

Sumner County Schools – Needs Assessment

Additional Pages for Responses

STUDENT READINESS:

Transitions from Middle School -- Students who need Reading and/or Math intervention did not receive consistent intervention, which resulted in more learning loss. Students struggled with navigating online learning platforms. Online learning resulted in students not retaining grade level content and lower scores on benchmark assessments, limiting opportunities for honor classes in high school. The lack of social interaction caused anxiety and depression in many students who were well adjusted previously. Back to School nights and high school tours were limited, raising anxiety and lowering preparedness.

Transitions into High School -- The 9th grade year is pivotal and research shows that failures during 9th grade are strong indicators of becoming at risk of dropping out. Students struggled to navigate online learning platforms. The number of failures in courses required for graduation rose significantly, causing higher numbers of students trying to recover credits. Algebra I is crucial to success in high school math. Learning math on online platforms proved difficult for students. Students and families feel unprepared for geometry after receiving little in-person instruction during the 2020-21 school year. Social engagement is an important aspect of entering high school. The lack of social interaction caused anxiety and depression in many students who were well adjusted previously, as seen by educators as well as indicated from parent / stakeholder responses gathered through surveys and meetings.

Graduation Rates -- Students and families found themselves struggling with navigation of virtual platforms and hybrid schedules and found themselves needing to access tutoring due to independent learning. Students and families struggled to navigate college application processes as students had less access to school counselors. Students struggled with completing assignments and meeting due dates due to lack of engagement, which will affect their readiness for college/technical school expectations. Concern with preparation for graduation and post-secondary school skills was a common theme seen from the ESSER parent survey responses, with the intent to seek more ACT preparation, more opportunities for life skills and CTE courses, and more focus on support for the academics at the high school level (such as through tutoring).

CTE -- During the 2020-21 school year, there were no changes made to CTE course offerings due to pandemic restrictions. Sumner County utilized ESSER 1.0 funds to purchase online curriculum for several CTE content areas, focusing on those courses that were difficult for CTE teachers to create virtual content for (such as automotive, manufacturing, cosmetology, and agriculture). This curriculum allowed impacted CTE content areas to be taught at a high level regardless of the mode of instruction. The number of CTE concentrators did decline, but this was not attributable to any pandemic restrictions.

Special Populations -- Virtual instruction was not conducive to their learning. Barriers such as language, access to the internet, appropriate curriculum, and materials as well as parent involvement create significant needs to be addressed that are in addition to the already-present special needs of the populations.

STUDENT READINESS (CON'T):

Mental Health, Behavioral and Other Supports... -- Maintaining relationships with all students, including those with known emotional challenges, was especially hard during virtual and quarantine days. The lack of adult and peer contact escalated the struggles for students. Once students returned to schools, an increase in crisis management as well as observation of student anxiety suggested the need for the social and emotional needs of students. Stakeholder input from parents, educators, and others associated with the school system included pointed concerns for addressing social-emotional health in schools and the need to ensure a focus on the whole child.

School Nurses -- Nursing shortages began when school nurses were needed in other health care settings. Once in person days returned, staff time was monopolized with Covid management for both students and staff. This presented a need for additional nurses to serve the needs of all students and staff.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

Access to Technology -- Schools worked directly with parents to loan Chromebooks. The district continued to purchase these mobile devices throughout the year to increase access for students. Elementary schools generally are around 1 device for every two students. MS/HS are around 1 device for every four students. Responses gathered from stakeholder input indicated a continued concern for ensuring student access to technology, such as use of Chromebooks and Google Classroom, both having been considered as effective during times that schools or classrooms were in quarantine. At least 10% of parent responses indicated a desire to see the technology continue to expand and be used for student learning.

Access to High Speed Internet -- Schools have consistent access to high speed internet. We continue to add redundant circuits to our schools to improve service. We added new access points to the exterior of designated school buildings to provide high speed internet access to families without internet connectivity at home. Sumner County has provided over 700 mobile hotspots for students through the T-Mobile Project Ten Million Initiative. High speed internet is a struggle for approximately 10% of our families.