

Executive Summary

Of the small group work activity responses

Reimagine Alton Community Engagement Workshop #2 November 2025

Overview

Over 80 community members participated in the Reimagine Alton Community Workshop, held at Alton Middle School on November 5, 2025. The session was designed to engage district staff, parents, and community partners in collaborative discussions focused on improving student attendance and graduation outcomes.

The workshop was guided by a shared commitment to ensuring that every student in the Alton School District is supported on a clear path to success. Participants explored root causes of attendance challenges, shared parent and community perspectives, and developed actionable strategies to foster a culture of belonging, accountability, and achievement.

Activity 1: Attendance Strategies

Working in small groups, participants collaborated to develop and document practical strategies for improving attendance rates. First, each group reviewed current strategies the district is using to determine if a strategy should be continued. Then, groups generated new ideas that the district, families and the broader community could implement to further improve attendance.

Summary of Responses

Response to the District's Current Strategies

The majority of the small groups believed the district should continue all of its current attendance strategies.

Suggested Attendance Strategies

District-Focused

- Improve communication platforms such as ParentSquare for clarity and accessibility.
- Implement visible attendance dashboards and recognition systems by grade level.
- Provide staff with training on cultural awareness, trauma-informed practices, and family engagement.
- Offer flexible, personalized outreach to chronically absent students and their families beginning in kindergarten.

Parent-Focused

- Increase opportunities for two-way communication between home and school.
- Build awareness of attendance expectations and the impact of absences on learning.
- Provide workshops and resources to help families establish healthy routines such as bedtimes, study habits, and morning routines.
- Encourage parents to participate in parent forums, surveys, and conferences.
- Reinforce positive attendance habits through recognition and home-school collaboration.

Community-Focused

- Leverage local organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, churches, and neighborhood groups to provide mentoring, after-school programs, and family support.
- Encourage businesses to celebrate attendance milestones and offer incentives.
- Strengthen neighborhood communication networks for check-ins and outreach.
- Host community workshops and public campaigns to promote the value of daily attendance.

Activity 2: Student Success and Graduation Rate Strategies

Participants also collaborated to develop and document practical strategies for improving student success and graduation rates. Again, they first reviewed the strategies the district is currently using to determine if a strategy should be continued. Then, they generated new ideas the district, families and the broader community could implement to impact student success and the graduation rate.

Response to the District's Current Strategies

The majority of the small groups believed the district should continue all of its current strategies to improve student success and graduation rate.

Suggested Student Success and Graduation Rate Strategies

District-Focused

- Provide consistent academic and social-emotional support from early grades through high school.
- Develop advisory and mentorship programs to monitor student progress toward graduation.
- Promote early career exploration and alternative pathways such as vocational training, college, military, and entrepreneurship.
- Maintain transparent data on graduation requirements, progress towards those requirements, and post-secondary outcomes.

Parent-Focused

- Help families better understand graduation pathways and post-secondary options so they can best advise their children.
- Provide opportunities for parents to connect with school counselors, teachers, and administrators for early intervention.
- Model a growth mindset with language such as “when you graduate” rather than “if you graduate.”
- Celebrate student milestones and foster excitement around senior year.

Community-Focused

- Partner with businesses and community groups to offer internships, job shadowing, and scholarship opportunities.
- Host community-wide celebrations or develop public promotional materials to recognize graduates and their achievements.
- Provide local workshops on college and career readiness, including support for students struggling to complete school.
- Engage mentors to provide one-on-one support for at-risk youth and their families.
- Ensure community spaces promote the message that attendance plus passing every class equals graduation.

Emerging Themes

1. Relationships and Communication

Participants emphasized the importance of genuine, respectful relationships among students, teachers, and families. Parents expressed appreciation for open communication

beyond email and requested more personalized outreach, especially for families experiencing barriers such as transportation, work schedules, or housing insecurity.

2. Early and Consistent Intervention

Many participants agreed that attendance and graduation challenges begin early and require consistent, compassionate intervention. From kindergarten readiness to senior-year planning, the community voiced a unified call to start sooner and stay connected.

3. Community Collaboration

There was a strong consensus that improving attendance and graduation rates requires a shared responsibility across all stakeholders. Businesses, civic organizations, and community partners can help provide mentorship, incentives, and wraparound support that schools alone cannot offer.

4. Mental Health and Belonging

Participants highlighted the need for ongoing investment in mental health services and student well-being. They recommended additional social workers, trauma-informed training, and peer support programs to foster belonging and emotional resilience.

5. Cultural Competence and Equity

Equitable engagement was a recurring theme. Stakeholders emphasized that all staff should understand and respect the diverse cultural and social contexts of Alton's students. Training and community partnerships were seen as key to building trust and inclusion.

Consensus Points

As the Reimagine Alton process continues, participants agreed that the district should:

- Pursue a holistic approach connecting attendance, academic engagement, and social-emotional well-being.
- Maintain transparency with families and the public about attendance data, graduation data, and improvement plans.
- Empower teachers and staff through professional development and manageable class sizes to strengthen relationships.

- Partner with community organizations and local businesses to create opportunities for students to thrive both inside and outside of school.
- Celebrate milestones to reinforce a positive, future-focused school culture centered on the message that every day counts and every student matters.

Summary Statement

Community members were clear that improving attendance and graduation outcomes in Alton will require shared accountability, early engagement, and deep community partnership. The Reimagine Alton process reflects a unified belief that every student deserves the support, encouragement, and opportunity to succeed from their first day of school to the day they graduate and beyond.