teachers</p>
3	<p>Online database for citizens in Quincy to provide support/wishlist items to schools/staff in an immediate way Voucher program to pick where city taxes go in schools Transparency, more information to community either by building events held at Kroc, YMCA churches (places where people already are)</p>
4	<p>1) Alternative classroom settings (removing behaviors into smaller setting-no IEPs) a. Behavior intervention classroom 2) Phone-free school/technology free 3) Classes for parents/educating parents a. If your child has a behavior problem so many times you have to attend a class</p>
5	<p>Career/life readiness skills for all students Use QAVTC trades classes to do some maintenance work with support from local businesses in that trade Advertise that subs don't need a bachelor's degree</p>
6	<p>More out of the box thinking. Love that Quincy has a lot of pride that contributes to a great culture. However, does this prevent us from thinking in different ways to solve problems? Increase sales tax rate Transparency in where money is going and coming from in our district vs. other LUDA districts. How are other districts paying so much more with nicer facilities.</p>
7	<p>Facility sales tax (alternative revenue) Letting community know the Votech challenges to see if people could donate or provide services (Titan, Knapheide) Off-site area for Vo-tech (empty buildings)</p>
8	<p>Community partnerships to help with needs Continue to use QPS Foundation grants to help fill needs Teacher autonomy- being trusted as professionals</p>

Table	Suggestions
9	<p>Programs to grow students to want to be become teachers at an early age</p> <p>Taking advantage of recent tax law changes regarding credits to contribute to educator expenses</p> <p>Identifying local employers and having a program to have students work with them to build skills</p>
10	<p>Reaching out to community for specific private donations</p> <p>Figure out how to pay the teachers more</p> <p>Community engagement/education on QPS system</p> <p>K-5 structured reading program</p> <p>Look at contracts from districts on the LUDA list for ideas</p>
11	<p>Tax credit like Arizona</p> <p>Other tax – sales, food/beverage, property</p> <p>Hire superintendent who will help pass tax referendum & engage private/corporate investors</p> <p>Expose facility maintenance needs to the community (VocTec Center is hidden)</p> <p>Ask non-public schools to pay more to send students</p> <p>Work with parochial schools on the issues because they will benefit too</p>
12	<p>Create partnerships with businesses/experts</p> <p>Prioritize transparent plans with right experts at the table</p> <p>Penny tax to help increase teacher’s salaries</p> <p>Deep dive into teacher survey about their concerns- why they are leaving</p> <p>Outsourcing some services to alleviate burnout</p> <p>Increase communication on the positive but more transparency on the true state</p> <p>Stand together against 3rd parties ex. unions especially at the state level</p> <p>Continue grant funding explorations</p> <p>Balance needs/We should get board to prioritize plan on which buildings to go first</p> <p>Grants available</p> <p>Partnerships for construction.</p> <p>How can we be creative to recruit/open up teacher residency program</p>
13	<p>What we’ve done here tonight can’t stop here, we have to bring or tell someone about the next meeting.</p> <p>Make a topic a positive one to discuss in the community</p>
14	<p>Facilities – partnerships with community</p> <p>High school level- but this is the opposite at elementary</p> <p>Throwing the younger teachers to “the wolves”</p> <p>Regular Ed classes</p> <p>Do other schools pay to be a part of VOTEC?</p>
15	<p>Continue having community conversations/transparency with the public</p> <p>Identify ways to get additional funding - sources that the community will buy-in to</p> <p>Creative and strategic community partnerships</p> <p>Consistent communication of the districts needs</p>

Table	Suggestions
16	<p>Increase community partnerships for some programs</p> <p>Need to increase funds and/or evaluate current funding and needs</p> <p>Increase PR to community so they know the challenges</p>
17	<p>Be more innovative in solutions</p> <p>Build more trust with community programs</p> <p>Communicate better how QPS overlaps with parochial schools</p> <p>Sales tax increase</p> <p>Look into Hannibal vocational center- how they funded their new programs</p>
18	<p>An alternative school option that provides for students for whom the general population is not a good fit</p> <p>Strong leadership</p> <p>Community/business partnerships (welding machines)</p> <p>Need to spend time on an economic/tax options</p>
19	<p>Pass a tax referendum</p> <p>Increase revenue</p> <p>Find ways for sustainable funding</p> <p>Teacher incentive package (benefits and retention)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Tuition reimbursement, professional development, job sharing</p>
20	<p>Better communication/transparency about salaries, buildings, discipline</p> <p>Greater community engagement</p> <p>Expand district comparisons among IL large districts we would like to see compare - of special ed., tax %, etc.</p> <p>Where is our \$ going vs. other districts</p>
21	<p>Possible 4-day work week-state issue</p> <p>Permanent subs</p> <p>Parent helpers in class- how can community help</p> <p>Educate community on shortfalls</p>
22	<p>Can we use our VoTech service to do some in-house repairs from students?</p> <p>VoTech – is there more creative ways for partnerships and county schools to help with funding?</p> <p>Can we outsource space at other locations?</p> <p>Importance of building a trade, variety of skills – can such courses be added as required instead of electives?</p>