

KCS Minority Advisory Council KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS

Minutes

November 17, 2020

Present:

Bob Thomas
Renee Kelly
Ashley Anthony
Alejandra Berry
Tanya Coats
Jordan Culp
Derek Griffin
Laurie Griffin
Anthony Hancock
Paula Hancock
Melody Hawkins
Kellie Layden
Katherine Mencer
Kayla Montgomery
Stephanie Peltier-Green
Michael Rodgers
Sofia Roth
Heather Sumpter-Blakemore

Not Present:

Chris Douglass
Sonya Kyle
Florence Ndiaye
Dee Thomason
Linda Treadwell
Victoria Tutor
Antoinette Williams

Guests:

Tammi Campbell
Jon Rysewyk
Beau Stanley
Janice Cook
Job Isles
Jay Butler

1. Welcome: Superintendent Thomas

- Superintendent Bob Thomas greeted the group and performed a welfare check
 - Q.** What are biggest issues?
 - A.** We're just exhausted-mentally and physically.
- We hear you. You are doing a terrific job and we really appreciate you
- Good News – Minority Recruitment Position has been approved unanimously by BOE.
- Future MAC meetings will be going virtual. TEAM link will be sent for January meeting unless there is a drastic improvement
- There will be no meeting in December

2. Feedback on Learning Preference Selection Process for Spring Semester- Superintendent Thomas

- In-Person: 45,884-77.8% (6,366 Virtual switched to In-Person)
- Virtual: 13,064-22.2% (1,225 In-Person switched to Virtual)
- Did the window feel long enough?

Response:

Yes

- What could we do better?

Response:

The feedback, of calling parents helped parents on the line make the best choice

Having the message in different languages helped parents

3. Virtual Learning and Attendance Questions Follow-Up-Jon Rysewyk, Beau Stanley

- **Jon-Referred to Teresa Nixon’s presentation last month**
- We know from teachers and principals that some students would do better in-person
- We know that in some cases students who struggled chose virtual
- Disciplinary referrals have dramatically decreased
- Kudos for those who reached out to those families to recommend students would do better in-person. It comes down to relationship.
- We cannot require students to attend in-person during a pandemic
- In future of Virtual learning, there will be student criteria to be met in order to set students up to be successful
- We are likely to offer a spring selection process for next fall with an early selection window around Spring Break
- Unsure about K-2 or 3 for virtual in future because of difficulty for younger students
- We value virtual teachers. We have hundreds of years of practice with in-person learning. We are better adept for helping struggling students in-person than virtually.
- Virtual learning enables high schoolers to take dual enrollment courses
- Some in-person students chose to go virtual for Spring Semester
- Parents who expressed concerns that their child’s teachers were not from their base school in the beginning, now see the relationships built and do not want to change teachers
- Homebound students were previously required to have 2 hours of instruction daily. With virtual learning, we can now offer full curriculum
- Virtual is great for accelerated learners
- ELL teachers are hired for every 35 students and placed where the need lies
- Effort was made to keep class sizes evenly distributed and keep students in their school zone when possible
- Some schools were able to have all students in their zoned school, but second semester more had to use Quest. We need allow enough space for newly incoming students to have an option
- Homeschool families were contacted and given the opportunity to return to KCS and enroll into virtual or in-person roster for second semester
 - **Questions, Answers, Comments and Responses:**
 - Q. We recently had a 2-hour delay due to inclement weather, why not just go to a virtual day?
 - A. We used all of our inclement weather days at the beginning of the school year in preparation of reopening. This weather event came on quickly, and there wasn’t time to prepare and practice with getting devices sent home. We are planning and preparing principals for this in the future.

Renee Kelly-The weather forecast showed that the morning would be bad, but the afternoon would be sunny, so it didn't warrant a full day of virtual. We were better able to assess the conditions once the daylight come up

- **Renee Kelly**-One of the goals in the Strategic Plan is a Positive Culture. These questions are helpful. As ambassadors, MAC members can help pass this information and thought processes at their schools.

- **Beau Stanley:**

- Attendance supervisor does not make decisions on attendance. It is a consortium of people who manage attendance. Decisions are made as a team of people coming from different angles including Curriculum team.
- Attendance is recorded in ASPEN. ASPEN is the software used for reporting.
- Heather Willis works with Social Workers on attendance.
- **Questions, Answers, Comments and Responses:**

Q. Is there liability- student not at school, not marked absent.

A. Yes. There is teacher liability

Q. Are state mandates going to change around attendance policies?

A. We don't know at this time

Q. Who makes the schedule for when grades are coming out? We are getting 2-3 days open. Do schools have the ability to re-open?

A. There needs to be common close dates because virtual teachers may have students from many different schools. This year's dates were a little firmer. Schools may open the grade window earlier. Because work has to be in, the opening can only begin so far ahead. My guidance to schools has been assignments can be put in at the 3rd quarter Calendars are built so that there is a weekend in between to allow for a bit more time. Established time is always 5 days after the final week of instruction.

Comment: Elementary time is tighter

Julie Thompson- Marking period closes before the break rather than in January because students may be in a different learning program (Virtual/In-person) or with different teachers. It places a crunch on Elementary. If they don't print report card by the 16th, a schedule change – new teacher's name will be on the report card rather than teacher who gave that grade.

4. Exit Interview Feedback from Minorities (MAC Goal #3)-Scott Bolton

- We give every person an opportunity to have in-person exit interview.
- An African American male left KCS and then returned, saying that we should slow the pace of advancement in order to build strong foundation
- Questions, Answers, Comments and Responses:
 - Q.** Opportunities of advancement not attached to advance in pay but beneficial
 - A.** 8/12 African American left for higher paying position

5. Cultural Competency Training and ACES Training Updates (MAC Goal #4) - Jay Butler, Janice Cook

- Culture department is not just about Cultural competency. There are 26 other departments: Homeless, Coordinated School Health, and more
 - How to bring it all together:
 - Taking care of people and connecting people is necessary
 - Relationships
 - Taking care of students through trauma informed training
 - **Job Isles Trauma Informed Specialist – Aces and KCS**
 - *** See presentation materials attached**
 - We don't really do AES training. ACES is 1 piece of Trauma Informed training
 - Customized Training
 - Customized Training KCS Support Team at individual schools.
 - 2019 state law every district has to have a policy for how to account for trauma in discipline. KCS was ahead of the law
 - KCS guidance document - Ongoing Support, Vetting Curriculum
 - **Jay Butler:**
 - *** See presentation materials attached-PowerPoint School Culture the Shift from Competence to Responsiveness**
 - (Jay Butler School Culture Facilitator)
 - Telling people to stay after and take training isn't the way to make changes
 - We look to hiring people to help and support schools, community in a meaningful way
 - Partnership with Harvard Reimagining Integration
 - **Questions, Answers, Comments and Responses:**
 - Response:** Were developing small groups to look at specific things.
 - Comment** – I am the only certified person of color in entire building – there is never a conversation about that
 - Response** – We sent information asking if people would like to participate in a small group- not just people of color. People may have missed it over the summertime. The body of the group decides where it goes.
 - Comment:** Consider various cultural members for those properties in addition to other demographic areas. There's not one cultural lens. Be inclusive of the variety of lenses in Knox County.
 - Response--** what is the best way to get that response?
 - Comment** – Ask others. This group may recommend someone and then that person may bring another. Personal relationship would be more helpful than an email. Be honest about How much time will be required. It is important to see people like Jay Butler presenting. It is good to have someone who looks like Jay Butler. It is very important
- * Janice and her team will be back for January meeting

6. DEO (Disparities in Educational Outcomes) Virtual Community Meeting

- Renee Kelly announced the DEO Community Meeting will be held virtually on December 10th at 4 pm.

7. Closing Comments – Superintendent Thomas Happy Thanksgiving