

Knox County Schools
Teacher Advisory Committee
West High School Library Classroom
Thursday, March 12, 2015



Attendees

Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent
Tanya Coates, KCEA President
Mark Duff, Halls High School
Eric Aguilar, Chilhowee Intermediate School
Lindsay Bell, West High School
Annette Benson, Corryton Elementary School
Jannice Clark, Kelley Volunteer Academy
Kelly Clemmer, Gap Creek Elementary School
Denise Cross, West View Elementary School
Jessica Fine, Cedar Bluff Middle & Hardin Valley Academy
Jessica Holman, Inskip Elementary School
Wanda Lacy, Farragut High School
Jessica McDonald, Vine Middle Magnet School
Ryan Milani, Career Magnet Academy
Valeta Norris, Central High School
Kristi Pell, Powell High School
Suzanne Sherman, Hardin Valley Academy
Heidi Walsh, Christenberry Elementary School
Vanita Williamson, Farragut Middle School

Visitors / Guests

Dr. Elizabeth Alves, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Chief Academic Officer
Lynne Fugate, School Board Member, District 4
Dr. Rodney Russell, Director of Human Capital Strategies
Christy Hendler, Director of Planning and Improvement
Stephanie Jeffreys, Superintendent's Office

Snows Days and Balanced Calendar

- Some members reported hearing great things about the break created by the inclement weather especially if they could have planned for it
- Questions were raised about what would happen if we experience several snow days prior to a planned two weeks break
- If the break was expected, we would plan accordingly to be at a good stopping point
- Some AP parents had concerns about delays from weather closings
- A planned break could allow students the chance to absorb information
- The break could allow time for college visits

- The weather closings created a chance to use technology to continue studies

- We will evaluate the cost versus improvement of achievement with a Balanced Calendar
- We will conduct a Balanced Calendar survey
- The District Advisory Council came up with the idea of having school based conversations; good opportunity to let people weigh in on it before we make any decisions
- Page on knoxschools.org with Balanced Calendar information and commonly asked questions
- Just shuffling days may not create improvement, could use it as an opportunity to have additional learning time and intervention
- Some members asked if the balanced calendar break included a week of intervention built in as a contract extension or as an option to apply like the current summer programs
- Depending on structure, may need about 25% of our staff to lead intervention and incorporate enrichment activities from Community Partners
- Concern was expressed in regard to federally funded Summer Programs that feed kids and if other districts with Balanced Calendar have funding to feed kids during the 2 week breaks.

Budget Update

- Budget FY16 is tight and somewhat challenging
- Revenue is looking decent, but we are tight on our fund balance
- We are pushing for 4% increase for teacher salaries
- If we are going to try to give a 4% raise across the board, may mean tradeoffs, like considering APEX not being paid out in November while we work on the redesign
- The State proposes a 4% increase in the compensation pool
- The State will give us ~ 40% of the funds that would cover a 4% raise for teachers and we have to come up with the rest locally
- \$4.3million from the State and we need \$10million to give 4% raise, so we need to fund the additional \$6million
- Some difficult tradeoffs, but generally a budget that supports and continues our instructional efforts and will help sustain our academic success

Knox County Schools Five Year Strategic Plan

- A discussion around our vision and where we want to be in 5 years
- The committee divided into groups to discuss each goal and share thoughts with committee
- Group 1, Goal 1-Focus on Every Student
 - Overall thought we are meeting most of those objectives
 - Is there a way to measure everything in regards to monitoring student leaning?
 - Cost is a difficult challenge with Objective 2, Personalized Learning; Know that we want to have comprehensive instructional technology, but unless you are a 1:1 PLE school it is difficult to fund technology

- Balanced calendar is an exploration of determining the best way to structure our time to best meet the needs of our kids
- At kindergarten end we want to make sure our kids are ready for 1st grade and focus on early literacy efforts
- Performance targets are ambitious and a stretch goal

- Group 2, Goal 2- Invest in Our People
 - Focus on student mastery and strong student learning outcomes
 - Building learners and leaders, important to understand educators are learners as well
 - Some initiatives for teachers to come up with innovative ideas; innovation mini-grants are really powerful for teachers to make them feel like they have autonomy
 - We are third largest district in the state, we are 37th in teacher salary; need to do much better, move toward a more competitive level of pay
 - If we do all of these things, we should be able to retain teachers

- Group 3, Goal 3- Partner with our Stakeholders
 - How do you get support from community?
 - Community support can be little things like coming and doing flash cards, reading with kids
 - How do you get them invested? Being invested builds a sense of pride for the students, parents, and community
 - How do we maintain the momentum when we do make progress?
 - Identifying those people who can make those connections within each school and each part of the community
 - Struggle with parents and families participating in school carnival versus attending reading night
 - Need to show how they can be a part of what we are doing

- Group 4, Commitments / Culture of Excellence
 - Every School being a great school, level 5, great teachers, inspired, living our high standards every day
 - Need to get back to our kids versus my kids; every child in our system is our collective responsibility
 - "Teacherpreneur" Grants help drive innovation
 - Innovation Labs could be a place, school or classroom, or individual classes, where they have great ideas and we want try to support and help facilitate that
 - Would like TAC to continue to think through this and help with continued conversation of what this should be
 - Ensure that whoever interacts with us has a positive experience
 - Commitments to our community
 - Making decisions that drives our kids and we are a community of learners

- Invite and earn stakeholder feedback
- Meaningful and actionable conversations
- Culture, Engagement, Support
- The look back video during State of the Schools helped to see the timelines and how it unfolded, helped to see the taste of success
- At Powell High School they asked students what they want from their teachers to help build connections
- Engage teachers with as many venues as possible like TAC, where they feel there is a teacher voice
- Getting feedback from teachers and reporting to Board
- Gather feedback in the same way as the approach to Balanced Calendar; not completely structured yet so we feel like our input is valid
- Ask teachers what they want to see our culture to look like

Assessment Inventory

- Resources and support available through a grant from Achieve, Inc.
- Plan details are currently in a comprehensive inventory document
- Assessment name, who is it targeted at, what is the impact, costs, what is the purpose
- Mandatory versus School Based
- Decisions made at school level versus district, state
- Going to each individual school and find out what they are doing
- Have teachers who will lead focus groups in pairs at each level (Elementary School, Middle School, High School)
- Try to measure how people feel about the assessments; students, parents, and teachers
- Looking for feedback to get this information
- What kind of assessments are we doing? Are they valuable? Are they necessary? Do they inform instruction?
- General consensus from group members is conducting this inventory of assessments is very good and the more communication you have, the better
- Some committee members suggested that the rub lies in how adults structure conversations around assessments, resulting in the kids being stressed out
 - For example, a child may think " I moved from light blue to dark blue so now I am a bad reader"
- Parents should have some input on the discussions taking place and the information they are given on test results
- Rally the kids and they realize it can be fun
- Students at one school were very excited to show growth. At risk children who are excited about demonstrating their knowledge.
- Tests that stress us out as teachers are state tests online; stretches resources, computers break down, technology challenges
- Would like to measure the amount of instructional time that would be given in an instructional block versus time lost to prepare for assessment

- How much time it would take for teachers to just teach vs how much time to prepare and administer an assessment
- Measure how conversations are framed around assessments?
- Could do a comparison of 1:1, Title 1 schools
- There will be small group student discussions to gather student perception
- Technology is an important consideration in all of this
- Perception is that there is too much testing; we are breaking down where that is coming from
- We welcome guidance, feedback, and suggestions from the TAC
- Assessment Inventory will occur this spring and give insight into what assessments are being given, are they required, and are they valuable to support effective instruction.

Upcoming Agenda Items

- Consistency/Autonomy
- Discuss RTI²; Is there an advantage to doing it the way we have been doing it this year?

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 9, 2015