

Brevard Public Schools  
Re-Imagining Schools Task Force Meeting  
January 20, 2022

Meeting called to order at 3:01 PM

- I. Review meeting norms and take attendance
  - a. **Present:** Dr. Stephanie Soliven, Vanessa Skipper, Stephanie Booth, Catherine McNutt, Cathryn Thornton, Matthew Gent, Patty Adams, Meara Trine, Jason Sherburne, Stephanie Lay, Christine Ferrer, Tara Harris, Vivian Jones, Jasmine DeLaughter, Catherine Bramlett, Shereen Luchten, Kyle Savage
  - b. **Absent:** Gisell Barnett, Danielle McKinnon, Chris Reed
  - c. **Guests:** Dr. Mark Mullins
- II. Establish process for minutes and review of minutes
  - a. Vanessa Skipper will be taking minutes and helping throughout the organization and research process of the committee as part of her graduate degree under the supervision of Dr. Soliven.
- III. Share website
  - a. <https://sites.google.com/share.brevardschools.org/middle-school-task-force/home?authuser=0>
  - b. Committee will be kept up to date as the website progresses.
  - c. We are signed up in AMLE as a school so that we can stay connected with research and middle school practitioners.
- IV. Comments from Dr. Mullins
  - a. Dr. Mullins is very excited about this focus for our students. He wants to reinforce our effort to think innovatively, pursue best practices, pursue new uncharted waters. He appreciates the committee's commitment and expertise and dedication to work with best middle school practice and frameworks. We need to prioritize our middle schools and ask the question: "How can we build the absolute best learning experience for our kids, teachers, and staff."
- V. Discuss upcoming conferences
  - a. The national AMLE conference is huge, and it is in November. There will be thousands of people with an energy for middle school kids and will help us be fresh in our craft with middle school strategies as we move through this experience. Soliven will work with Skipper to coordinate the conference, camaraderie, and collaboration.
- VI. Data Overview
  - a. Youth Truth Data- Youth Truth Data is being analyzed by directors and we will be able to look at it as a group at a future meeting.
  - b. FSA/EOC Data- The state produces data by cluster. We dropped from #11 in the state to #14 from 2019 to 2020. We disproportionately dropped in the state in grades 6-8.

- c. Retention Data- Sixth grade is in line with the state data. Seventh grade retained triple the percentage of the state. The 3.9% is the second highest retention rate in the state. Eighth grade balances back out again. We are lower than the state average.
  - i. Booth teaches seventh grade. Much of the problem is such a huge divide between elementary and secondary teachers. In elementary, there is more movement. Sometimes seventh grade teachers are high school minded and lecture heavy. We need to teach teachers about the middle school brain and the development process. Developmentally, a 12-year-old boy is in a different space than a 15- or 16-year-old boy.
  - ii. Lay says the seventh-grade mindset is different, and they are expected to be a lot more independent. At Cocoa, there is a lot of open space, so they were running like they were at recess, so conversations had to be had about the open space. It is critical to build relationships and understand where they are developmentally.
  - iii. Harris says that in many of our elementary schools, sixth grade teachers may be motivated to re-teach to get the students to pass, so we may not be sending sixth graders with the skill set to tackle seventh grade transitions and content.
  - iv. Adams wonders about the makeup of the 3.9% ESE percentage and how it tracks back into the delivery model of sixth as we know there is a significantly different experience in seventh.
  - v. Soliven is concerned with the 4-6 VE model, so we need to explore that model and how it affects the 6-8 experience.
  - vi. Gent suggested that we look at the transition into the seventh grade with the new concept of semester exams.
  - vii. Soliven suggests visiting George Washington Carver in Miami to see what they are doing; we should visit schools that are in the dark blue. Dark blue on the state regression analysis is above best fit. Miami Dade has high poverty and is diverse when thinking of ELL populations- what is similar with us? If they can do it, we can. There is a steeper decline related to our proficiency. Our schools are even below where they should be when free and reduced lunch is considered.
- d. VAM Data
  - i. We are working on improving instructional outcomes for students. What we know is that we can do better. 18.2% of teachers are highly effective, 59.9% of teachers are effective, 11.8% of teachers are needs improvement, and 10.1% of teachers are unsatisfactory. This is the most stringent criteria for VAM. It should be noted that we are outperforming the state.
- e. Discipline Data
  - i. Looking at the chart, the green is sixth grade. There were 189 students suspended for at least one day. On average, a cohort of students is about 5000. There were 631 events, 897 incidents, and 477 days of out of school suspension (OSS). Blue is seventh grade. There were 589 students suspended, 3108 events, 4140 incidents, and 2534 OSS days. The yellow represents the eighth-grade data. What makes sixth grade and seventh grade data so starkly different? We know that consistency and continuity is important.

1. Takeaways from this data: Females are disproportionately undiagnosed for ESE because they're often exhibiting behaviors we want to see. We must respect that all students act and behave differently. Risk ratio levels the field for students with disabilities and discipline. Could we run skill instruction data on this same cohort?
2. Middle school students are their own marginalized group. The typical grade an elementary teacher wants to teach is not 5 or 6. Our secondary teachers have a high school mindset, but in middle school, we have an entirely different child. Middle school requires a different mindset for the educator.
3. Middle school educators appreciate the oddities of the middle school student, enjoy being with them, think positively about them, and think about changing the dynamics.
4. DeLaughter suggests considering the middle school boy and how there are huge ones and teeny ones. There are ones that are there for girls, ones that are always getting lost. There are boys that are used to being spoken to by people who are afraid of them. When you speak to them in a different manner, you give them an opportunity to be seen.
5. Sherburne says that the relationship is a big piece of it and suggests that not being departmentalized in the sixth grade produces makes the transition from one teacher to seven teachers difficult.
6. Bramlett suggests that more interaction with teachers and school staff with more opportunities in different settings could lead to more incidents in seventh grade.
7. Gent says that five times OSS days is remarkable. We want to keep students in class because that is where learning happens. Do discipline ladders from elementary to secondary connect?
8. Harris doesn't believe that all the sudden seventh graders start making poor choices. Are we over reporting? Under reporting? Not holding kids accountable.
9. Jones suggests that we work to build skills in sixth grade to prepare them for the freedom they will face in seventh grade.
10. Ferrer believes that many issues happen when they are not in the classroom and that issues are underreported in elementary.
11. Collaboration needs to strengthen in 6-8. We need to look at semester blocks in sixth, seventh, and eighth.
12. Trine has been at all levels. It is a big shift from elementary to middle. Elementary has more time for relationship building than middle school. When they get to the middle school, they get seven different sets of expectations and ways of doing procedures.
13. Soliven says that we need to run the data and make a change in areas with high numbers of incidents. Quality data is important, so intelligence is used to adjust practice. The risk ratio reports need to be used to improve overall outcomes. We must think about the discrepancies

between enrollment percentages by race and ethnicities and students with disabilities. She has requested a disaggregated report from the state.

14. Savage says that with respect to male versus females, males are suspended more leading to some implicit bias. Also, the percentage of African American students is double the percentage enrolled. This did not happen with the percentage of Hispanic enrollment.
15. Bramlett suggests that this disparity tells us that what we learn about these students and transition is important. We can be smarter about transition with paperwork, files, and knowing our students.
16. Savage suggests having a separate discipline decision tree for 6-8. Collaboration between grade levels is important.

f. Overall Group Discussion

- i. From a curriculum standpoint, we need a clear middle school focus. Shereen mentions that even resources are even separated. We need to bring the silos together.
- ii. Professional development is needed for curriculum and social development. We are dealing with a special population and the data says we have areas for improvement.
- iii. Skipper suggests that the district wide PD Day in August have a 6-8 component.
- iv. Ferrer suggests that there be a spreadsheet for where the kids are going and that there be comments on the spreadsheet for transition. What does transition look like? What capabilities are in FOCUS to help with this?
- v. Booth says that we need to have social emotional supports in place and that there is a level of flexibility that must be in place. There is a lot of trauma, and we must have compassion for middle school behavior.
- vi. DeLaughter wonders how we can capture a structure in FOCUS for how a student learns as they transition from sixth up.
- vii. Soliven is attending FTCE on the 27<sup>th</sup> and will look for resources for the committee to use and/or consider.

VII. Topic for next meeting

- a. Impact of exams
- b. 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> 9-week grades for each 6, 7, 8<sup>th</sup> grade by demographics
- c. More topics to be determined/placed on next agenda