

Teacher Advisory Council
September 17, 2020
Sarah Simpson Professional Development Center, Great Room

Members in Attendance:

Bob Thomas
Davis Bodie
Stacy Davis
Amelie Delzer
Mavis Foster
Lindsay Kennedy
Brandon O'Neill
Cheryl Culbertson
Joy Thomas
Elishia Basner
Dave Brooks
Sherry Fischbach
Douglas James
Michelle Staal
Whitney Parson
Stacey Reece
Tanya Coats

Members not present:

Rachel Evans
Lynn Shuryan
Laurie Smith

Guests:

Carly Harrington
Renee Kelly
Ron McPherson
Russ Oaks
Jon Rysewyk

Superintendent Thomas welcomed Council Members

- Brief history of TAC purposes
- Encouraged boundaries and self-care
- Encouraged members to speak candidly, and take information back to share with their school staff
- Superintendents are collectively trying to meet with legislators about assessment and evaluation waivers
- In response to evaluation concerns: KCS Board of Education approved a resolution for waiver of evaluations, but Federal and State legislators would not approve waiver of guidelines, so we must prepare for evaluations
- All are encouraged to reach out to legislators to voice concerns

Each member introduced themselves and shared insights on what is going well and what challenges they are facing

- Reopening has gone better than expected
- Virtual students attending regularly are doing very well
- In-person students are doing well
- Minimum issues with students complying with mask rules
- Overall less behavior problems
- In-person students seem very happy to be at school
- Students seem to want close contact with one another
- Some virtual students express desire for more face-to-face instruction, others express desire for less
- Increase of workload in adapting to teaching virtually
- A member expressed “awe” at primary students’ adaptation to using Chromebooks and virtual students transitioning from academic to encore classes
- In-person students have stated they feel safe and happy to be back
- Students who like virtual learning are thriving
- Virtual learning should remain a component after pandemic ends
- Some teachers enjoying the new type of interaction with students
- Member encouraged to participate in TAC by cohorts seeking an advocate

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- Using Canvas for both virtual and in-person learning is timesaving
- Staff unity and support of one another has improved
- Church and community groups have generously donated plenty of masks to some schools, so even if students forget their masks there is an ample supply
- Schools on extended contract were given an extra 2 weeks used for professional development which was very beneficial
- Some teachers are really enjoying virtual learning while others are still struggling
- Some teachers in virtual and in-person teaching finding a love for both
- Impressed with staff and students' adaptation to the technology aspects
- School prepared staff very well to be online
- How will it (class size) look if large numbers of students switch back to in-person at the next semester?
- Teaching both virtual and in-person, virtual class is favorite class. Student contact is good, and they are very understanding and patient with the teacher learning to teach using new technology and new format
- 1:1 school for quite some time, so we are accustomed to using them. However, our Chromebooks are older, and some are having issues

Challenges and Concerns

- Teachers feel they are working extremely hard
- Some schools don't have what they need regarding technology
- Poor communication between administrators
- Kids craving normalcy, use of pencil and paper
- Obvious learning curve for students who have not had access to technology in the home and Socio-economic disparities more apparent (including schools not considered low-income)
- Concern for students of fine arts such as musical theater which has been pushed to the spring semester – and potential impact on college and scholarship opportunities
- Struggle to prepare lessons for in-person and virtual instruction
- School with older Chromebooks having battery-life issues. Even if fully charged in the morning, batteries do not last through the school day making it difficult for in-person learners
- Virtual teachers stress seems to be increasing as mid-term grading draws closer
- Evaluations – How can virtual teachers meet rubric criteria?
- Large class size (30)
- Kindergarten parents unable to walk students in
- Missing the full reading experience due to distancing and masks
- Some students seem to be on target while extremely far behind academically,
 - middle school honors students seem significantly behind
 - writing skills seem to have regressed
- There seems to be social, emotional and maturity delays, perhaps due to missed opportunities for growth during isolation
- Masks make speech therapy, hearing impaired lessons difficult
- Scheduling issues for in-person learners in speech therapy due to need for social distancing in small spaces. Only able to see 1-2 students at a time rather than 4-6
- Late changes in enrollment have made class size adjustments a little challenging
- Uneven class sizes (3 Kindergarten classes: 1 virtual with 15 students, 2 in-person with 22 students in each
- Administrators are overworked as well as teachers

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- Issues with teacher and student microphones going out at different times during virtual instruction time
- Many issues with Microsoft Teams
- Overwhelming teacher workload
- Concerns with primary grade students spending 7.5 - 7.75 hours daily in front of computer
- Can the technology team do something to help Canvas and Aspen to “talk” to one another?
- If students have computer issues and then complete assignments later, there is no notification for teacher that the assignment has been turned in
- Trying to understand attendance issues for virtual students-are students having technical issues, are students not signing in, or are they not returning for later portion of the day?
- Attendance with virtual is a bit of a struggle
- Taking attendance with Teams and reporting can become very stressful
- Teachers are largely concerned with evaluations. There are a lot of new tools to learn, but what are we going to be “good” at? Teachers can either master skills one at a time or go all in and gain low-level use of all at once
The evaluation and testing components are weighing heavily on most teachers
Not opposed to evaluations, but it needs to be recognized that things will look different
- Biggest stresses are time and evaluations. Many teachers are “just so tired.” There are late nights of planning, and virtual parents contact teachers throughout the evening into late night

- KCEA President Tanya Coats
 - Encouraged teachers to appeal to legislators about evaluations and assessments
 - “We are going to have to adapt and find solutions to COVID-19. It is not going away.”
 - Encouraged self-care
 - Pointed out that the pandemic did lead the district to 1:1 device
 - Thanked members for their honesty
 - Expressed gratitude to Superintendent Thomas for the two extra weeks of preparation prior to the beginning of school

Introduction of Superintendent’s Direct Reports: Each gave a brief description of their role in KCS

- Carly Harrington – Director of Public Affairs
- Russ Oaks-Operations Officer

Superintendent Thomas reiterated the need for substitutes. There are currently at least 25 full-time subs needed. The goal is to keep school open for students to learn in-person.

- **Cedar Bluff Elementary is currently on red largely due to the shortage of substitutes**

- Ron McPherson - Assistant Superintendent of Finance / Chief Finance Officer
- Jon Rysewyk – Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction / Chief Academic Officer
Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Renee Kelly – Chief of Staff

Topics for Discussion – Divide into Grade and Groups:

- **Chief of Staff Kelly instructed groups to list topics for discussion for future TAC meeting agendas with order of priority.**
 - **Elementary:**
 1. Synchronous vs. Asynchronous – Inconsistency

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2. Realistic expectation and how to communicate
 3. Evaluations
 4. Attendance for Virtual
 5. Break-out groups in Teams?
 - Spell out what that looks like
 - What exactly is policy?
 6. Student quarantine
 7. Moving students from in-person to virtual and from virtual to in-person
****VIRTUAL EXPECTATIONS –See above for questions**
- **Middle:**
1. Tech Glitches
 - Canvas talk to Aspen (grades)
 - Teams sort attendance by last name
 2. Teachers that virtual having all levels in one class with truly **no** support (sped, standard, honors)
 3. Directives for teachers on how long to be in virtual
 - Some teachers only take attendance and others on the entire class,
 - Equal playing field county wide
 - Some schools making paper copies for virtual kids – that creates problems at other schools
 - Address parent expectations
 - *To virtual parents*
 4. Teachers only have one plan period at some schools (50 min), others have two (1.5 hrs.), and others being asked to cover other teachers' classes due to absent teachers
- **High:**
1. Time for Teachers / Defining workday
 2. Students who are failing and not showing up
 3. Teams/Canvas/Aspen
 4. Leadership unification
 5. Evaluations

Wrap Up:

TAC Members will be introduced to the Board of Education at Work Session Wednesday, September 30, 5 p.m.

Next Meeting – Thursday, October 22, Great Room, Sarah Simpson Professional Development Center