

## MICHIGAN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Southeast Michigan Region

September 2008

### Waterford Focus Group Starter Questions

**Every organization has a number of areas of strength. What would you identify as the major strength areas for the Waterford Schools?**

#### Most Frequently Identified

Human resources – our people (49)

Teacher/Staff dedication (41)

Curriculum (39)

Support staff (38)

Parent/Community support (34)

Parent Volunteers (24)

Proactive student environment (24)

#### Also Mentioned

Communication (Edline) (21)

Diversity (19)

Grant writing (18)

Progressive/cutting-edge practices (17)

Facilities (17)

Business/local government partnerships (16)

AP Classes (16)

Communication/Collaboration between buildings (15)

Interventions-group effort (14)

Safety & Security (13)

Quality of teachers-great (13)

Quality programs (10)

College counselor advising (10)

Partnering with government (10)

Music (10)

Student involvement (10)

Value (tuition free) (10)

Performing Arts Programs/ Center (10)

Co/op program

Early Development-great! (7)

PLCs excellent (7)

Child care (7)

All day kindergarten (7)

Financial situation (6)

Community collaboration (8)

Foundation (6)

Priority has been to preserve programs (6)

Increasing Scores (6)  
Extracurricular (5)  
Movies (5)  
School Liaison Officers/Communication with Police Dept. daily (5)  
Stress on reading is impressive (4)  
Special Education programs (4)  
Strong Leadership (4)  
Nutritional services (4)  
Crisis planning (4)  
Pool & Fitness Center (4)  
Support staff for individual learning/behavior (4)  
Improving with data collection (3)  
Center-based program (3)  
Resources (3)  
Blue Ribbon Schools (3)  
Effectively marketing our facilities on “available dates”(3)  
Location (3)  
Workshop model (2)  
Junior achievement (2)  
Natural resources-lakes (2)  
Fair wages and benefits (2)  
Approachable (2)  
Athletics (2)  
Creativity & constructivism (2)  
Support systems (2)  
Students first (2)  
Advanced Placement courses (2)  
M.S. Honors classes (2)  
Technology (2)  
HS Facilities (2)  
Diversity of class offerings (2)  
Good student/teacher relationship (2)  
Staff development /Cutting edge (2)  
Class sizes (2)  
Clubs (1)  
Reading interventions (1)  
Peace/community circle (1)  
Military recruiters in high schools (1)  
Strategic Thinking (1)  
Good Leadership (1)  
Clear mission statement  
Sports awards/programs  
Visible Administration  
Differentiation  
Theater  
Cohesive group of elementary principals

Accredited schools  
All elementary schools made AYP  
Longevity of residents  
Staff that live in community  
Programs are funded Job embedded PD  
Unity – support each other  
Welcoming and friendly  
Aligned grading practices  
Common assessments  
Transitions between schools  
Articulation agreement with Universities  
Enrollment  
Career Orientated  
Computer lab/Libraries

**Every organization has areas that need to be improved. What would you identify as the most significant areas that need to be improved in the Waterford Schools?**

**Most Frequently Identified**

Class size (63)  
Technology (51)  
Communication/listening (40)  
Meeting the needs of all kids (40)

**Also Mentioned**

Adjusting to the needs of students (21)  
Achievement (MEAP scores) (21)  
Tutoring/Mentoring programs (18)  
Wage benefit gap between administrators – teachers - support staff (17)  
Gifted program (15)  
Outdated facilities/equipment (15)  
District needs to crack down on students living in other districts & coming here (14)  
Meeting Social/Life skills for kids (13)  
Push into community (parent ed. in apt. complexes) (13)  
Relationship between Adm. & Staff (13)  
More support staff (13)  
Extra support discipline/behavior (12)  
Facilities (11)  
Building security (11)  
Improve meals choices/Food Program (11)  
Parent support/involvement (10)  
Summer school for everyone-free?? For those who need it (10)  
Foreign language (10)  
“Motor Moms”/”Brain Gym” available but may not be implemented (9)  
Loss of teacher aid hours (9)

No magnet program (9)  
Special education services (9)  
Accountability (9)  
Loss of benefits (8)  
Better PR (8)  
Missing grammar education in elementary (8)  
Block schedule (8)  
Magnet schools (7)  
Expansion/improvement of parking lots and most schools (7)  
“Bullying” prevention program for every grade level (7)  
Before or after school enrichment program (tutors too) (7)  
Keeping kids here (7)  
Meeting the needs of kids in a global world (6)  
Better use of technology (6)  
Support for full-inclusion classrooms (6)  
Entrance into WKHS (6)  
Data collection (6)  
Funding (6)  
Work load /expectations (6)  
Student needs/personal future goals (6)  
Sports/Coaching (6)  
Need base staffing (6)  
Athletic facilities (6)  
Accountability (6)  
Doing more with less (5)  
Employee attendance (5)  
Child care program needs improvements (5)  
Update equipment (5)  
Improve dress code (5)  
Follow-thru – staying with something (5)  
Discovery portal used consistently (5)  
Lack of contract (4)  
Space planning (4)  
Security in buildings (4)  
Fundamentals-Basics- reading, writing, math, spelling (4)  
More special ed. dept. support (4)  
Productive discipline (4)  
Seminars (4)  
Air-conditioning (3)  
Free preschool to be ready for full-day kindergarten (3)  
Need improved academics (3)  
Support staff professional development (3)  
Out-dated maintenance equipment (3)  
Further alignment of curriculum, instruction/assessments (3)  
Motor development program (3)  
District image (3)

Teachers should not be taken out of classes so much (3)  
Mandatory all school “community or peace circles” (3)  
Extended day (3)  
Positive behavior support plan-district wide (3)  
Drop-out rate (2)  
Lack of morale (2)  
Flavored water machines instead of pop (2)  
Board decision making (transparency) (2)  
Improve athletic programming to keep quality athletes in-district (2)  
Collaborative efforts across departments (2)  
Professional development opportunities (2)  
Aid time-full time for cases that need it-on case by case (2)  
Parent Education (2)  
Advanced classes (2)  
System-centered (2)  
Playground safety issues (2)  
Lack of parent involvement (2)  
Too many kids in one lunch (2)  
More health classes (2)  
Principals need more support (2)  
Transportation (2)  
Block scheduling (2)  
Continuity between teachers/schools and same grade level (2)  
Kingsley Mont. Center/School-out of date (2)  
Financial expenditures (1)  
Safety/Discipline (1)  
Grounds (1)  
Earlier recognition of strengths/talents (1)  
Bus stops should not be on major roads (1)  
Respect between departments (1)  
Transients (1)  
Office aides-custodial – time in buildings (1)  
Inconsistencies between Course Content Alignment (1)  
Grammar expectation (1)  
Parent involvement – Secondary (1)  
Under use of facilities (computer lab) (1)  
Diverse resources for secondary students (1)  
New child card system (1)  
Teacher prep time (1)  
Staff attitudes toward some students  
All clocks should have same time  
Sports facilities  
Setting goals  
Community supported programs  
In-school suspension-meaningful & learn from detention  
Keeping a focus

Accessing usable data  
Pulling in more community members  
Not enough lockers for all students  
Celebrating successes  
Teacher leaders representing grade levels  
Higher enrollment  
Resources for teachers  
Time (planning & collaboration)  
Developing school pride  
Student readiness out of middle school  
Grants  
A.C. in elementary schools  
Systemic processes – district-wide  
Higher expectations  
Moving on too quickly  
Family involvement  
Transition from Elem. to Middle school  
Social promotion increases achievement gap  
PD programs for all dept. – staff driven  
Equity in MS facilities  
Staff Development  
Graduation rate  
Business partnerships  
Parent needs  
Teacher Assessment  
Summer tech./lang. program  
Physical activity  
Multiple intelligences  
Stick to plans that are working & “tweak” as necessary  
Aide time  
Workbooks for lower elem. students  
Activities & Equipment for kids  
Follow up on new programs  
Reputation changes  
Building/District curriculum alignment  
Consistent grading practices  
Split classes  
More support services

**Are there practices, programs or services currently in place or currently being offered by the Waterford Schools that should be discontinued?**

**Most Frequently Identified**

School of Choice (39)

Duplicate requests for information (35)

Staff cuts from bottom up (29)  
Skipping a day of cleaning for buildings (26)

**Also Mentioned**

No Junk food sold (pop machines) Healthier Diet (23)  
Lower Expectations-being lowered to help kids pass (21)  
Split classes (21)  
Downsizing buildings (20)  
Ed line (20)  
Duplicate meetings (19)  
Voice Mail-Take it away (19)  
Social Promotion (19)  
Children's Village support by Oak Cty instead (17)  
MEAP-to compare schools & districts-pull program (16)  
Use of PCMI (15)  
Allowing politics to drive decisions (15)  
Eliminate access to student population by general public (14)  
Allocation of funds-are distributed for extra curricular activities (11)  
Re-evaluate how difficult children are handled or dealt with in the classroom (11)  
Need police liaisons in each middle school (as well as keep HS) (11)  
Stop or limit interruptions to class time (10)  
Discontinue the block schedule (10)  
Current report cards-makes more parent friendly (10)  
Structure of school year-extra minutes (10)  
Suspensions (10)  
Meetings for the sake of meeting (8)  
Passing the buck/blaming (8)  
Printing/duplicating - use more electronic means (8)  
Discipline system reform (8)  
Nepotism (7)  
Revisit inclusion practices (7)  
Extra meetings (7)  
Latch Key (7)  
Block scheduling – flex (7)  
Out of state travel for conferences (6)  
Bullying/Swearing (6)  
Parks and Recreation control of 6<sup>th</sup> grade athletics (6)  
Disparity of allocation of resources throughout the district and/or top to bottom (6)  
Curriculum Resources (5)  
Attendance Policy (5)  
Support Services-across the Board (5)  
Curriculum Night (5)  
Stop school selection (5)  
Stop any thought of privatization (5)  
Including certain subgroups for MEAP (5)  
Reducing critical resources (5)

Start times for school day (5)  
Assessments that don't tell us anything (4)  
Overloading elem. Secretaries (4)  
Over-charging for lost employee badges (4)  
Keeping buildings so hot (4)  
Current tenure program for probationary teachers (4)  
Mid-winter break (4)  
Unreasonable communication (3)  
Charging for parking (3)  
Career Cruising (redesign) (3)  
Parent teacher conference set up (3)  
Stop negotiating-needs to be finalized (3)  
Meal Magic (bank fee) (3)  
Mandatory seminar (3)  
Revisit SAT process (3)  
Preschool tours for incoming kindergarteners (3)  
Re-evaluate follow thru of discipline in classrooms (2)  
After Hours use of buildings (2)  
Discovery – Better Program! (2)  
New procedures for childcare (2)  
Beef up career planning for kids (2)  
Weekly staff meetings (2)  
Being lax on enforcement of No-Smoking (2)  
Current SRT format (2)  
BAR Documents (2)  
Teaching Spanish in Kindergarten (1)  
Lunch time 10A.M. (1)  
Defensive driving class (1)  
More email follow up with graduates (1)  
Professional development for support staff (1)  
Charging for sporting events (1)  
Keeping secrets (1)  
Mid winter break changes (1)  
Producing unnecessary reports  
Systems/Operations  
Professional Development  
Making excuses  
Paper pay checks  
Office staff reductions without building input  
Unneeded electives  
M.S. exit evaluation by teachers  
Cell Phone Policy  
Social promotion  
Report cards/comments in the same month as conferences  
New teacher development

**Are there new practices, programs or services that the Waterford Schools should initiate? If so, what might those be?**

**Most Frequently Identified**

Tuition reimbursement for employees (21)  
4 day work week in summer for 12 month staff (21)  
Critical thinking vs. learning how to take a test (MEAP) (20)  
More support/training/person for students with sp. needs (16)  
Partnership with other districts/community (16)

**Also Mentioned**

Offer incentives for support staff certification (13)  
Elementary foreign language (13)  
Improve image of Waterford Schools (12)  
Positive behavior support (12)  
Physical activity (12)  
Varied & Nutritious Lunch/Health Education (12)  
Offer enrichment programs during school day for adv. Students (11)  
School nurse at each building (10)  
Positive behavior support programs (12)  
Hold tenure teachers accountable (10)  
Enrichment Programs (10)  
Magnet program & possibly a separate school or curriculum (10)  
Bully Prevention Program (9)  
Social Worker/Increased time or full time (9)  
Hire tech. teachers (9)  
Training for displaced/re-assigned staff (9)  
Dedicated fleet replacements (8)  
Technology – latest/greatest (8)  
District-wide staff development (7)  
Larger building budgets (7)  
Recycling program (7)  
Life guard training (7)  
Enrollment (7)  
Hire more staff (6)  
Career/job shadow opportunity (6)  
Improved access to breakfast program (6)  
Cross-curricular technology integration (data base/website evaluation) (6)  
Data tracking system (5)  
More Middle School athletics/activities (5)  
Reasonable childcare solutions/return to former billing schedule (7)  
Accountability for students leaving 8<sup>th</sup> grade (5)  
Life skills program (5)  
In-district “free cycle” (5)  
Future driven curriculum (careers) (4)  
More learning opportunities for students/after school (4)

More disaster training (4)  
Parent Ed. courses (4)  
Intramural programs (4)  
I.B. program (3)  
Re-introduce Leaders/Readers program (dropped this year) (3)  
District time card system (3)  
Support curriculum with resources (3)  
School uniforms (3)  
High-school peer mentoring w/elementary kids (3)  
Principal evaluations involving school community (3)  
Streamline systems that are well defined by ALL (3)  
Improve ESL (3)  
Facilities/Grounds (3)  
Dress code improvement/enforcements (3)  
Tri-mesters (3)  
Mentoring students (3)  
More support for Libraries (3)  
Full-time reading intervention in every building (2)  
Offer affordable insurance to those who have none (2)  
Electronic Pay options at local school sites (3)  
Parent contact events (2)  
Computer learning (2)  
Essential Learning (2)  
After school tutoring (2)  
Early-childhood education (2)  
Teaching in depth not breadth (2)  
More resources for new families to district (mentoring program for parents) (2)  
Create gifted & talented program (2)  
Smaller class size (2)  
Equipment-Update (2)  
Additional Counselors (2)  
Community/College partnerships (2)  
Pay to play (2)  
Magnet programs (1)  
Handwriting (1)  
Character building (1)  
Self-esteem (1)  
Teacher to teacher mentoring (1)  
6<sup>th</sup> Hour (1)  
Weekly communications/updates – Parents (1)  
More security (1)  
Peer Support Programs –Grief, Divorce, Eating Disorder (1)  
Social Skills Curriculum (1)  
Close buildings over breaks (1)  
Improved playgrounds (1)  
Alt. curriculum nights (1)

Nutritional programs (1)  
 Science based program (at all levels) (1)  
 More Advanced Placements courses (1)  
 Teaching beyond the content (understand the learner) (1)  
 Catch up math program in Middle School (1)  
 Reading Recovery in every building (1)  
 Senior Project (1)  
 Communication between employees (1)  
 Alternative Middle School  
 More recreation space for seniors  
 Total funding for athletics activities & 2-way transportation for athletics  
 Freshman Academy  
 Flexibility in hiring to meet student needs  
 Separate 9<sup>th</sup> Grade  
 Expand Schools of Choice  
 Longevity incentives  
 Allow for each building to be unique  
 Team plan hour  
 Quarterly staff development meetings  
 Elementary Talented and Gifted program  
 Fine arts in buildings  
 Unlimited supplies  
 More enrichment programs  
 Elementary Foreign Language program  
 Staff release time for assessments  
 Advertisements – promotion  
 Evening enrichment programs  
 Volunteer programs  
 Adult Ed/Community ed.  
 More electives  
 Building self esteem  
 Evaluation  
 Tutoring/Counseling Services  
 Developing leaders

**New opportunities to insure future success always exist. What new opportunities do you believe exist and should be pursued by the Waterford School District?**

**Most Frequently Identified**

Partnerships - Community/colleges/Big 3 /Alt-energy Company (40)  
 Make all schools “Blue Ribbon” (21)  
 Intramural sports for older kids (middle & high school) (21)  
 Grant opportunity/availability (18)  
 Parent’s steering committees at district level (17)  
 Expand volunteer programs to include senior citizens & retirees (16)

### Also Mentioned

- PAC'S in a better fashion (12)
- Community service as grad. requirement (12)
- Provide services to other districts (10)
- Implement tuition reimbursement for support staff (8)
- Expand bilingual programs-earlier language (8)
- Shared leadership (6)
- Community Rec Center for kids (6)
- Peer mentoring in own school (homework help) (6)
- Vo-tech-more offerings (6)
- HW Club-all buildings w/bus to take kids home (6)
- National elections (5)
- More social services (5)
- Utilize Senior Center (5)
- Merit Programs for students and staff (5)
- Professional Development for untenured teachers (5)
- New staff (5)
- On-line courses (5)
- PTA council across schools (5)
- Explore diversity (5)
- Increase At-risk programming (5)
- Implementation of data mart (4)
- After school weight training & fitness class for students (4)
- Improve early participation in sports, band, language, performing arts to open doors for scholarships (4)
- High school credit at Middle School (4)
- Incentives for enhancing instruction & keeping good educators (4)
- Parent education – family out-reach (4)
- Combine marching bands at Mott & Kettering! (4)
- 360 evaluations of teachers/administrators/staff (4)
- Allow high schools to go to middle schools to promote band & orchestra (4)
- Communication – internal and external (3)
- Establish Bus routes for drivers before school begins (3)
- School liaisons in middle schools (3)
- Adding
  - Freshman Academies (3)
  - Uniforms (3)
  - Open forum for School Board-web based (3)
  - Discipline follow-thru & if expulsion necessary (3)
  - This planning process/Think tank (3)
  - Parent support in classroom (3)
  - Video Production/Programming–Broadcasting (3)
  - Graduation requirements bringing parent involvement (3)
  - Go Green with Bond dollars (2)
  - Year round school (2)
  - Tutoring programs (2)

Access to technology (2)  
Mentoring (2)  
Schedule restructuring (2)  
Additional college-pre programs (2)  
Healthy food options (2)  
District to be more green (2)  
Utilizing performing arts center more (2)  
Distance learning (2)  
Magnet schools (2)  
I.B. program (2)  
More connection of social workers and psychs to buildings (2)  
More camps for sports as youths (2)  
Exit interviews for those leaving district (1)  
Schools of Choice  
Motor programs (1)  
Full time ESL (1)  
After school/exercise programs (1)  
Challenging the status quo/not being complacent (1)  
In house community college course offerings (1)  
Mandatory parent volunteering (1)  
Data tracking (1)  
Teacher led in services (1)  
Closer ties with social services agencies (1)  
Job shadowing/career planning (1)  
Increased collaboration (1)  
Host more state-wide events (1)  
Finish teacher contracts to secure future for all students (1)  
Share Point (1)  
Project-based learning  
Diverse clientele  
New business partnerships  
Athletic program alignment  
Grants  
Parks & Rec.  
Valued Volunteer Program  
Expand food service during summer

**Potential threats to future success exist for every organization. What threats to the future success of the Waterford School District do you see?**

**Most Frequently Identified**

Economy (70)  
State funding/NCLB (38)  
Negotiations/Lack of contract (38)  
Poor staff morale/stressed employees (32)  
Privatization (out sourcing) of staff (29)

### **Also Mentioned**

Our reputation (26)  
Money (22)  
Negativity (20)  
Community social program (poverty, crime, drugs) (18)  
Discipline issues & bully problems (16)  
Acceptance of Mediocrity (15)  
Mandates/NCLB (14)  
Promotion of unprepared students (14)  
Community apathy (14)  
Waterford's population make-up is changing faster than we are (13)  
Losing students to more progressive/well funding school districts (12)  
Catering to all parent demands (11)  
"Us" vs "Them" mentality (11)  
Loss of grants (10)  
Elections (local & national)/ Politics (10)  
Staff accountability (9)  
Increasing class sizes (12)  
Parent involvement (7)  
Childcare-enrollment down-kids home along-withdrawing kids from district (7)  
Behavior problems at earlier ages (6)  
Residency fraud (who tracks) (6)  
Reciprocity-lack of between the Board, Cen. Office, Buildings, & Staff (6)  
Transient population (5)  
Not offering expanded curriculum (5)  
Schools of Choice (5)  
Lack of world peace (5)  
Rising costs (5)  
PCMI (4)  
School security (4)  
Changing demographics (4)  
Inconsistencies across schools (class sizes, programs) (4)  
Negative PR (4)  
Lack of district vision (3)  
Time and money (3)  
Too much! We need depth not breadth (3)  
Overcrowding (3)  
Drugs, alcohol, firearms (2)  
Getting rid of "extra-curriculars" (2)  
Misrepresentation of data (2)  
School Image (up keep & cleanliness) (2)  
Violence (2)  
Not enough gifted programs (2)  
Being overwhelmed (2)  
Loss of quality personnel (2)

Closings (3)  
Lack of Focus (2)  
Pontiac Schools (2)  
Parent realities and our lack of understanding (2)  
Bad kids out shine good kids (2)  
Economic woes (2)  
Number of special needs kids increasing with lack of resources (2)  
Family dysfunction (1)  
Lack of developing attitude of change (1)  
Rumors about schools amongst students (1)  
Over regulation of class programs (1)  
Declining property taxes (1)  
Misconceptions about secondary schools (1)  
Diversity challenges (1)  
District and Government need to work together (1)  
Relevant curriculum (1)  
Business influences/ twp. approval (1)  
Morale (1)  
Miss use of money (1)  
Higher state expectations without support (1)  
Unbalanced/focused on curriculum "all subjects" (1)  
Lack of a clear vision and follow through (1)  
Over population (1)  
Lack of consistency in discipline (1)  
Perception of our district  
Breach of safety standards  
Competition  
New Board Members  
Poor communications  
Blocked access to information  
Lack of technology  
Lack of support  
Lack of materials  
Relationships  
WCLB  
Apathy  
Test scores  
Community changes  
Lack of resources  
Not changing  
Poverty  
Graduation requirements  
Terrorists  
Mainstream media  
Special needs children are rising in number

**Is there anything that you would like to tell us that you have not had the opportunity to say?**