



DISPARITIES IN EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

Thursday, March 5, 2020

5:30 – 7:30 pm

Fulton High School

NOTES FROM BREAKOUT SESSIONS

BREAKOUT – DISCIPLINE DATA

Facilitator question: In what ways could we improve?

- Consistency in length of suspensions
- Consistency across schools / Discipline should not be based on principal personality, it should be based on the infraction

Facilitator question: In what additional ways could we partner with the community to help address these issues?

- Add an impartial voice or community member to the discipline appeals committee.
- Use UT instructors to address cultural competency.
- Partner with neighborhood associations on after-school, community events.
- Partner with Emerald Youth, CAC, Centro Hispano.
- All schools (including West Knox) need partnerships with Centro, Emerald, etc.
- Some children are suspended because of cultural differences. Ask outside organizations to help with this.

Additional comments

- Appalled that Out-of-School Suspensions are increasingly used and that students with disabilities are suspended at a high level
- Principals need more Special Education (SPED) training, more training on discipline tiers
- May need to increase restorative practices at the elementary level. Early intervention could help at secondary level
- Pie charts don't show mandatory categories. "Disruption" is open to interpretation – it's not about weapons or drugs
- KCS needs a chart showing suspensions on zero-tolerance offenses, by race
- Teacher training would help me determine what to write up
- Show vaping videos to all students

Audience questions (Note: Answers to these questions were posted by KCS after the meeting)

Q: What law enforcement data (KPD, KCSO) are available?

A: KCS has consulted with the Knoxville Police Department and the Knox County Sheriff's Office about this question.

The Knoxville Police Department will share school-related arrest data that can be made public. KCS is continuing to discuss this matter with Knox County Sheriff's Office officials.

Q: Are there disparities regarding when law enforcement intervenes?

A: We are working to gather data from our law enforcement partners that will enable us to answer this question.

Q: What is the district's policy on notifying law enforcement?

A: Law enforcement is generally notified when:

- a crime has occurred;
- a credible threat to the school population has been reported;
- or in any situation in which Law Enforcement notification can possibly enhance the safety of the school population.

Q: How are cameras used to investigate / validate?

A: Cameras are used regularly by administrators to help determine appropriate discipline, used by School Security to address or explore safety issues and to address complaints regarding SSO conduct. Cameras are viewed by law enforcement as a component of investigating crime. Law enforcement must produce a subpoena in many cases to receive a copy of a video unless exigent circumstances exist. FERPA guidelines are adhered to when sharing information on student records.

Q: What happens in Restorative Learning Centers (RLCs)?

A: While RLCs in many cases take the place of In-School Suspension rooms, their purpose and functions are different. RLCs provide a space where students can de-escalate in times of crisis and / or be removed from class for short periods of time due to misbehavior. The classroom environment is structured and there are clear behavior and work completion expectations. When the student has followed the expectations and is ready to begin the restorative program, staff will work with the student through the restorative and reentry process. At times, students just need to check in / check out with the staff to ensure they are keeping on track and for staff to provide accountability, support and encouragement.

Q: Who is on the discipline appeal screening committee?

The screening committee is made up of alternative-school principals and supervisors from the Central Office.

Q: Can discipline data be shared at District Learning Days and administrative team meetings?

This is something the district can consider.

Q: Why is Brian Hartsell on the screening committee and the appeal committee? Is this a conflict?

KCS does not have a disciplinary appeal committee. Disciplinary appeals are heard by Disciplinary Hearing Authority Brian Hartsell. If a parent wishes to appeal the decision of Mr. Hartsell, the case is heard by Superintendent Bob Thomas or the Board of Education.

All suspensions of 45 days or longer are sent to the screening committee to ensure that the decisions comply with district guidelines and due process. However, the screening committee does not hear discipline appeals.

Q: Is discipline the same at every high school?

We have a set of District Guidelines that all schools are to follow.

Q: The number of administrators makes discipline inconsistent. Should there be a committee approach?

KCS believes the current system allows disciplinary actions to reflect the varying degrees of the infraction.

Q: Does discipline jump from Step A to Step E? Does KCS skip tiers of escalation?

This may happen based on the disciplinary investigation and the nature of the infraction.

Q: There is a high rate of suspensions at schools with large populations of students of color. How does KCS determine if there are disparities?

KCS examines a number of factors when analyzing disparities, including:

- Total discipline cases;
- Discipline levels at individual schools; and
- Risk indices based on ethnicity, economically disadvantaged status and disability status.

BREAKOUT – School Culture

Facilitator question: In what ways could we improve?

- Demographics of teachers / staff and demographics of students match
- Process to evaluate the various interventions of PBIS and restorative practices
- Evaluate and analyze the role and success of the restorative staff in the building
- Expanding restorative practices and making them the culture rather than the component
- Moving from being trauma-informed to trauma-responsive
- Elevate the importance of student voice and make sure that our student organizations are representative of the student body
- Improving the partnership between students and parents to promote ownership
- Making sure that the district has consistent administration of the processes that are being used
- The classroom is where we need to see the partnership of all the initiatives. Trained extra staff will be needed

Facilitator question: What are we doing well?

- The focus on diversity in the classrooms
- We now have an Office of School Culture. West High School is doing a great job of integration
- The new website is much more user-friendly
- The implementation of multi-tiered levels of support and intervention to meet the needs of staff and students
- Jeff Wright and his behavior coaches are helpful in our schools
- The use of college students as peer tutors at Austin-East
- Laid a foundation with Cultural Sensitivity training for teachers

Facilitator question: In what additional ways could we partner with the community to help address these issues?

- Leverage our subject matter experts that are in the community like Harmony Family Center
- How to help parents connect through a variety of means, i.e. technology, rather than just through the school
- Explore opportunities to increase engagement of college students in the schools
- Making sure that all our stakeholders are aware of our initiatives and how they help
- Increasing our transparency
- A point person at the school and district levels to increase community involvement
- To use the media to get our needs and initiatives out
- Focus not only on the college path, but also trades and other post-secondary options

- Nurture the relationships between school and community – Fulton and Austin-East host monthly and bi-monthly partnership meetings. Benefits of reaching out to the community to build these partnerships. Organized through ProjectGRAD

Audience questions (Note: Answers to these questions were posted by KCS after the meeting)

Q: Is there a way to see the effectiveness of the programs we have? Are they being implemented equitably throughout the district?

A: Many factors go into the decision as to which programs are in which schools. Unless there is guidance from the State DOE or federal mandate, principals have significant autonomy in choosing and providing the programs within their schools. This might lead to one school having one program and another not. Typically, programs like PBIS and Restorative Practices collect data which are used in determining the effectiveness and appropriateness of programming.

Q: How do we gain more feedback from our parents other than the online survey?

A: Parent support organizations and activities provide feedback from many parents to school administration.

Q: Some schools have increased parent communication. Is it going out in different languages?

A: Yes, our schools have the tools to send out communication in a variety of languages. Schools also have access to translators if they are needed.

Typically, parent communication goes out in the top 5 languages which cover 95% of our non-English speaking population. Additional language supports are provided by individual schools.

Knox County Schools posts district-wide information on the KCS Facebook pages in the languages of Arabic, Chinese, Kirundi, Swahili, and Spanish. In addition, the district has 10 Family Community Employees who serve in schools on a rotating schedule to increase communication between the schools and the families. These employees cover the languages of Arabic, Chinese, French, Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Swahili. They are assigned to schools based on a rotational schedule that is based on the population of the students. For families who speak languages other than these, KCS obtains interpreters and translators from contract agencies and volunteers from Knoxville Internationals Network (KIN) as required.

Q: I am interested in the training for cultural competency and restorative practices, so my suggestion is to make the training available for the community in some way. If it's a license, can it be licensed in some way that would allow for loans to community groups? Or, if it's distributed on media, can they be circulated in libraries?

A: If you can provide the titles / publishers, we will look into suggesting it to the public library. Thank you for your critical work. (Editor's note: This portion of the answer was provided during the meeting.)

In the future, KCS could offer community informational meetings on topics such as PBIS, Cultural Competency, Trauma-Informed Practices and Restorative Practices. While KCS does not plan to provide full trainings (certification) for parents or communities, interested parties should seek out certification from the certifying organization. Google searches on each of the topics will provide a list of certifying organizations.

BREAKOUT – STUDENT SUPPORTS

Facilitator question: In what ways could we improve?

- More interpreters and translation of messages
- Identification of disabilities for our ELL students
- Consideration of language barriers when identifying Students with Disabilities
- Access to Helen Ross McNabb counselors for our ELL students
- Administrative supports for 504's
- All IEP meeting documents available in Spanish (ex: PWN, meeting invitations)
- Awareness of cultural barriers for parents of ELL students
- Consider providing forms to request meetings at an alternate setting (other than school)

Facilitator question: What are we doing well?

- More certified interpreters for IEP meetings
- Partnership with Great Schools
- Project GRAD
- Training teachers/staff in trauma-informed strategies/practices

Facilitator question: In what additional ways could we partner with community to help address these issues?

- Great Schools – pilot program with Central using translation tool

BREAKOUT – OMBUDSMAN OFFICE

Facilitator question: In what ways could we improve?

- More people knowing / aware of Ombudsman role
- Knowledge of what Ombudsman does
- Parent (SPED) rights – list Ombudsman as resource
- When something is going well – bring to attention of district so that it can be replicated

Facilitator question: What are we doing well?

- The role exists / provided
- Defusing hot situations
- Ombudsman returns calls promptly – follow-through good
- You Tube videos on ASPEN – improvement
- Increasing student graduation rates

Facilitator question: In what additional ways could we partner with community to help address these issues?

- Participate / provide information at community events – awareness (Lonsdale Union of Churches as example. Also, Mechanicsville / East Homecoming)
- Talk to Jack and Jill – what's going on in schools / who to talk with?
- Mentoring programs for students and volunteers