

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



Committee Attendees

Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent
Tanya Coats, 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
Jessica McDonald, Vine Middle Magnet School
Ryan Milani, Career Magnet Academy
Valeta Norris, Central High School
Kristi Pell, Powell High School
Dr. Kitty Pruet, Northwest Middle School
Suzanne Sherman, Hardin Valley Academy
Heida Walsh, Christenberry Elementary School
Karla West, A. L. Lotts Elementary School
Vanita Williamson, Farragut Middle School

Other Attendees

Terri Coatney, Assistant to the Board of Education
Laurie Driver, Supervisor of Assessment
Dr. Rodney Russell, Director of Human Capital Strategy
Tracie Sanger, Board of Education Member, District 2
Millicent Smith, Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Professional Development

Writing Assessments

- 22,000+ KCS students have completed the TCAP writing assessment to date
- Schools completing assessments on many different platforms
- Austin-East had entire grade complete the assessment on iPads
- Assessments going well on operational side due to good preparation
- KCS infrastructure holding up well – Bearden High School completed assessments with two grades at once
- One-to-one technology schools have great advantage
- Consensus that all schools need access to one-to-one technology
- Classroom teachers being in room with students has provided calmness
- Some belief that some students are experiencing frustration because of keyboarding skill level
- State wanted trial run of an assessment being completed online to gauge how students responded

- Assessments do not count toward student grades or teacher evaluations
- Some feel students need more practice keyboarding, but consensus that should not take away from instructional time
- Some teachers who administered assessments online last year are amazed at how well students are responding to assessment online this year
- Some feel that teachers are now buying-in to online administration
- Some feel that student skills are underestimated
- Some teachers are able to provide keyboarding practice time in classroom by rotating students between small number of laptops/computers
- Need to complete assessment each semester at high school level because of block scheduling
- State has said that new state assessments may begin during October/November and February/March during 2015-2016 school year
- Some teachers feel that February is too early, only had students a few weeks at that point in semester
- State has meeting scheduled for March 2015 to announce determinations/decisions for next year
- Some teachers feel that other things can cause issues with timing as well – basketball tournaments, etc.
- Perhaps older computers could be used for keyboarding practice and shared between schools
- Technology teachers will be working to develop curriculum and content specific pedagogy incorporating keyboarding practice into lessons
- Idea for online testing is to make it a part of how KCS does business; should not be disruptive
- Having a technology expert available during testing is a necessity in case hardware fails; extra hardware also a must
- Has been difficult for students who have had to miss class time to complete assessment – some teachers have not had full class for several days
- Consensus that challenges with online assessments will likely continue until there is a computer in every student's hands
- Keyboarding practice must be integrated into instruction, but with teacher support
- Still need significant investment to get KCS where it needs to be regarding technology; policymakers must understand the need for technology
- Consensus that KCS cannot go back; must move forward with one-to-one technology, hopefully expanding to all schools eventually
- Heard that County Commissioners who attended recent PLE showcase said experience was eye-opening
- State has completed process to replace the current TCAP assessments in English language arts (ELA) and math – new assessment will be called Tennessee Ready (TNReady)
- TNReady assessment will be administered online next year
- TCAP assessments will not be available as a back-up assessment next year
- Once more particulars are known about TNReady assessment, KCS will do school team training; will be computer enhanced items that will require students to have knowledge about highlighting, dragging/dropping, graphing, etc.
- Top things that KCS should be doing as a system to prepare for future assessments:

- ⇒ Make sure communication is clear about expectations for students, parents and teachers long before testing window
 - ⇒ Acquire funding for schools that need hardware for online testing
 - ⇒ Professional development for teachers on how to use hardware and how to incorporate technology into lessons
 - ⇒ Make sure students are familiar with procedures; students that miss online assessments this year will not be familiar with procedures
 - ⇒ Make practice tests available online and incorporate into summer professional development; teachers need experience prior to start of school year
 - ⇒ Need to prepare students to read digitally – research shows that mind reacts differently when reading digitally as opposed to print; make sure online advertisements are turned off and students are able to focus – computers need to be in reader view
 - ⇒ Need to prepare students for interaction with devices
 - ⇒ Request that TNReady put out practice questions instead of whole practice test
 - ⇒ May be good if students could be allowed to use graph paper as scratch paper
 - ⇒ Make interactive practice available to teachers and students including how to annotate and highlight
- KCS received word from State that sample questions for current TCAP assessment will be released in March; KCS will share information as soon as it is available and get feedback on each question
 - KCS making true effort to be transparent – will share everything when it is known

APEX

- KCS APEX redesign team that includes 22 teachers spent time delving into research and examining APEX; looked at positives and negatives
- Positives include 12.3 million dollars went to teachers; positive impact on teacher growth and leadership (rise in number of teachers in leadership roles and types of leadership roles); evidence of performance growth even though hard to make connection with APEX
- Negatives include fact that teachers do not seem to perceive APEX as impacting choices or reason to stay in high needs schools or hard to staff areas; TAP viewed much more positively as an incentive; APEX incentive accurately reflects what teachers requested when asked during development, but teachers do not see direct connection
- Team also looked at other incentive models across Tennessee that have been effective and how APEX is constructed based on previous strategic plan
- Moving forward, team focus will remain on tying incentives to newly adopted strategic plan
- Team wants to specifically look at alternative salary schedules – everything from salary caps to using different salary schedule to attract and retain strong teachers in hard to staff subjects (math, special education, etc.); exploring integrating performance, leadership, professional development experiences or other factors into salary schedule rather than exclusively education or years of experience; also how to use additional links to increase teacher conversation about teaching at high priority schools and/or choosing to teach hard to staff areas
- APEX Redesign Team will spend next session (scheduled for February 23) reviewing strategic plan and what teachers say; team will break into small groups and look at

areas where KCS has had success but needs refinement – i.e. leadership rubric, TAP model and alternative salary structures in other districts; desire to get to actual recommendations this spring

- Teachers will have opportunity to give team feedback
- Leadership rubric is complicated subject – some feel that teachers run to sign up for any leadership roles just for incentive; perhaps there could be an application process – some teachers want leadership roles even without incentive
- Some want principal discretion regarding leadership roles; allow principals to give credit for what they know teachers are doing
- If alternative salary schedules are considered, would need to do lots of preparation and careful analysis, as well as teacher engagement
- KCS wants to retain great teachers – desire to look at correlation between degrees and salary; must create buy-in and ask teachers what is fair
- Some teachers in untested areas feel that their composite TVAAS score doesn't always reflect their individual work
- KCS could look at pooled / school level compensation rewards as a component (like TAP) – would not be all or nothing, but opportunity for each teacher to make connection between their efforts and compensation
- Some schools / districts across the country use a model where whole school can earn incentive amount and split between everyone (even classified staff); some feel group pool could be unsuccessful as well if not done well – must be based on collaboration
- Some non-teachers – i.e. guidance counselors – feel it is difficult for them to earn incentive
- Everything revolves around creating a strong team at each school, but when APEX payments are made, some schools feel the tension created by some earning incentives and some not
- APEX Redesign Team (which includes several TAC members) will continue this important work

Instructional Coaches

- KCS has continued to look at various instructional coaching models and how to use this limited resource in the best way
- Became clear that job embedded professional development and working collaboratively are best ways to result in professional growth
- Depending on dynamics at individual schools, coaches doing lots of different jobs; wanted to restructure to make biggest impact
- ILCs. Working one-on one with teachers and developing relationship with teachers inside classroom some of best ways to make impact
- Coaches should also be heavily devoted to supporting PLCs which are supposed to be collaborative meetings regarding student performance and reviewing what strategies work best; coaches should be observing, modeling and giving feedback
- Coaches should be working with individual teachers to help improve practice and making biggest impacts on student results
- When deciding on where to place 135 system-wide coaches, KCS wanted to prioritize how to spread them amongst 4,000+ teachers
- Coaches are heavily funded by federal dollars; initially prioritized placement by highest needs

- Significant change to move coaches out to schools this year; under principal supervision now
- Coaches are consistently deployed across district
- Also changed instructional coach professional development this year; wanted the them to work on relationships and how to work with adults
- Coaches do not evaluate teachers, but very important for them to understand evaluation rubric and how to support teachers
- Collaboration between coaches and teachers very important; KCS is trying to adjust as it is needed
- Some believe having coaches assigned to one school has made a huge difference – has built crucial relationships; having someone come from the outside caused challenges and even sometimes mistrust
- Desire for communication to be shared about coaches being under principal supervision now
- Coaches are content specific-numeracy or literacy; may not be comfortable with every subject area
- Some teachers may view coaches as administrators; support may not feel like it is coming from colleague
- Consensus that relationships with coaches are better this spring semester
- Some schools are utilizing instructional coaches in very positive ways; others may need more professional development
- Coaches are chosen by going through extremely rigorous application process; KCS does not have instructional coaches without proven track records
- Some coaches may feel torn between principal they report to and following central office procedures and expectations, something we'll need to work to reconile
- Helpful when principals communicate with entire school staff about what coach's role is; faculty meetings are good avenue for this communication

Future Agenda Items

- Committee asked to share future agenda item ideas with Superintendent via e-mail

Other

- Committee members will receive reminder about schedule of who is reporting at Board of Education meetings

Next Meeting

- Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 10, 2015