



**Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force
Urban League Conference Room
March 31, 2015
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

Notes Summary

Welcome/“Who’s on First?” (*Phyllis Nichols*)

- Review of Meeting Norms
- Between now and next meeting we expect to have DEO page on the knoxschools.org site
- This meeting will provide an opportunity to review all of the data and information so the Task Force can begin its work

Actions from the 2007 Study (*Melissa Massie*)

- Referenced recommendations from the committee, important to know some of the things we have implemented
- Consistency in how we are managing our discipline (guidelines for schools)
- We now have alternative options for suspended students – students now have the opportunity to keep learning and progressing academically when they have been suspended
- Students in After- school detention & Saturday School are not just sitting in study hall
- Opportunity to provide additional instructional learning
- Focus on homework or reinforcing a specific skill
- Trying to make ISS(In-School Suspension) a resource for our schools ; staffed trained with behavior management skills
- Professional Intervention Teams
 - Includes social workers, school counselors
 - Meet weekly and/or bi-weekly
 - Discuss students with dropping grades, excessive tardiness and absences, basic needs concerns

- Identify how best to handle situation
- Student behavior is communication; Assessment looks at the behavior to determine what student is telling us
- Determine if the student has a specific skill set need
- Create strategies for success in school. What motivates them?
- 10 Behavior Liaisons
 - 7 for Special Education
 - 3 for General Student population
 - Train to understand how to respond and de-escalate situations
 - 4 day Crisis Intervention training session
 - Half day refresher each semester
- Attorneys training our administrators on legal procedures/processes
- Youth Summit
 - Each school selected traditional and non-traditional leaders
 - Discussed issues specific to their school
 - Came up with Action Plans
 - Another Summit planned for Spring 2015
 - Anti-Bullying, Prevention, Guest Speakers
- Student Support Services Proactive Strategies
 - Preventing student behavior that can lead to trouble
 - Very specific training on expectations
 - Consistently reinforcing expectations
 - Identify who needs more support and who needs intensive intervention
 - Someone to touch base with student daily
- Positive Behavior Support Classrooms
 - Teacher and Teaching Assistant trained for classroom in high needs schools
 - Resource available if we have tried other options
 - Work on behaviors, then integrate back into mainstream courses, eventually move back to zone school
- All Principals will attend training to focus on achievement gap closure
- Several school-wide Positive Behavior Interventions
 - Beaumont Elementary - 85 % reduction in referrals to the office
 - Sarah Moore Greene Elementary - 65 % reduction in referrals to the office
 - Significant reduction in suspension
 - STAR data shows phenomenal gains in reading scores
 - School-wide Positive Behavior Intervention Session for South-Doyle Middle, Vine Middle, and Northwest Middle schools is scheduled for May 2015
 - Each High School will have group attend School Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Session in June 2015
 - Prioritize schools that need the most intensive interventions and start with them

KCS Discipline Policy/Procedures *(James McIntyre, Clifford Davis, & Brian Hartsell)*

- Maintain Safe and Orderly Environment
- Consistency across district
- Policy JCCC
 - Level 1- minor misconduct such as tardiness, class disturbance, cheating; addressed by teacher or staff
 - Level 2-misconduct more serious, but not a threat to safety; includes infractions such as tobacco products, forged notes, or continuation of level 1 misconduct; addressed by administrator
 - Level 3-misconduct directed toward a person, such as fighting or vandalism, or continuation of level 1 or level 2; handled by administrator
 - Level 4-criminal misconduct such as extortion or bomb threat, repeat of other levels; may need to involve law enforcement
- Discipline Options
 - ISS (In-School Suspension)-student removed from classroom(s) for at least a half day; still remain in school and complete assigned work from teacher
 - OSS,(Out of School Suspension)-short term (1-4 days) or long term,(5 or more days)
 - Zero tolerance/expulsion-aggravated assault, drugs, controlled substance or prescription drugs, possession of firearm
 - Suspension for 10 days or more we still provide services via alternative school or evening alternative school
- Guidelines for Administrators
 - State zero tolerance law is in place for drugs, weapons and assaults on staff
 - State mandated zero tolerance for sharing prescription drugs with another student, aggravated or physical assault
 - Requires suspension of no less than 180 days from school during calendar year
 - Consider bringing back student at a time when it will create the least amount of impact to student's grades
 - How can we address misconduct and have the least amount of damage to student's academic progress
 - As technology evolves we are reviewing policies and guidelines
 - Guidelines give suggested parameters, but also give the principal discretion based on their knowledge of their students
 - High School varies from Middle School for fighting because fighting is more prevalent in High School
 - Principal has to write to Discipline Director to justify a suspension longer than recommendation in guidelines

Implementation of policy and procedures *(Nathan Langlois)*

- Layers; policies and procedures, school culture, our individual people
- Ensuring the people working with students have a relationship with them
- The implementation of a 9th grade academy has helped the transition into high school
- At the school level we share policies and expectations with parents and students and also cover during assemblies and post on website
- Address individually when we have issues come up. For example if students are involved in fighting, share with them what they should or should not be doing to get into fight and avoid suspension
- Communication and transparency is key
- Thorough with collecting information before we make a decision
- Collect as much information as possible before we make a decision
- Consistency with all parties involved
- Administrators practice due process; ask students for their side and take into consideration
- Academic success is the goal; even if very serious, at the end of the day, we still have to keep in mind that giving them an education is the goal.
- Students make mistakes and as administrators we try to respond and discipline in a way that helps them recover

Review of ODR form *(Cindy White)*

- ODR is an Office Discipline Referral
- Preventing and reinforcing positive behavior
- Communicating expectations to parents and students in great detail
- Spend time teaching students what positive behavior looks like
- Track the date, time of day, location, and type to help make better decisions about what we do
- Tracking helps us see trends and where we can make changes to correct or prevent discipline issues
 - If we notice we have a greater number of referrals that occur at beginning of day, in the hallway in front of 8th grade bathroom, then we can put measures in place to address that
- We work to not only improve student behavior but also improve our adult behavior
- Always give student opportunity to tell their side
- Task Force member asked for clarification on when a School Resource Officer is involved and when a School Security Officer is involved
 - School Security Officer (School Employee) is involved when there is reasonable suspicion of misconduct
 - School Resource Officer (Knox County Sheriff's Office or KPD) is involved when there is probable cause to suspect criminal activity
- Some Task Force members expressed concern about officers being involved and the community not understanding; seems to be a disconnect; would like to see more details to help clarify

Discipline data (*Melissa Massie/Clifford Davis*)

- Demographic & Accountability groups
 - Black, Hispanic, Native American
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - English Language Learners
 - Special Education
- Methodology 1) student count of infractions-reports the number of infractions within a school year
- Methodology 2) percentage of students suspended –reports the percent of the students of a given group who have been suspended during the school year
- Glossary of Terms
- ED=Economically Disadvantaged
- ELL= English Language Learners
- SWD= Student with Disabilities
- SWOD= Students without Disabilities,
- Use analysis of this data to help us prioritize for School-wide Positive Behavior Sessions
- Could see overlap in data with Ethnicity, Economically Disadvantaged, and Students with Disabilities
- Alternative school is required for Special Education students with suspension of 10 plus days and transportation must be provided by law
- Alternative school is parent choice for general population students with suspension of 10 plus days; No transportation required for general population students
- About 97% of those suspended 10 plus days attend an alternative school, but Tennessee State code does not allow us to compel general population students to attend alternative school
- Students can use Odyssey online and parents are allowed to pick up work from teachers
- Subgroup data is only available when there are 30 or more students in the subgroup
- The group most impacted is African American male
- From 2007 Study-principal committee for violation of school rules and brochure with student and parental rights
- Help teachers understand how to approach students and situations
- Task Force member inquired about what percentage of Caucasian certified staff is bi-lingual
- Several Task Force members requested data for race and ethnicity of staff by school for teachers and administrators and years of service per school

Breakout Discussion

I felt...

- Disparities echoed across subgroups
- Data shows cultural disconnect
- Kids are different
- Too few African American Educators
- 93% of staff is white while 75% of students are white
- Lack of Diversity; Why?
- More informed about challenges
- Overwhelmed
- Hurt / Angry
- Frustrated
- Frustrated and confused about the number of African American students that were suspended
- There is a need for more data to get a better picture of the issues
- Concerned that a lot of what was said about what is happening in schools is ideal, but not happening everywhere
- The data was not disaggregated so true picture of data is obscured
- Lack of sensitivity to poverty and race
- This information makes me want to ask why and then figure out the solution
- Want a breakdown of percentage by school administrators and teachers
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Gender
 - Years of service

I was surprised by...

- That we are not confronting the problem with urgency
- That middle school students with OSS (Out of School Suspension) are not required to go to school (parents can decline alternative placement)
- Out of School Suspension remandment; alternative placement optional and no transportation
- Rate of suspension at certain schools
- No mention in data of high incidence of law enforcement in school and involved in discipline
- The impact of poverty and how that affects students
- That 3 of the 4 high schools with the largest disparities in suspensions by race had African-American male principals last year
- So much data
- The middle school numbers
- Number of ELL (English Language Learners)
- Explanation of mandatory attendance and what is the law
- Lack of context, but want a broader sense
- Overall disparity for African American males
- Data patterns in high incidence high schools

I don't understand...

- Do the schools with the highest Economically Disadvantaged students have the highest rates of suspension?
- Why it is taking so long to develop a better strategy to fix the problem from 2007 to today
- Why we cannot fix the problem
- The amount of diversity training
- The descriptors of students with disabilities

What if...

- We focused all of our efforts on one thing until we get results
- We really educated all children with equity
- There were more experienced African American teachers?
- We had a more diverse workforce
- We better addressed cultural competency in our workforce
- We address poverty
- We have more community schools
- Keep it simple
- We had more money and more time
- We start at the foundation in elementary schools
- We had more options before issuing Out of School Suspension

Additional breakout discussion statements and questions

- What teacher skills and understandings are developed?
- Racial composition of administrators and faculty
- Is it possible that schools with African American administrators overcompensate to not show favoritism?
- Would like to see Elementary School data
- Diversity training needed; constant training not just a single shot
- Early alert systems
- Assignments, connections to teachers
- Return rate of success
- May be helpful to bring this down to a case study to put it into perspective of what happens to someone
- How much is an accumulation and how much is a single infraction?
- We need numbers of students more than number of incidents
- Would like to have more time to discuss rather than listen
- Would like to see a breakdown for fall semester and spring semester incidents to see if higher frequency during one semester or the other

Next Steps

- Chief Rausch has city information to share with the group
- Judge Irwin has data to share about kids in court and what happens to them
- Please email us with specific questions

Next Meeting, Tuesday, April 28, 2014 at 4pm at the Knoxville Area Urban League

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