

WHAT COUNTS

“I was surprised by the diversity of participants - parents, teachers, political members, business members, and community leaders - and pleased with the openness of the conversation, and the freedom to be heard and speak without judgment.” -*Community Participant*

“We have found that the information we collected from our community is an affirmation of the school system's good work and an additional effective tool to keep us focused on continuous improvement. We are looking forward to using the process again in the future.” -*Superintendent*

“**What Counts** helped our community go from a perception that we were on opposite sides of the fence to an understanding of different roles with a common cause. This forum has become a respected and highly effective communications tool that is held every other year in our district.” -*Board Member*

“The open discussion forum really spoke to a collaborative effort for our children's success. I enjoyed having a student at my table to hear that point of view.” -*Community Participant*

“**What Counts** provided us with the perfect opportunity to engage the community in dialogue centered on continuous improvement of the school system. The feedback we received has proven to be invaluable and continues to serve as a benchmark as we look at where we have been, where we are today, and where we are going.” -*Superintendent*

“The night of the event, I was nervous; would people come and would they think it worthwhile? Turnout was great and the facilitator did an excellent job of keeping everyone focused, on task, and on schedule. The energy level was high and people were excited to be a part of the event.” -*Board Member*

“I was surprised by the different perspectives of our table group depending upon their past experiences with the school system, their current involvement, and their passion.” -*Community Participant*



Community Conversations in Maryland

For more information on community forums, contact:

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What does your community **value** about your public schools?

What factors do they think contribute most to **student success**?

What should **count** in education?



What Counts is a proven and effective community engagement tool for boards of education seeking to open or enhance dialogue with stakeholders in their district. Since 2005, numerous Maryland boards have convened *What Counts* forums with valuable results and positive feedback from participants.

Following an initial forum, several boards have subsequently convened forums that are either a follow up to the original one, or with a change of topic, such as **What Counts With Our Budget**. Attendance at subsequent forums remains as high as the initial event, with survey results being just as enthusiastic.

What Counts asks citizens - parents, students, community members, governmental and business leaders - their perception of the local public schools, what is important about them, and what should count when assessing their productivity and success. This sampling of the public's perception yields immediate data valuable to boards and staff in moving forward with continuous improvement and student achievement.

Without exception, all forums have experienced high attendance numbers with diverse community members attending. Evaluation forms routinely reveal at least 95% percent of participants found the evening worthwhile and would return for future forums.

If asked, what would your community say?