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

2
• 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