



Disparities in Educational Outcomes Task Force

March 22, 2016

Notes Summary

Welcome and reminders:

- The notes for each meeting are posted on the Knox County Schools' web site.
- Reminder of future DEO Task Force meeting dates

Observations:

- This committee was started in February 2015 and has accomplished much since its creation.
- We are on the last leg of our mission. Like the best marathon runners from Africa who train and run as teams, we are working as a team. Teams can accomplish more than a single person.

KCS Personnel Data/Diversity Recruitment:

- Kathy Sims is the Knox County Schools' Chief Human Resources Officer since 2004.
- There is great interest in the demographics about KCS staff and the efforts to recruit minorities for employment.
- In years past there was a Human Resources supervisor who was a minority recruiter. Presently different HR supervisors recruit. In summer 2015 there was a minority recruiter for Title I schools but the position was eliminated because of budgetary constraints.
- The difficulty of recruiting minorities is a concern for school systems across the state of Tennessee.
- Statistics show that a low number of African-Americans, especially African-American males, are going into the education profession.
- Some school systems (e.g., Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, NC) have programs to help finance minority students through college.
- Knox County Schools has:
 - Tuition assistance program (\$1200/semester) for teachers who are in critical need subjects.
 - \$3,000 signing bonus to teach in Knox County Schools in critical need areas.
 - Tuition assistance and signing bonus are only for KCS employees.

- Will have to offer more to entice minorities to come to Knox County (e.g., laptop computers, signing bonus, moving expenses, etc.).
- Handout detailing number of KCS minority certified employees vs. total number of certified employees. Minority certified staff is approximately 6%. Minority category includes Hispanic.
- Conversation ongoing for future employment of dedicated minority recruiter.
- Real purposeful effort in Knox County Schools to have diversity in administrative/principal ranks and leadership roles.
- This concerted effort has led to a rate of diversity in our leadership ranks that is much higher than our teacher population.
- Percent of principals of color is more like 15 or 16% as opposed to 6% for teachers.
- Recruitment concerns:
 - Perception that Knoxville does not offer community amenities/activities for minorities.
 - Because Knoxville offers a good family environment, it is easier to recruit people who are more settled.
 - Community/businesses can offer incentives to move to Knoxville/Knox County.
 - Support for people who have relocated should be available through professional networks.
 - There is an influx of highly degreed immigrants from other countries and US territories who do not have teaching credentials but who could earn the needed credentials.
 - Industry spends lots of money to bring in qualified employees.
 - Some organizations spend lots of money to train but cannot keep employees because of greater salary/benefits elsewhere.
 - There is a great mobility/turnover rate from Generation X because they do not have a commitment to one organization. They also frequently change professions. This is a nationwide problem.
- Comments/Observations regarding recruitment:
 - UT would welcome to partner with KCS to build an educational relationship with the Hispanic community.
 - Even though there are many qualified minorities a person cannot be pressured to become a teacher. A person must be passionate about teaching as a profession.
 - KCS needs to continue to be intentional about creating a pipeline for minorities to become administrators. Presently there are 30-40% minority participants in the Leadership Academy.
 - The general public does not understand the efforts of KCS Human Resources goes to recruit and hire minorities. The story must be told.
 - Years ago, the Office of Civil Rights directed KCS assign black teachers to majority white schools and vice versa. These assignments were accomplished through a lottery.
 - Principals have the autonomy to select teachers for their building.
 - Budget is always an issue. Salaries attract but benefits retain employees.
 - Some school systems around Knox County pay more, some significantly more.

- Committee members should use their connections, both personal and professional, to steer potential candidates towards education.
- Hispanics have festivals which feature their culture and can potentially entice persons to move to the area.
- Black students can benefit from black male role models. Several commented that this is extremely important for students to see a real life model. A student must see himself/herself in an attainable role.
- All students need role models who motivate students, regardless of race.
- There needs to be continuous cultural training. Some individuals need to overcome built-in biases.
- Perception expressed that minorities have to prove themselves much more than non-minority teachers.
- Support for minorities:
 - Need support in the education profession, especially if they are the only minority, or one of a few, in a building.
 - This is more important if the minority candidate has relocated to this area with no ties to the community other than the job.
 - Being the only minority in a building can be isolating and lonely.
 - Need support networks for teachers of color, even if it is virtual support.

Draft Report Discussion:

- Background: There has been a series of small group meetings to create, edit, and revise the DEO Task Force Final Report. The subcommittee used feedback from many sources, including the community forum and a meeting with our law enforcement partners.
- Task Force Observations:
 - “Disorderly Conduct” – use the word “decrease” instead of “eliminate”. Arrest for disorderly conduct is sometimes the last resort when there is no other option.
 - Data:
 - Concern that data can be manipulated to show results as needed. Comparison data should be used. We must recognize that policies and procedures are in place. We have to have the right incentive structure to lead to the right outcomes.
 - Concern that data can create a skewed picture.
 - Data must be transparent and help to hold us all accountable.
 - Communication Plan
 - A whole strategy needs to be developed to communicate the work of this Task Force.
 - Report and communication needs to be in Spanish, in addition to English. Parents as well as community members want to be involved but some cannot be involved because of the language barrier.
 - Questions:
 - What is our time frame to accomplish the DEO Task Force recommendations?
 - What do we want to measure along the way?
 - If we reach our goals, will disparities go away?
 - What is an acceptable level of suspensions?

- Is there a Student Bill of Rights? What is the consequence of violating those rights?
 - A Bill of Rights empowers people.
 - Will students feel marginalized without their own Bill of Rights?
 - Schools should let parents and students know their rights in a school handbook or school discipline handbook.
 - A Student Bill of Rights should be a positive document.
 - One suggestion was to have an advocate for students available in the school.
 - A Student Bill of Rights should also include the students' accountabilities and responsibilities.
 - Conclusion: students actually have a substantial number of rights. Therefore, we don't need to create a Bill of Rights, rather we just need to articulate the existing one.
 - Cultural Competency training
 - Training will be non-negotiable.
 - Initial training will be the same for all, but ongoing training could be different in each school.
 - Training will be reflected in the instruction.
 - Training should be the responsibility of the principal.
 - There has to be buy-in at the school level. Teachers should be part of the implementation and evaluation of cultural training at the school.
 - UT is reconstituting and expanding the Urban Specialist program.
 - Teachers should have knowledge of their students and do "what is best for the kids".
 - Culture is not a subset of another culture. Everyone needs to have a basic awareness that each culture is different regardless of race, ethnicity, etc.
 - Behavior and diversion programs:
 - Involve students in after-school activities.
 - There should be programs in the schools to develop young people.
 - There is a need for an alternative to suspension.
 - More behavior specialists could be hired to train teachers to deal with behavior concerns.
 - People have to become aware of how different behaviors are viewed in different cultures.
 - Discipline in KCS. There is a range of consequences per offense.
 - Culturally-Responsive Curriculum
 - Could be a professional development activity or series of activities to learn how to implement in the schools.

Community Forum:

- The next Community Forum will be on Thursday, April 28, 5:30 p.m., at Vine Middle School.

Teacher Forum:

- The second Teacher Forum will be held on Thursday, March 24, 4:00 p.m., at Central High School.

Future DEO Task Force Meetings:

- April meeting will focus on the DEO Task Force draft report/recommendations.
- May meeting will focus on feedback from the April 28 Community Forum and the draft report revisions.