

## NOTES AND PRIORITIES

### 2015 COMMUNITY SUMMIT ON STUDENT ASSESSMENTS

Tuesday, June 2, 2015

6:00 – 8:00 pm

West High School

#### I. PRIORITIES FROM GROUP 1: EARLY EDUCATION K-2

- **K-2 teacher evaluations should not be based on standardized testing at all**
- **We need to measure the talents of all children, not just the ones that are good at standardized testing**
- **There is not enough time for play-based learning and hands-on activities because drilling for assessments has taken it away**

Additional comments from Group 1:

- K-2 teacher evaluations should be based on STAR testing in their own grade
- K-2 students need more choice of activities & most particularly not desk work
- Would be good to know how much practice testing is done and time taken for standardized tests
- Policy that gives teachers (not STAR testing) to have final say on which reading groups should be in
- Not working: When students are evaluated publicly on their behavior
- Parents and teachers should have the right to see assessments after they are given – especially state-level
- Parents need more information about placement of students based on assessments and what are all the determining factors in a student's placement
- Not working: Too much tied to assessments – wish it was more diagnostic than judging students and instructors (wish it was a tool more like blood pressure)
- Not working: Testing instead of nap time and recess for Kindergarten
- Working: Dedication of teachers to students through all the testing
- Working: STAR test really helps in assessing the strengths and weaknesses, better than past assessments
- Not working: Communication to parents about RTI needs to be improved
- Working: RTI seems to be working for some kids that could otherwise be labeled as discipline problems

## II. PRIORITIES FROM GROUP 2: ELEMENTARY 3-5

- Joy of learning, joy of teaching (getting lost)
- Too much pressure –
  - Tests are timed
  - Difficult for distracted kids
- Infrastructure issues –
  - Computers
  - Internet access
  - Libraries – testing labs, not learning centers

Additional comments from Group 2:

- Kids turn into numbers and scores, not students/individuals. Testing for testing sake
- Not enough computer training for kids taking tests on computers – OOPS!
- No typing skills for “type” intensive assessments
- (One teacher mentioned): Spent 25 hours last year administering tests
- Teachers should be able to create their own assessments – frustration abounds
- Good that SAT10 is gone – highly developmentally inappropriate
- Protect young students
- Reading intervention all on computers – major hardware shortage
- Sheer volume of tests – too many. How many? Too much.
- STAR testing – merit in some instances, but too general
- Teaching to the test. Knowledge sharing does not equal good. New regime equals interrupting, not enhancing
- More on critical analysis is good
- Good – less pressure on students, based on feedback (kids/teachers)
- Too standardized information for G (?) and T students
- Parents don’t know if value-add for students. 9 out of 10 parents may not understand
- STAR testing works
- T-CAPS work or no? Are these accurately measuring?
- STAR – much more accurate assessment/screener
- Social studies doesn’t equal beyond (?). Negative effect on kids

### III. PRIORITIES FROM GROUP 3: HIGH SCHOOL

- **Battle for time: administering tests, getting into classes to discuss options, completing basic daily tasks**
- **Math test anxiety – students are scared and tests should not seem like a test and don't reflect true learning**
- **Parents/teachers/students do not have a chance or opportunity to assess or comment on assessments**
- **Loss of instructional time, not only in the class being assessed, but from other areas and resources**

Additional comments from Group 3:

- End-course tests are interesting and challenging
- College admission assessments are not reflective of curriculum, per se
- Tests are not challenging and account for too high a percentage of a grade – not reflective of a student's true learning effort
- Tests should not require additional test-taking, skills training for students
- Expensive test results are "adjusted" by the state to look however is needed politically
- The target constantly moves – hard on students and teachers: rigor, standards, grading scale
- County should not follow same process as state and lower standards when teachers are teaching well to curriculum. County is doing a good job.
- Those who earn general education degrees do not feel prepared for technical colleges and other colleges
- Assessment tools do not marry aptitude with student interests – to motivate what they might *want* to do
- Students *think* they're graduating prepared, but aren't, and drop out or perform poorly
- Huge amount of tax dollars and effort go into assessments – to what end? What's the point? How is it benefitting students?
- Teachers lack time to do their core jobs
- STEM occupations in high demand, but we don't assess for tech/manufacturing skills
- Don't assess for gender-norming in technical fields...it's working in schools that use it
- Loss of instructional time, not only in that specific class, but students pulled from other classes
- STAR-renaissance is prescriptive...good feedback for teachers but not for students, and students would benefit from it
- Not all assessments should be online. Technology is a tool, but hinders success in this application
- Kids do not have a chance to connect their achievement on a test and what that means for them

#### IV. PRIORITIES FROM GROUP 4: GENERAL

- **Transparency –**
  - **How many class days are used for testing?**
  - **Results – teachers, parents and students**
  - **Parents not given hard copy – delayed publishing, Parents Access ASAP**
  - **Need results immediately**
  - **When test given**
  - **Why this test?**
  - **Validity of testing formats**
  - **Cost – students. Who are we paying to?**
  - **Cost of test prep – time and resources**
  - **Communication – clarification**
- **Need policy to opt out of testing – non-punitive**
- **Teachers should not be evaluated on test data**

Additional comments from Group 4:

- No clarification on what the tests are
- No transparency, stakes – are teachers evaluated by these tests, how often are they given, what % impacts student grade, teachers. Who gets this information?
- Pertinent specific information by grade level, school
- Duplication of state and local tests (E.O.C.)
- Correlation between tests that are given
- Needs to be consistency from school to school
- Quick score inflation – misleading
- Disruption in terms of computer testing (ex: computer labs not available)
- Testing takes away resources from learning
- STAR testing is working well
- Specific results need to be given back to teachers to analyze data
- Who decides who gets the data?
- Related Arts and Music classes being moved to accommodate testing
- Transparency re the Curve – parents do not know this
- Arbitrary decisions on which tests to give based on available tests vs curriculum
- Tests given to be a part of teacher's evaluations instead of for students
- Do not use T-CAP scores for placement

## V. PRIORITIES FROM GROUP 5: SPECIAL EDUCATION

- **Parents are concerned that KCS gathers information regarding student skill levels, skill sets and abilities that do not truly give an accurate reflection of their present levels. For example: TCAP is a summative, mandated assessment with few accommodations & inflexible format. STAR is a universal screener that is used to identify SLD – with no accommodations. Concern: KCS is assessing disability, not ability.**
- **KCS asks identified SPED students to take the STAR assessment with absolutely no accommodations, but then held accountable these scores which more than likely do not represent the student's true set skills and ability.**
- **There appears to be a conflict of interest in general ed teachers being part of the IEP team decision to include or segregate a student with a disability, and the direct effect that low assessment scores have on teacher bonuses.**
- **Between alternate assessments and regular assessments, there is a huge gap where many students with disabilities could be effectively assessed. We need something in between to truly serve the wide range of students with disabilities.**

Additional comments from Group 5:

- Score is weighted in inclusive environment/activities are scored high – proficient measure of program and alternate assessments not using the access of inclusive settings
- IEP moved and got “lost in the system” – STARS testing (KCAC) Wilson method is only thing that improved STAR scores. Teacher was more worried about testing than teaching. Mom knew what resources to bring to the table to help him
- Good thing with assessments caused parents to “raise the bar” academically. Questions are which one is not. Found the right answer but missed because of nording being which one is not...modified, short steps with questions, different ways to present for learning styles
- Assessments work well (parents don't always get them – bad thing). But, it does raise the bar. Alternate assessment creates segregation. Should be *least* restrictive environment.
- STAR assessment is incredible and walking students in without accommodations with no supports they have had been used to
- Cultural learning is not considered with testing (i.e. Native American)
- Came to learn about alternate assessments – doesn't feel schools are equipped to test son (child is autistic). TNready? Some high grades, some low grades.
- Parents concerned about assessments. Gather info on skill sets (STAR, etc.) – concerned that child is *not* being assessed. Teacher made tests to truly identify the skills and abilities of child – not disabilities.
- Working well – we test our kids and get data for all kids, including IEP's. Not doing well – a lot of gray matter – doesn't test well, so not getting a true picture of child's ability.
- Proficient on alternative TCAP but not clear on what it means? Are there certain parts of TCAP he could take and modifications to others?
- Some parents want to be included and some do not but state mandates make them (BOE)

- IEP's – state mandates – parents don't have a lot of options
- Inclusion with class and makes progress in some areas and others, not so much
- So many changes and providing info on time as going thru – looking at student needs vs what the state is requiring
- IEP – but in regular ed classroom which requires certain assessments and will likely fail assessments. It goes against teachers' IEDA. Conflict - teacher of record would be reviewed and for teacher for IEPA because teacher bonus is affected.
- Smooth facilitation of assessments – they follow guidelines, BUT not adequate time given to assess the data (TCAP's, etc.) so much to do can't adequately address accommodations and modifications
- Glad no more K-2 tests. STAR assessments *not* always being read, i.e. child intervention score and retested reading/access to test with her went from 21<sup>st</sup> to 65<sup>th</sup> (has IEP for reading)
- Not well is centered understanding of aggregated data (state school did to show impact). Message is not clearly understood by educators – need better communication. Very important to include all student scores with schools and teachers.

**VI. PRIORITIES FROM GROUP 6: ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

- **Community and parents fear bringing in children who don't speak the language or culture requiring them to take assessments**
- **Not enough information for parent who has ELL kids with special needs**
- **Cultural barrier is not being addressed by the schools and it's hard to make friends if English isn't your first language**
- **So, school needs to get ELL students involved to take extra step for more involvement by students**

Additional comments from Group 6:

- List of accommodations for ELL students not readily available
- Test taking of standardized tests, such as ACT, is not being prepared for in ELL classes, by tests given
- Should move toward international tests
- Not enough available information about how ELL process works
- Lack of information about how the tests are given or modified
- Schools need to incorporate other activities as part of the assessment score
- Bearden Middle School teacher sponsored an international club that worked well (met every 2 weeks)
- ELL teacher was very nice, was inclusive (Farragut High School)