

# Education

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## Introduction

During the recent Reality Check Workshops, topical experts and members of the public worked together in small groups to examine a particular topic in-depth. During the two-hour workshops they worked with a trained facilitator to complete the following exercises:

- 1) Review of Ideas. Participants reviewed all of the ideas related to their topic that were collected during the community Idea Gathering Sessions.
- 2) Critical Questions. Participants engaged in a discussion of two Critical Questions, which had been identified by the *Vision for Staten Island* Steering Committee. The facilitator recorded the results of the discussion on flipchart paper, and then helped the group summarize major areas of agreement and disagreement.
- 3) Implementation Recommendations. At the end of the discussion period, each participant wrote down two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps to help Staten Island achieve its vision for their topic.

The results from the Education group are provided below. Note that responses have been recorded verbatim, and some errors may remain due to handwriting legibility. Responses are numbered for reference purposes only; this does not indicate any sense of priority.

## Quick Brainstorm:

What are the hallmarks of a quality education?

1. Enriched city
2. De-emphasize tests
3. Qualified teachers – compassion, passionate
4. Functional, adaptive, independent life skills
5. Small class size. Develop relationships between staff and students
6. Update materials (current)
7. Communication improved among admin/teachers/parents
8. Emphasis on learning
9. Students access suitable and appropriate study and work space

**Critical Question 1:**

What can members of the Staten Island community do to improve the quality of schools?

1. Understand role of museums in supporting school curriculum
2. Parents involvement in child's school. Understand issues and needs
3. Delineate politics from admin of schools – critical areas, i.e. zoning
4. Partnership with cultural and local community organizations and invite in school. Be aware of needs/issue to supply enrichment
5. Demand compliance of Mayor and chancellor. Complete transparency in spending
6. Parents and other adults encourage good attendance (i.e. incentives)
7. Internships/mentors for students – parents, faculty i.e. retired teachers, teachers, ? students to overcome obstacles
8. Community way. Schools work to be more aware of issues, education and the system
9. Businesses and neighborhoods – more involvement with the educational CBA, SLT's, CBO's as member of the teams
10. Common Educational Council utilize forum to learn and discuss the school/education issues
11. Collaborative Boards assist funding outside of Board of Education (i.e. private co. fund and update equipment)
12. Payment of taxes to fund the school
13. Keep school environment, including stores springing up in the area, clean and safe and positive
14. SI parents be responsible: ensure children go to school and have materials through parenting “workshops” and positive work ethic

**Critical Question 1 SUMMARY:**

No summary was provided.

**Critical Question 2:**

What are some creative education initiatives that may be suitable for Staten Island? How might we pursue these?

1. Parent Leadership Academy, parenting workshop. Help parents be stronger voice. Mentoring/modeling
2. Local public/catholic/colleges share resources and dialogue, take advantage of small town environment. Improve relationship between public and catholic schools
3. Info sharing through website operated by borough with all community activities
4. Non-school hours use of the building for broad range of programs, activities, events (not limited to education activities), community (i.e. families/all ages). School building and grounds as hub of community (Beacon schools)
5. Public library and museum programs. Make community aware by public relations, marketing and PR expertise, to provide org with the expertise for community
6. Info sharing through website operated by borough with all community activities (duplicate; see#3)
7. Rethink school year, more shorter sessions with optional vacations (i.e. week off, some go on vacation and whol year school, more like work schedule)
8. Emphasize diversity, sensitivity and compassion (i.e. bring people constructive ways to learn about differences with sense of sensitivity of other cultures)
9. Use arts and culture to teach diversity (i.e. teach African dance to Irish community). Theater, story telling, folk tale. Social tolerance, not just tolerance. Rejoice in differences
10. Redesigned school building. Use bid system for architectural designs
11. More interaction between teachers and parents to build relationships, recreational activities, email, telephone, calls, structure that kids feel safe and comfortable and supporting children

**Critical Question 2 SUMMARY:**

No summary was provided

**Implementation Recommendations:**

Consider the draft vision statement, the ideas gathered from the public, and your group's discussion of critical questions. Please recommend two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps that you would recommend to help Staten Island achieve its vision for your topic.

1. Build more and better designed schools which will not only better serve the educational needs of our students but also serve the larger community as a unifying hub
2. Restructure the school day and school year to better reflect the way families exist in today's society. School start times, school vacation time and community needs should inform school schedules
3. Recognize that important education happens outside of school. Create a website to serve as a source for parenting information: fun/educational family events at museums; help for families in crisis
4. Make school facilities available to groups and organizations, especially those that support lifelong learning
5. The DOE should enter into partnerships with CBOs to turn schools into community centers during off hours in order to provide a myriad of programs to support the entire community
6. The DOE should enter into partnerships with civil service, federal agencies and service organizations to establish job training, internships, mentoring programs and job placement programs
7. Replace the superintendent with someone who is a graduate of the Chancellor's Principal Academy
8. Emphasize full year and full day schooling for students and the community
9. Go back to basics (ABC's, addition/subtract). Let teachers teach and parents parent. Respect, accountability
10. Open education up to the neighborhood. Bring in cultural venues, open education up to adults. Partnership with BOE and CBO and schools
11. True partnership between administration, teachers and parents when developing education policies for the school
12. To give school leadership teams real power not just a name
13. Parent groups/school based teams should take advantage of the fact that there are 3 local foundations to fund creative initiatives in schools
14. Culinary/nutrition/health programs in schools, working with local restaurants and registered dieticians
15. Need to literally open up schools to neighborhoods and communities so that schools are the focus and are supported businesses, neighbors, etc. What happens inside is transparent enough so all resources are used to educate SI children
16. Parents need to be trained so they can become professionals in the sense of education

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