Teacher Advisory Committee
West High School Library Classroom
Thursday, November 19, 2015

Attendees

Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent
Dr. Rodney Russell, Director of Human Capital
Karen Carson, Board Member, District 5
Lauren Hopson, KCEA President
Eric Agular, Chilhowee Intermediate School
Merry Anderson, Karns Middle School
Chris Beatty, Powell High School
Annette Benson, Corryton Elementary
Jannice Clark, Kelley Volunteer Academy
Tanya Coats, Farragut Intermediate School
Laura Davis, West High School
Rebekah Ellis, L&N STEM Academy
Kelly Farr, Mount Olive Elementary
Jessica White, Cedar Bluff Middle School
Jessica Holman, Principal, Inskip Elementary
Beth Howard, AP, Hardin Valley Academy
Heidi Knapczyk-Walsh, Christenberry Elementary
Wanda Lacy, Farragut High School
Ryan Milani, Career Magnet Academy
Jarrod Pendergraft, Halls Middle School
Dr. Kitty Pruett, Northwest Middle School
Laurie Price, Bearden High School
Jessica White, Cedar Bluff Middle School
Lee Anna Wright, Northwest Middle/Ridgedale
Jennifer Sullivan, Administrative Assistant

Not in Attendance

Jessica Helman, Vine Middle Magnet School

Guests

Dr. Elizabeth Alves, Chief Academic Officer
Millicent Smith, Executive Director of C & I
Dr. Kathy Sims, Chief Human Resources Officer

Greeting & Introductions

- Everybody introduced themselves, including guests.
- Reviewed topics for discussion and given time to adjust timing on the calendar as necessary. The calendar is a draft and is fluid if necessary.
- There were a few additions and changes made to the calendar regarding topics for discussion. An updated version will be provided to members.

TAC Members to Report to the Board of Education

- Review of tentative schedule of which member was scheduled to report to the Board of Education and on which date.
- A few "trades" were made
- An updated version of this schedule will be provided to members

TNReady

- Previous years have seen more presentation of these topics, consensus is that there is a desire to have more discussion and less formal presentation time. Appropriate district personnel were on hand to answer questions as they arose.
- Members had a few minutes of discussion time with their neighbors to start generating ideas for discussion.
- Some were concerned that that their schools didn't have enough hardware so scheduling of devices could become a challenge.
- State has specifications on what is required & analysis has shown that each school meets these specifications in hardware-- question may be what type of devices are in each school, and how the schedule is structured
- Most felt that testing is do-able but scheduling is challenging---concerns are absentees or tardy students---when do they make up sessions or how do they squeeze these students into the timeframe?
- Some were concerned about the instructional time that might be missed when scheduling exams--- group shared creative solutions that their schools were trying to limit this issue.
- Some stated that they were taking the math test during math block and English during English block, perhaps by extending the block a bit but they would get to participate in all classes
- CMA has decided to come up with a few scheduling models and pick the one that works best for their staff and students. Perhaps sharing best practices with TAC when this is completed.
- Elementary grade teacher expressed anxiety is being felt by some students. It is their first time taking a major exam, feeling pressure, inadequate typing skills at this age, etc. Question asked, where is that coming from? Some acknowledged that source is really adults.

- In the high school, manpower involved in scheduling, checking rosters, printing tickets, roster corrections, etc. has felt like a full time job for a couple of weeks
- The High School models can be helpful to the middle schools and elementary schools as they move forward to ease the process.
- Some blocks were a little longer but the students and teachers seemed less stressed when taking assessment in their regular class blocks.
- Some schools may be using their Fine and Practical Arts teachers as well as their ELL teachers to "proctor" assessments. Creative solutions need to be considered when reviewing their scheduling process
- State has issued very specific and narrow guidance for determining which students may be eligible for read aloud accommodations on the ELA assessment. Causing some angst for some teachers and parents so more communication regarding the State's narrow definition for accommodations for TNReady would be beneficial.
- There is a rigorous protocol for determination so it may only be a limited amount of students who are eligible, but there is no limit on how many can receive this accommodation as long as they are eligible. There are no "quotas" or number limits per school.
- The reason given for this protocol is that the State wants to get an accurate measure of how well a student reads. If a student can de-code they usually don't qualify for the read aloud accommodations.
- The same rationale goes for the non-calculator portions of math even if they have the accommodation.
- Everybody, regardless of accommodations, can use the "text to speech" function for the math test, if the teacher requests it.
- Some of the general concerns are coming from a feeling of uncertainty or the unknown…normal feeling when endeavoring something new.
- High school folks feeling a bit better than elementary and middle because they have now done the TNReady assessment and it is no longer an unknown.
- Some more specific concerns included: are the kids prepared regarding curriculum, will the students have the computer skills required, passing anxiety to the kids, getting out of the TCAP mindset, stressed parents (especially 1st time parents)
- Some feeling that the state could improve on communicating how different this test is from TCAP. Some teachers fear what they have been taught to teach is not going to line up with the test, although we are told this assessment is designed to fully align with Tennessee standards.
- Some teachers are frustrated with the fact that a multi-part question may be an all or nothing situation. It appears that in some circumstances, the students may not be given credit for getting some parts correct.
- Some are very excited that we have a test that is making our kids excel in critical thinking rather than recall content.

- Some are very excited that kids will be learning across the curriculum---one holistic idea presented in all courses.
- Some are concerned that scores are going to affect their evaluations… a question was posed concerning waiving this process for a year to allow the teachers to get acquainted with the process. This topic has been raised at the state level, and it does not appear to be an option due to the NCLB waiver from US DOE.
- In relation, some mentioned that the topic of data brings up the question of "How it will be used"…not necessarily what the test is but uncertainty about how it will be used.
- Superintendent stated that we recognize that this year is a new assessment measuring skills we've never measured before, and will be a new baseline.
- Superintendent noted that personnel decisions will not be made based on a single data point (2015-16 TNReady scores), particularly in such a big transition year. KCS typically looks at multiple factors over multiple years when making personnel decisions. How do we communicate this clearly to teachers to lessen anxiety?
- Most recommended a message straight from the Superintendent would be most meaningful regarding this topic. (maybe a holiday video?)
- This year, the impact of the data will not be as great due to statutory adjustments have been made (perhaps have John Beckett help get this message out)
- At schools that have a lower stress levels concerning TNReady, the following appear to have contributed: leadership has presented info in a clear and positive manner, the teachers tend to use common language across the curriculum, a more pro-active approach regarding expectations exists, teachers have taken a strong leadership role, they have accepted that the assessment is required and moved forward

<u>Summary on TNReady</u>

- Communication is critical to address concerns & uncertainty (Superintendent, Principals, instructional leaders, teachers, parents/students)
- We finally have a test that will align with our standards, and hopefully measures the skills we need our students to have for future success
- At the district level, we can share best practices
- Most feel that they have adequate information and materials to share with parents regarding the rationale and value of TNReady

Substitutes/Staffing

- Discussion of strategies that were put in place last year in response to the TAC conversation on subs.
- Fridays and Mondays seem to be the biggest problem days when trying to secure subs
- Some schools are having their current teachers absorb students in a crisis
- History/Context: A few years ago there was a real concern over who was subbing so the district raised substitute standards which means the pool shrunk
- Last year the TAC brainstormed on how to increase the substitute pool and the KCS instituted such actions as incentive pay for high needs schools which saw more retired teachers and other licensed people join the pool. It has made a difference for most schools, and has made a big impact at high needs schools
- We may need to consider other ideas for schools that are not high needs schools….perhaps examine compensating current teachers to sub on their planning period or looking at employing a full-time substitute (with benefits) for each large school
- May need to consider piloting a program in certain schools
- Communication needs to be made to the public regarding the flexibility of subbing (they can pick their school, choose their days/dates, etc.)
- If the schools have a good number of volunteers, HR can come directly to their school to do sub training to make it as convenient as possible. Maybe two schools come together for this.
- Also, one member suggested that some schools should make even more of an effort to treat their subs well so they will want to come back again…be better prepared for them!
- This topic has been discussed with TAC previously which prompted the incentive pay for high needs schools….Teacher Advisory Committee is having an important impact on decisions made in the KCS!

Closing remarks

- Additional topics for discussion should include: instructional technology (BLTCs, tech support, etc.) and student transportation
- Adjustments were requested to time table of topics to be discussed. Those adjustments will be made as well as the additional topics added.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 10, 2015
Proposed agenda items: RTI^2, Instructional Technology, Teacher Autonomy