

Knox County Schools
Teacher Advisory Committee
West High School Library Classroom
Tuesday, October 21, 2014



Attendees

Dr. Jim McIntyre, Superintendent
Tanya Coates, 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
Wanda Lacy, Farragut High 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
Heidi Walsh, Christenberry Elementary School
Karla West, A.L. Lotts Elementary School
Vanita Williamson, Farragut Middle School

Non-Attendees

Jessica Holman, Inskip Elementary School

Visitors / Guests

Dr. Rodney Russell, Director of Human Capital Strategies
Patti Bounds, Board Member, District 7
Stephanie Jeffreys, Superintendent's Office

Purpose & Expectations

- Our group from 2013-2014 made some very good decisions
- Our purpose is to continue to have a robust and constructive conversation
- Tried to make sure we have a diversity of voices
- Several returning members from last year who helped select members for this year; did a fabulous job with the selection process; it was a lot of hard work and took a lot of time to consider applicants; know you were selected by your peers
- These meetings will generate very productive conversation

- Try to meet monthly and try to have a rough agenda, to help be prepared
- Encouraged to solicit information from peers, and represent your colleagues
- Make sure you attend meetings, engage, and participate
- We think you have an important voice to bring and want to hear from you to help us make decisions for greater student learning and success
- Be candid and courteous. When we don't have consensus, be professional
- We will take notes during the meeting. A member of the group can take notes if the group prefers that approach.

TAC Website

- Pictures, Bio, Email addresses are posted on the Knox County Schools website
- If you want to change, let us know
- Email addresses are posted on website so people can get in touch with you to contribute to robust conversation

Brief History of the TAC, Minutes and 11 Action Steps

- The Teacher Advisory Committee grew out of some concerns and challenges that were brought forth by educators
- Teacher working group convened by School Board Chair & Superintendent
- We determined concerns we could address in the short term and any we could plan to address in the long term
- We reported to Board of Education with 11 Action Steps that we executed
- The 11 Action Steps are listed in your packet.
- Encourage you to look over the action steps and the minutes from last year.

Ground rules

- What are your expectations as participants as we begin the dialogue?
- Does the group want TAC member(s) to be facilitator?
 - Members would prefer Superintendent facilitate
 - Liked that Dr. McIntyre encouraged those members of the group we did not hear from to contribute
- How best to keep a conversation focused with 20 people without going off on significant tangents?
 - Dr. McIntyre was an effective facilitator and helped keep us on task
- Ground rule should be that this group is focused on being solutions oriented and not about us individually
- These are very real, honest conversations.
- Having these discussions to make things better for students and educators, with the end result being what is best for students.
- Continue to think about ground rules. Can develop as we go along as necessary.

Topics for Agendas

- Break out into smaller groups, initially to discuss:
 - What are the important topics we need to be addressing and digging into?
 - What is on your mind in the schools?
 - What are the concerns and “pain points?”
 - What are the challenges, how do we do better?
 - Short term, what needs to be addressed right now?
 - What do we need to look at over the long term?

- ASPEN-*IMMEDIATE*
 - Different grade levels have different issues
 - As Quarter 1 ends, then quarter 2 starts it appears to be averaging the quarter one final grade with the new grades for quarter 2
 - Difficult to know actual grade at a point in time, parents and students are not sure of grades and upset and contacting teachers
 - Real discomfort with system, partially because it is new and people are uncomfortable
 - Letter came home today from one school that report cards are not coming home because they have problem with ASPEN
 - Saying it was the interim grade and should be the final grade,
 - Went to the training and followed instructions to a “T “and it would not work (have processes changed since the summer training?)
 - Calculated grade the old school way in 1/10th of the time
 - The gradebook system was not piloted in a KCS school
 - Should have been tried out at a mid-level school with an average number of students to find the bugs and work out the issues
 - School secretary working long hours and Principals and Teachers spent all fall break going in to put grades in and check if grades went through
 - Knox County Schools was not in a position to do a pilot because our vendor informed KCS that support would end for our SIS product in short timeframe
 - ASPEN/CANVAS-no consistency, no flow, need more training

- Substitutes-*Immediate*
 - Current plan-offer increase pay for hard to staff schools (20-25)
 - \$93 per day, and on Mondays and Fridays will pay \$20 more to encourage substitutes to work on those days
 - Implementing November 1, 2014
 - Hoping it will bring some retired teachers and others back in
 - Will try this approach for a while and evaluate how it goes

- Affordable Care Act-if folks work $\frac{3}{4}$ time we have to pay insurance
 - Part of it is not just cost, but it is the logistics
 - If we look back and we have people who have worked more than $\frac{3}{4}$ time then we have to pay a penalty
- Digging into rationale for teacher and other employee absences
- What can we do to encourage and improve attendance, especially Mondays and Fridays? (534 absences on Friday before Fall Break – typical day is 200-250)
 - Consider an incentive to those teachers who have excellent attendance? Retirement incentive was meant to help with that (and has). Perfect Attendance Incentive?
- Consistency. Evaluators, Instructional Coaches, etc.
- Other side of that coin is autonomy & flexibility
- APEX. Will it exist? What will it look like?
 - Multiple Sub-groups for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools
- RTI². More information, training, A “101”-level clarification
- Testing. Are all assessments necessary? How is the data being used?
 - Much of the concern seems to be at elementary.
- Staffing at High Needs Schools. Is BEP funding being reduced?
- Reduction and allocation of fees. Fee Waiver money being reduced? Particularly at high school. Why? What can be done to address?
- ELL as part of our test scores in the classroom
 - We realize it is state mandated but maybe we can be a voice to the state and talk to some teachers who are really struggling
- Teachers requirements
 - Are Lead teachers being required to do 2-4 RTI quality checks with tier 2 and 3?
 - Detailed Lesson plans required for tutoring?
 - If they have been asked to do the tutoring, then they are already good teachers
 - Why do they need more evaluative responsibilities?
 - Lead teachers would have 6-10, now have to do additional 2 evaluations on tier 2 & tier 3 for fidelity monitoring on RTI²,
 - Detailed Lesson plans required for RTI², more and more?
 - Is there a way that others-coaches, admin, to lift that off the lead teachers?
 - Is this school based because some have not been asked to do all of this?
- Autonomy
 - Want consistency, but also want flexibility & autonomy to do job of teaching students well
 - Where does the responsibility really fall for various requirements?

- Clarification and consistency-what is state requirement? Federal requirement? Knox County requirement? School level requirement?
- Special Education
 - Have to be certified for every subject that you teach and take a PRAXIS, is very difficult
 - Could we have a specific Special Education Math, Special Education Science, etc.?
 - Case Load, 50 students, teach EOC courses, IEP meetings, prepare for IEP meetings, being available if student's behavior is not going well, lesson plans
 - State problem example – teacher takes Praxis over and over for Math, difficulty passing it, one point away from passing
 - Took a math teacher out of the class to help in Special Education and the students did worse
 - Need the expertise of the Special Education teacher
- EOC consistency
- TAP Schools
 - Clusters and PLCS, what should it be?
 - Different interpretations
- Teachers in other Non-traditional settings PLC with Traditional so we can meet with others who deal with same content-no opportunity to collaborate
- Worried about having to teach SPI and TN Common Core together and they don't always perfectly align / overlap
 - Were meant to be into PARCC this year, but pushed off
 - At least one more year of a test not designed to measure CCSS
 - Be a voice to Nashville, need an assessment aligned to standards
 - What's the message / guidance to teachers in the meantime?
 - How to avoid a mixed message. Is that possible?

Upcoming Agenda Items

- ASPEN
- APEX
- RTI²
- Instructional Coaches
- Consistency / Autonomy
- Alignment of Assessments to Standards

APEX

- Circle back, last year recommendation from group, continue for this school year, and re-design

- Do we want to suspend it while we re-design?
- Is it still the right decision to keep it while we re-design?
- We are required by state to have a differential pay-plan? The things we do around TAP, hard to staff educational areas could probably meet that requirement
- We can design it however we want
- We designed the current model based on teacher input but feels like it is not having the intended impact. Doesn't necessarily feel like an incentive / reward.
- Is it a worthy investment, can we use it more wisely?
- People in schools with no growth working very hard but not getting any money, it feels divisive, and some individuals who get APEX money who don't deserve it when they are in a school with growth
- Does not always feel fair
- Concerns that if we don't have something in place, the \$3 million will go back into budget and we are never going to see it again
- If you pay everyone exactly the same, there will be tension about those who are not working as hard as others getting the same pay
- Like that it at least offers veterans / strong teachers the option to get additional pay
- TCAP, TVAAS, creates the feeling of unfairness
- The issues that are big questions to people and perhaps they need to be taken out of the equation for APEX (Language Arts, Reading test results)
- Want to hear more from people who want to keep it, but some members beginning to feel like it needs to go away
- One teacher reported that when some schools became TAP schools, if teachers came to South-Doyle, they got money for staying another year, but those who were already there did not seem to get any additional money
- One teacher felt that it takes away from the focus on kids
- Some feel it is out of their hands, counselor or subject not tested
- Could send a survey to get input
- Good to re-evaluate as things have changed
- Don't want to lose the money that is going to teachers, keep the devil that we know, but change the devil that we know
- Teachers are working under the assumption that APEX is in place for this year, as that's what they have been told.
- General consensus: Proceed as discussed last spring. Continue APEX as currently structured for 2014-15, while fundamentally re-designing for 2015-16.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 18, 2014