

January 11, 2018 – West High School

Group 1 – Adults/Parents:

1. In what areas is Knox County Schools doing well?
 - Like full fall break
 - Glad that there is competency training system-wide
 - Communication is a strength – website, e-mail, phone calls
 - The curriculum is challenging
 - Overall looking at future needs of facilities
 - Multiple pathways – STEM, CMA, Paul Kelley, Byington-Solway
 - Dedicated staff, faculty, administrators
 - Good collaboration with business community
 - Community volunteers and partnerships!

2. In what areas does Knox County need to improve?
 - Facilities could be improved more quickly
 - Diversity of staff needs to be expanded *
 - Need to improve resources for students and civil rights
 - Schools need more support staff – social workers, counselors and fewer SRO's
 - Better communication for community forums *
 - We need to look at alternative learning styles and provide more trade programs, STEM, etc.
 - Elementary principals at under-performing schools need to be addressed, not moved (bad principals)
 - We need to raise teacher pay to compete with other counties
 - Our school administrators do not reflect the school's demographic
 - Some administrators and teachers do not dress or speak appropriately. Administrators and teachers should not dress like hookers. Faculty using “n” word.
 - Focus is all on college and students who don't fit into that track feel left out. Some students cannot afford IB and AB.
 - Push for technology, but no long-term funding plan. Do we have results that prove technology improves instruction?
 - Grades and test results should be posted more quickly
 - Need a KCS policy for transgender students
 - Communication on discipline policy. Inconsistent enforcement.
 - Kids who follow rules feel more attention is given to those who misbehave
 - Kids need to be fed. Sometimes students are fed at middle school and are not fed at high school. This should be consistent.
 - Disparities need representation at the district level by appointing staff to address issues. Add a department to look solely at these issues.*

3. What would you like to see initiated in the future?
 - Social media policies should be in place. Parents text students all day. Kids post whatever they want all day. Teachers do not collect cellphones. *
 - Teachers should not be on their cellphones. *

- Every school should offer honors, IB, AP classes
- Leadership Academy promotes training diverse leaders
- Work to recruit more diverse candidates
- Training needs to be in place for principals
- Alternate calendar 9 weeks/3 weeks
- Add more technical tracks to meet students' interests
- Elementary schools and middle schools could be structured in different ways (single gender classrooms)
- Montessori programs, nontraditional classrooms and broader structures for schools to operate within instead of one size fits all
- More support for students with learning disabilities and better collaboration between parents and schools to meet needs of all students
- IB Elementary School
- Pay increase for classified staff
- Need an accountability system foundations and PTO's instead of having the 1% making all of the decisions
- KCS is too dependent on support organizations
- Replace paid for incentives (food trucks) with free tickets to games, etc.
- Consideration for technology limitations at home (lack of WiFi). Not enough bandwidth at school
- Leaders need to be aware of all communities within each school zone (some kids have long bus rides and can't participate after school)
- Teach parents how to address concerns and advocate for their children
- Address concerns about overcrowding
- Empower parents to share their opinions
- Parents need a clear path so they know how to raise concerns with the appropriate staff

4. Is there anything else KCS needs to know?

- We need to better publicize what we are doing well for the community members to see – a dedicated webpage
- Better bus tracking technology

Group 1's determined themes:

- Consistency: Policies – social media and discipline. Set guidelines to be more detailed
- Access/Addressing Disparities: Free breakfast. Cum laude grading. Access to IB/AB. Appropriate incentives/technology for everyone. Sports/clubs for students bused to faraway schools. Gender/race/LGBTG
- Accountability: Underachieving teachers/principals. Teachers using phones. Resources. Communicating grades. PTSO. Spotlight on what people are doing well. Recognition & pay6. Empower parents.
- Diversity: Staff. Teaching styles. Research. Department. Community partnering/collaboration. Learning styles & curriculums – ALTERNATIVES

Student Group:

1. In what areas is Knox County Schools doing well?
 - Good job of creating a good learning environment with teachers (all good) – spreading of IB program with BMS
 - Chromebooks – nice not to use paper and can type notes
 - The faculty is incredible & coaches – easy to work with, understanding, and they legitimately care – they will give time to help you no matter how long! Gives example of French class and reading poetry, magazines and novels with improvement
 - Encourage a variety of classes to explore interests especially at high school level – coding, art, engineering options
 - On board can wholistically see all that is going on – positive community in many schools and students feel comfortable talking to people about academics and emotional (mental health) – upcoming cultural competency. The community has some concerns about this and KCS is moving in right direction
 - Informing students about different paths you can take – meeting with counselors the path you are on now and where you want to be – share websites. The counselors help figure out right course load and classes
 - At West, they have guest speakers who come in (advisory or during the day) – they have a WHS alum speaker next week who has experienced racism and can share his story. There are a variety of different types of speakers and keep focus broad, not just science and engineering. The speakers can share their stories.

2. In what areas does Knox County Schools need to improve?
 - To get to certain classes there are prerequisites – Coding I – need to take prerequisite to access computer science class. Pace is slower as he completes assignments quickly.
 - Advertise for summer opportunities or research programs that are available. Difficult to navigate multiple sites while balancing schoolwork. Create an area on website – gap year of summer opportunities.
 - Agree with comment above. This is something the Board Student Rep's Council can work on. Also need to have more promotion and receiving information about other community meetings.
 - Sister in middle school – beneficial to her more guidance outside of school (not what they like or academics) – other opportunities like service and potential other opportunities outside of school. Creating or highlighting these opportunities

3. What would you like to see initiated in the future?
 - In high school, you have a variety of classes, but in middle school not feeling challenged (even in honors). Choice of electives in middle school – so they can have time to learn more about elective focus
 - If KCS could have (facilitate) a mentorship like a Big Brother/Big Sister. A program where they can support a middle school student and could support with people (older students) who could help guide them. Example – WHS working with Pond Gap Elementary to sponsor. Shared idea about tutoring, reading buddies. Seniors could go to school and support, guide you and visit once a month (time frame). Could participate in related arts. Good use of resources.

- Arranging more field trips for sciences to go into local and national labs to see how/what is in curriculum and how it is applied. Think about offering on weekends so does not conflict with time.
- Agree with above statement – there are trips for social studies and ROTC, not for English, writing, science.
- Sometimes teachers don't have time based on IB curriculum. It can be a hassle for teachers with paperwork and finances. Could offer field trips in summer. One person could help offer support to teachers to plan field trips and paperwork.
- Someone at district to complete paperwork and find potential opportunities and they could help with planning
- Good idea – internship for college student in this role

4. Is there anything else Knox County Schools needs to know?

- Appreciation to students about how what you are saying will impact Knox County. The comments are heard and listened to.
- Knox County Schools gives students chance to share experiences good and bad (build on good and address bad)
- Came from a different country and what is confusing is AP, IB, Honors, and CP. Then looking at testing schedule and what colleges will accept.
- Never know when the exams are
- How do I benefit from an AP test – and hearing from others is it beneficial
- Counselors job to inform people about AP and IB then it is difficult if you don't take initiative to go ask. Training/responsibilities for the guidance counselors and they are up to date for what students are wanting.
- These IB/AP confusion could be frequently asked questions to help with information
- How can you use an online platform to capture the questions from students and then can be answered from district office
- Some information sent out with Remind and you could do something similar. Or a phone number that could answer questions

Student Group determined themes:

- Doing well – Faculty is helpful and provides a good learning environment through encouragement and dedication to their jobs. Making learning interactive throughout of schools hours and availability
- Needs to improve – Community and promote opportunities for students in summer and year-round. This includes options for electives at middle school.
 - Build network of support for teachers to plan field trips
 - Build network of support for students through mentorship