

Focus Group: Merion Elementary School Staff

Date: 4/10/14

SWOT

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunity	Threats
Principal	Pull Outs	Using all staff better sharing expertise/ not being asked for solutions/ teachers have a better solution to problems than admin who are not present in buildings	Security/ office door propped open (almost daily)/ others following teachers in to get into building. Have one door that swipes
Staff/Library (informed, professional, dedicated, motivated)	Use of Library not maximized (i.e. research)	collaborate across schools or within	Core Curriculum Challenge
Diversity	Range of Learners (ability)		Lack of Time with entire class present
Support each other (covering classes in time of need)	Rigidity of Curriculum/ Curriculum sometimes disconnected from students interests	A No Tolerance Policy of hitting, spitting and punching others	Emotional Support and time taken from Principal
Outstanding achievement	Forced pacing/Set blocks/inflexible pacing charts	maximize WIN time- improve it for 9/2014	Not caring what you do because it doesn't matter
Supportive families	feeling that little is being done for students crisis	listen to input from teachers	Pressure
responsive to students' unique needs (as much as we are permitted by district)	allowing students to be physical with adults/children because of diagnosis (teacher/IA's physically hurt)	GLP, Staff meetings, MAT meetings	Standardized testing/ Danielson Framework
Teacher put a lot of effort into planning, assessment and instruction	Time spent in District, State Assessment	Open minded Principal who is willing to see and hear the teachers concerns/ willingness to listen to new ideas	Too much testing
Creating nurturing environment/ welcoming environment	need more staff for unique population here	Schedule time to collaborate	Cuts to special area programs
Get students (motivated, capable)	lack out of level testing, acceleration, meaningful D.I.	Make it easier to get reimbursed for classes and supplies	Told to do a lot of contradictory things

Teachers are told what, when, how to teach certain skills without student needs being taken into consideration MAT, WIN time are good ideas but need improvement to include research based strategic interventions	conductive to student-centered/teacher facilitated structures of planning and teaching	Not being acknowledged
We allow our students and staff the chance to explore beyond the classroom	Increase in diverse students- represent their cultures in academics and language	Reducing programs like music, arts and FLES/ reduction of exposure to foreign language
Available resources	Experiences beyond classroom in relation to community experience can always be expanded upon	Communication with parents can be difficult- clear guidance
HSA- Parent involvement	WIN Time- utilizing whole grade levels for grouping students instead of individual classrooms	Stressed/Fragmented/ Mobility of families
Providing opportunities	Move to early education plan- full day kindergarten	Not enough time
	HS opening later/ ES opening earlier	Student Population
	More precise G/L benchmarks need to be established held to and communicated to parents and staff	Too much "top down" educational initiatives
	Taking inservice time to analyze data in a more meaningful way	Taking away Specials/language
	add computer/technology as a "special" w/ qualified teacher	Leaving the "child" behind in "no child left behind"
		Lack of time for kids to have fun learning/ creativity
		Culture of fear cultivated district-wide teachers are fearful of district leadership
Programs are at risk for cuts More multi-culture events and increase in foreign language classes per grade level and across 5 day week		Not using most current emergency response plans

	wait time till interventions take place	
	Time it takes to get children identified for help	
	Certain children taking up too much time of staff availability	
	Students below grade level but not LD don't get the help they need	
	Need asst. principal or 2 school counselors based on school populations needs	
	Mandated programs that are not required to meet needs of our students (WIN time)	
	Inefficient Gifted Screening	

Key Questions

What should school look like ten years from now?	What should a Lower Merion School District graduate look like? What are the skills, attitudes, and dispositions that we want for all students?	What do we value as a District? How do we hold onto our traditions while simultaneously embracing change?
Better Strategies for teachers to handle classroom management	more flexible	Have to be flexible/ lack of flexibility in curriculum/pacing does not support the creativity of staff/students
Less standardized testing	respectful	Whose values/ personal vs LMSD society/ What are our "values"
Out of level testing to determine "real" instructional levels-differentiated instruction weekly. Meaningful teacher collaboration	positive self-image	Have to bridge access to technology with core values (respect, etc.)
fun, authentic learning	cooperative and collaborative enjoy learning	Understand that change can be painful
connect to the arts: music, dance, performance arts	strong work ethic	model values through lit. Talk to kids at each grade level-discuss issues of tech and social integration

Start key boarding in 2nd grade	self-motivated	if we can have an open conversation down the road about what worked/didn't work to make tests useful we need time to analyze to drive instruction
Smart Board in every classroom	positive	
Language treated as core class (5 times/week)	engaged	Not everything needs to change remember that we're working with children
infuse move exercise/movement into the day	accepting of other cultures and opinions	keep in mid that testing data is just a snapshot of a student or grade level
reasonable pacing charts	strong foundation-socially and academically	
implementation of stress reduction strategies throughout the day "mindful classrooms"	self-reliance	Not cutting programs like art, music, FLES and PE
more flexible grouping/clyster grouping. Use teachers at a grade level in creative ways-move beyond traditional classroom grouping	communicator	Thinking outside the box
utilize teacher strengths-more "switching for SS/SCI" at many grade levels	thinkers	asking teachers for input for change
connections to the community-service	problem Solvers	good teaching isn't,'t going to change
Computer lab w/trained teacher	reading comprehension	remember the student are the center of this
Keyboarding 1 day week w/instructor	listeners	more freedom
Integrated technology	observant	
Increase physical activity	language developments	
starting time earlier (HS students start later)	giving back	
Text books online, with teacher support	self- starter	
no more heavy backpacks	resilient	

improve nutrition at lunch	creative	
integrating all curriculum	resourceful	
more time for creativity learning	activist (social)	
less testing	awareness of the greater good	
full day kindergarten	gracious	
increase support for all children despite backgrounds	social skills	
more involved parents	We want our students to be happy	
basic skills	we want out students to enjoy challenges and learning	
more rigor discipline (and academic)	we want them to make noise and be engaged in active learning	
higher behavioral expectations	we want our students to take pride in their efforts as well as achievements	
Kid reflective/true and realistic differentiation/ kid choice/ kid specific	we want them to come to school with a sense of excitement for what they may learn	
integrated learning/ holistic approach	We want them to question and be motivated to find answers	
more diverse staff/additional counselors/psychologists	we want our students to be good citizens	
more engrossing curriculum/individualized	we want them to feel free as to how they show their learning	
	we want them to be lifelong learners	
	we want them to be ambassadors of positive energy	