

**Knox County Schools
Teacher Advisory Committee Meeting
West High School Library Classroom
Thursday, May 7, 2015**



Attendees

Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent
Tanya Coates, KCEA President
Mark Duff, Principal of Halls High School
Jessica Holman, Principal of Inskip Elementary School
Eric Aguilar, Chilhowee Intermediate 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
Wanda Lacy, Farragut High School
Jessica McDonald, Vine Middle Magnet School
Ryan Milani, Career Magnet Academy
Kristi Pell, Powell High School
Dr. Kitty Pruett, Northwest Middle School
Suzanne Sherman, Hardin Valley Academy
Heidi Walsh, Christenberry Elementary School
Karla West, A.L. Lotts Elementary School
Vanita Williamson, Farragut Middle School

Visitors/Guests

Doug Harris, Board of Education Member, District 3
Dr. Elizabeth Alves, Chief Academic Officer
Jeannie Dulaney, Director of Community Relations
Melissa Massie, Director of Student Services
Dr. Rodney Russell, Director of Human Capital Strategies
Millicent Smith, Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development
Terri Coatney, Board of Education Assistant

Unscheduled In-Service Hours

- Some teachers have concerns about required school-level in-service hours
- School-level 6 hour requirement was added this year at request of principals to give them more flexibility in direction
- School-level in-service hours should be specific to things happening at the building
- Some teachers are having difficulty attaining the required hours at building-level; not enough options are being offered at some schools
- School administrators may need to make sure that teachers are able to attain 6 hours
- If a principal says a particular activity is relevant, nothing precludes that, it is encouraged
- Starting in January 2015, principals could categorize in-service hours as system-wide or school-level in ERO system
- Principals have autonomy to include individual activities; viewing of training videos
- Mostly positive feedback about training videos offered on CANVAS; some complaints about length of some videos, but law requires specific time length of some training videos
- In-service requirements could change for 2015-2016 school year, but decision based on principals perspective
- Some teachers have issues with scheduling, as district meetings may conflict with school-level opportunities
- The system-wide and school-level required in-service hours only come into play for APEX compensation; regular pay not affected unless system-wide hours not completed
- A teacher committee is currently in place to hear appeals from teachers and sort through issues
- Can be very hard to earn required number of hours if employees wait until late in year

- Deadline for completion of hours was extended this year by one week
- In-service records were moved into new system this year; some information had to be moved manually to ensure accuracy; if teachers find issues, a report form is available to request a review of information
- Some report issues with administrators not requiring employees to stay for entire length of meetings offered at building-level
- RANDA is being built to KCS specifications, so ultimately will be a great system; PD staff wants to hear from teachers so modifications can be made if needed
- Some classified employees have issues, since most do not currently have access to ERO system
- Some classified employees have expressed they are more comfortable with paper forms to register
- Workshops offered by Family & Community Engagement Office very helpful for classified employees
- Want to make sure instructional assistants have access to ERO, but much cleaner to make sure accurate information is there for those eligible for APEX first
- There will be a financial cost to add access for classified employees
- Informational Technology staff has been professional and great to work with during the process
- Principals are trying hard to help employees find hours
- E-mail regarding in-service requirements for next year should go out to employees before summer break; information will be on professional development website as well
- Group consensus that best recommendation for next school year would be 12 required in-service hours with no distinction between system-wide or school-level

Consistency/Autonomy

- Committee members met in small groups for discussion of question: As an employee of KCS, do you have autonomy and flexibility to do your job, and if not; what areas are problematic?
- Some teachers feel there is inconsistency – some teachers have more autonomy than others – can cause friction
- Some teachers may have more autonomy because they demonstrate abilities over time and earn flexibility
- Some concern that during unannounced observations, some teachers hesitate to think outside of the box
- Some administrators very comfortable letting teachers run with things, but others are less trusting
- Some principals feel that autonomy must be earned
- Some principals may have a list of non-negotiables, but allow flexibility
- If teacher has tried something that doesn't show results, principal may pull back
- Different framework set by different principals – learning to work as a team within that framework can strengthen everyone
- Some teachers feel they have plenty of autonomy – makes it very easy to be organized and work effectively
- Some principals may take things that have a positive effect and then make everyone do them; makes it easy to feel like autonomy is lost
- Change has been difficult for some teachers who felt fine about the way things were previously done
- Has been challenging to create a structure for collaboration and ensure that it is in place across the whole district
- Teachers have seen lots of change over last 30 years; things have come back to being more integrated, cross-curricular
- A few believe that educational research “ruined” everything, but because of research, best practices are now known
- Student success has been seen with small learning communities; may be more collaborative to have PLCs within the SLCs; some feel that PLCs do not have to happen only with those teaching the same subject area – can make structure feel robotic, not organic
- Teachers are expected to have documented differentiated plan for students; some teachers would like to see principals have a differentiated plan for their teachers; and in turn, supervisors/directors for principals
- Some teachers collaborated in the past by co-teaching; some feel that some teachers could benefit from that type of arrangement now because not everyone teaches in same way – PLCs could look something like that and teachers could learn and develop together
- Some larger schools may have issues with PLCs because they do not have opportunity to experience closeness like smaller schools
- Some teachers feel that input is encouraged at PLCs, but not necessarily welcomed
- Some teachers may be frustrated by PLCs because they perceive they are being told what to try and when; some don't want to try something new just because it is suggested
- Some coaches may feel overwhelmed by the number of teachers they work with; could be solution to have someone in building be PLC leader and let coaches work with teachers one-on-one; but also may get better now that coaches have been moved to the school-level

- Group consensus that autonomy/consistency has gotten better this year and there is more teacher buy-in to reforms
- Questions on recent teacher survey about autonomy; looking forward to seeing results and continuing this important conversation

Special Education

- Director of Student Services Melissa Massie presented information regarding special education
- Important that teachers have tools they need, including technology
- Goals are developing best practices, addressing how to make everything excellent for special needs students every day, and providing quality, individualized support
- Lots of time spent working on transition services
- KCS serves 8,000+ students with special needs; majority of those have specific learning disabilities
- May require an assessment to determine what needs are and how to address those needs
- People move to Knox County district specifically for KCS special education programs
- A lot of focus on least restrictive environment; goal is to have most of student's time spent in a regular classroom
- Special Education Department also serves children in correctional facilities, homebound students, and those in hospitals, etc.
- Information covered regarding shift from content standards to PLE, gap closure strategies, assessments and accommodations, accountability for students with disabilities, teachers who serve disabled students
- Some teachers have concerns that limited or no accommodations are provided to special needs students for some assessments; will be a different assessment landscape next year
- Work load for special education teachers sometimes perceived to be significantly different from regular education teachers
- Special education leaders have been humbled by level of support from regular education teachers
- Working on specific practices for all teachers regarding differentiation
- Instructionally appropriate IEPs and addressing instructional gaps are priorities
- Huge initiative to have school-wide positive behavior support
- PLCs are discussing gap closure strategies; special education teachers are collaborating with general education peers to help support general education classroom
- Universal design for learning includes addressing how to utilize technology for individual instruction to accommodate and support special education students to get the most out of classroom
- Some pull-out meetings, but for most part special education teachers attending professional development with general education teachers because of importance of being there with content areas
- Will be number of future opportunities on CANVAS and lots of special education training for regular education teachers
- Most effective training is when special educators model lessons for regular education teachers in regular classroom setting
- Some regular education teachers have questions about how to work with special needs students, especially Tier III students; could ask questions of RTI team and share information to determine how best they can be served
- Functional communication for every student is a must
- Accommodations for special needs students include adult transcription, assistive technology, Braille, extended time, paper tests, text-to-speech, speech-to-text, visual representations for math, word prediction, etc.
- NCSC is an alternate assessment on alternate academic achievement standards; may be administered online
- Has been proven that when expectations are raised, students will rise to the occasion, this includes kids with disabilities; speaks to changing the way we approach teaching special education students
- Lots of federal dollars have been invested and the state has been very helpful
- KCS will make sure that students with significant disabilities will continue to have instruction on functional life skills
- If student has been identified with special needs, instruction must be driven by IEP; will begin to see shift to only address student deficits within special education classroom with more time spent in general education classroom

2015-2016 Teacher Advisory Committee Selection

- Suggestions welcome for structure of committee next year; should be e-mailed to Dr. McIntyre
- Gives credibility for educators to choose committee members
- Would like to have 4-6 current committee members volunteer to identify next year's committee; let Dr. McIntyre know by e-mail if willing to serve

- Allows continuity for 2/3 of committee members to remain intact with 1/3 rotating each year; allows members to serve a two-year term going forward
- Will seek nominations, self-nominations and review applications over summer months
- Identification of 2015-2016 committee members in August with first meeting in September 2015

Other/Wrap-up

- Ran out of time for discussion about evaluations and social/emotional learning programs; will start with those topics next year
- Group consensus that committee is making a difference!
- Appreciation expressed to everyone who served