



Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force

Urban League Conference Room

April 28, 2015

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Notes Summary

Welcome (Phyllis Nichols)

- Review of what was done at the last meeting, acknowledging that the task force was given lots of information and data.
- Last meeting small groups met, discussed, and reflected on the discipline data which was given to the committee.

Data Reflection/Whole Group Discussion (Phyllis Nichols and Elizabeth Alves)

- Since the last meeting everyone has had time to further reflect. Elizabeth Alves explained how the group was going to share those reflections from the discipline data. The total group participated in a TIPS exercise (Think, Ink, Partner, Share). Helpful statements were posted on the whiteboard: I felt..., I was surprised by..., I don't understand..., What if...

Thoughts about discipline and KCS personnel were shared by members:

- Not surprised at the number of suspensions.
- Students live up to the expectations that are presented to them.
- Teachers/parents/community must create a high level of expectation.
- Better teacher attitudes/expectations need to be built.
- Students need to be engaged.
- Continue to reach out to parents.
- Schools need help.
- Expectations of those who work with students need to be changed.
- Provide tools for teachers to work with students.
- Students come from a variety of places with a variety of issues.
- This is a community issue, not a black issue.

- All students suffer.
- Discipline data is missing in order to establish elementary patterns.
- Teacher preparation colleges/universities need to better prepare teachers.
- The discipline data does not tell the whole story. The narrative/background must be told also. The numbers are confusing which necessitates further conversation about what the numbers are showing.
- The discipline data is appalling. Strategies/solutions need to be identified in order to make a difference in students' lives.
- One member felt there is inconsistency in the way schools and law enforcement deal with discipline/suspensions.
- Some students are counted more than once in the discipline data. This is a major concern of how the data is presented. Since students can fall into different categories, one member felt the data is not accurate.
- A huge amount of data was presented and cannot be addressed all at once.
- How do we recruit more minority teachers?
- KCS personnel need more training and cultural sensitivity toward students.
- Does everyone have their own personal ownership for the problems?
- The clergy is lacking in helping the schools/society deal with discipline/behavior. Churches have an audience every week where they can influence their congregations.
- Questions about the KCS employment data: How many years are educators at one school? How many times do teachers move? Teachers have to build a culture competency at the schools where they work.
- The data confirms the achievement gap.
- There is a low number of minorities who are teachers.
- There should be other means of discipline besides suspensions.
 - Students need to be in school. Students must attend school until they are 18 years of age.
 - Alternative education is offered to students on suspension.
 - Sometimes the problem of a suspended student attending an alternative school is the parents and their unwillingness to send their child to an alternative program.
 - If students are suspended, then they are not truant.
 - Students who are not in school sometimes, but not always, become clients of the public defender's office. The cost of failure is a long-term cost.
- Discipline is a national issue.
- Academic gaps do exist.
- Maynard Elementary School has the most minority elementary teachers.

- Maynard Elementary has stopped suspending students but has found alternative ways to discipline students.
- Students have mental health issues and need support.
- Ways have to be found to engage parents.
- The teaching population is changing. Young teachers with 0-5 years of experience make up 38% of the teaching staff. Those teachers must be given tools to work with students.
- Higher suspension rates are shown in data where there are African-American principals. A minority principal in a majority school is usually over-objective when it relates to discipline.
- Discipline is consistent among KCS administrators.
- Teacher demographics are not the same as student populations. The best minority teachers must be attracted and retained. There will be a cost to this endeavor.
- Race and mobility are major problems. Schools may be the best place to begin to attempt to solve these problems. We have to learn from schools that already have these problems and create recommendations from the data.
- What contributes to the data?
 - Home/community issues
 - Teachers who lack in cultural diversity
 - Mentality change on both sides
 - Preconceived notions about discipline
 - How to deal with students if there is a lack of knowledge of how to deal with students
 - Must change mentality of both students and teachers – diversity training
- Educational disparities are shown by national statistics. It is a national issue. The data validates our concerns and parents' concerns. Even though we can get mired in data we all need to be on the same page. Studying the data can help us formulate guidelines.
- Diversity of staff – several members felt KCS needs to better reflect more of our students and their needs. A diverse administration and Human Resources work force is a place to start. KCS needs to be more proactive in respect to culture competency.
- Achievement gap is not just a school problem but a society problem. Ignorance costs. We need to improve our human capital. The community must own up to the problems and help in the solution.

KCS Student Achievement Data (Elizabeth Alves)

- Emailed Handout/PowerPoint Presentation
- KCS District-Wide Achievement

- Algebra I may be one semester or full year, depending on the school and the students' abilities. Algebra I data presented is only high school data
- Subgroups:
 - There are approximately 2,600 ELL (English Language Learners) in the school district.
 - A subgroup must be greater than 30 students.
- There are similar trends in the data for Algebra II, English I, and English II.
- Question: Would the data change if a course was full term instead of one semester? Typically full term courses are taught to struggling students.
- District-Wide Achievement Gaps
 - Achievement gaps are measured using state methodology.
 - No data is reported for less than 30 in a subgroup.
 - The achievement gap is a measure of the difference between groups.
 - There is progress in some groups.
 - Majority of ELL students are at elementary level.
 - BHN = Black, Hispanic, Native Americans
 - Students can be counted in multiple subgroups.
 - Data for grades 3-8 is TCAP district performance achievement.
 - Less successful students (drop-outs) can influence numbers.
 - Great things are happening at Austin-East.
 - Suggestion: Use things/programs that are going well at more schools.
 - Data in high schools show how individual subgroups are performing.
 - Last two years Austin-East students are performing better because of:
 - Remediation
 - Teachers working as teams and collaboration
 - Teachers are taking ownership of students and their issues.
 - Attendance
 - Intervention
 - Sense of collective responsibility
 - TAP System
 - Structure of teacher leadership
 - Formalized
 - Collaboration
 - PLC (professional learning community) – breaks large schools down into groups
 - Students in class can influence other students. It is important for students to have experiences with others unlike themselves.
- Graduation Rates:
 - Steady increase

- Paul Kelley Volunteer Academy began in 2012.
- Methodology has changed in counting graduates. Graduation rate is based on four years plus one summer of school. Students taking longer than this are counted as dropouts, even though they do graduate.
- Graduation methodology for students with disabilities has changed.
- Excellence for students may look different but all can graduate with a regular diploma.
- 90% graduation rate is realistic.
- Significant increase in the number of black graduates.
- Closing achievement gaps in graduation rate
- Special needs students can remain in school until they are 22 years old.
- **Other comments:**
 - Students need to be able to help the committee understand the data by telling their own stories. What are students feeling and why are they falling short?
 - The task force members need time to digest the data, look at problems, define problems, and realize the magnitude of problems so that there will be a collective understanding.

Revisit Task Force Agreements (Phyllis Nichols and Elizabeth Alves)

- **KCS Staff**
 - 93% of KCS staff is white.
 - Administration is more diverse, with expectation that diversity in administration will translate to more diversity in teaching ranks.
 - Can data be pulled to show the years of experience in different schools?
 - Black teachers were recruited from Knoxville College. That pool has now dried up.
- **Website**
 - Sample of the website which will be located on KCS website.
 - Will contain the committee members, minutes of the meetings, and data presented at the meetings.
 - Will email screen shot to committee members for study and comments.
 - Will go “live” next week.
 - Will have an email address for anyone interested to make comments or ask questions.
- **Open/Closed Meetings**
 - Resources will be on the website as reference points and for reflection.
 - The task force is a work in progress.
 - All information/data is available to the public.

- Meeting expectations – Open to anyone attending outside task force? Honor requests from folks to attend? Community spokespersons? Media requests? Just general observers?
- If meeting gets too large, the task force will not accomplish much. We need to proceed with caution as to who can participate.
- This group set perimeters at the beginning. We should be careful when responding to the public but we do need to invite public feedback.

Next Meeting:

- **Thursday, May 28, 2015** (not Tuesday, May 26 – day after Memorial Day)
- May meeting: subcommittees, action plans, community engagement, students/parents involvement, other
- Identify major themes, issues of concerns, and what is next?