

# **APPENDIX IV-5**

#### **IV. K.1.k. Superintendent Focus Groups' Findings SY2019-2020**

At the direction of the Superintendent, Superintendent Focus Groups were held monthly as an avenue for gathering district input and feedback from teachers across the district. Information gathering included feedback on Technology Services, Human Resources, Summer Professional Development, Social Emotional Learning, MTSS, Finance, and Operations. These focus groups provided opportunities for the District to engage with teachers and hear their perspectives on areas of concern to them as well as their suggestions for improvement. Feedback is tabulated and results shared with each corresponding department to help inform ways each department can enhance their services. Following are examples of key findings from the Focus Groups' feedback.

##### Technology Services

The Superintendent's Focus Groups were tasked to address improvements for teachers and students as the District continues its migration into Office 365. The group focused on two topics:

- How to improve Office 365 usage for teachers

The feedback for teachers resulted in providing greater training opportunities for teachers with grade and subject specific actionable examples such as:

- Furthering training to address troubleshooting, as a refresher, and to keep up to date with new developments,
- More opportunities to explore the more advanced features,
- Offer Office 365 training opportunities for all staff members given by Technology services staff in person,
- Updating equipment to be able to fully support Office 365 resources,
- Offer incentives to have teachers take the Microsoft education classes, and
- Basic training for new teachers and putting together a video/presentation that highlights different levels of success (elementary, middle and high school).

- How to improve Office 365 usage for students in the classroom setting

The feedback for students resulted in offering the following:

- Multi-year implementation plan so students and teachers will know how to use the software effectively support the teacher and their lesson plans/units,
- Tutorial for students on Office 365 that helps students navigate and get the most from resources,
- Training for students on use of Office 365 through video tutorials on YouTube which would also allow parents to view the videos to help their children,
- Update devices for students,

- Include parents in training, and
- Reduce the number of steps to access sites and programs.

### Human Resources

This year, at the direction of the Superintendent, focus groups were held at several school sites for gathering information from teachers. Part of the information gathering included feedback on the Human Resources Department, the TUSD hiring process, and Benefits.

Focus group participants shared that they have received great customer service from various members of the HR staff, however participants shared response time from HR could be improved. Participants also shared that the hiring process could be made more clear and faster.

The focus groups also provided information on benefits and retirement. Participants wanted better information on the benefits offered to TUSD employees as well as more retirement seminars. Participants shared that the cost of the family plan for benefits was too high. However, participants had positive feedback regarding the Wellness Incentive Program and accessibility to Wellness Coaches

Other needs as noted by Participants included improving the District Initiated Transfer (DIT) process, providing leadership training, and expanding Grow Your Own programs.

### Summer Professional Development

The Superintendent's Focus Groups were also tasked to address what topics and content they would like to see offered during the 2020 Summer PD to ensure that professional development is relevant and meaningful. Their feedback suggested the following:

- Technology – Use of computer equipment and software programs (Clarity, Office 365, IXL, ATI, Galileo, Imagine Learning Math, etc.)
- Application of Technology – Building teacher websites, Synergy gradebook, etc.
- Instruction
  - Social Studies – Using benchmarks to teach, photography in history, etc.
  - Math – Eureka from an expert not TUSD, activities & games, etc.
  - Writing
  - Science – STEM, Standard, science kits, etc.
  - Reading – LETRS, Wilson Reading, Guided Reading, etc.
  - New Elementary Reading Curriculum in Elementary
    - Benchmark

- Cengage (Dual Language, Adelante, PBL and Guided Reading)
- Incorporating relevant practice based on subject area
- Bridging Curriculum Expectations to testing (ACT/AzMerit)
- Physical Education
- Arts
  - More theatre/arts
  - Drama
  - Art
- Teacher Supports – PBIS, Trauma Informed/based, SEL PD, MTSS, etc.

Lastly, a final survey was conducted and 5 to 10 teachers felt it was important to be paid or offered something tangible for all/any summer PD opportunities since they would be participating taking them away from their families. Some of those tangible offerings could be childcare and/or the option of applying courses/credits toward endorsements/certification.

### Social Emotional Learning

To start, the focus group identified what social emotional learning would look like at their sites. At the top of the list was counseling lessons, PBIS, restorative practices/circles/class community, communication with staff and families, and some type of positive student award ceremonies. In addition, the focus group conducted a survey regarding the comfort level of teachers supporting social emotional learning of their students and found that 35 – 42% of them felt comfortable.

The next step was addressing how comfortable they felt supporting Social Emotional Learning of their students, the results reflected:

- Bullying, - they felt somewhat equipped to well equipped.
- Mindfulness/Self-Regulation - they felt somewhat equipped.
- LGBTQ - they felt not equipped to somewhat equipped
- Conflict Resolution they felt somewhat equipped to well equipped
- Trauma Informed Practices they felt somewhat equipped leaning towards not equipped.

Lastly, the focus group looked at training – what additional trainings or resources they would need and what trainings had they already attended that proved helpful to Social Emotional Learning. The top additional trainings or resources requested were mental health/disorders, LGBTQ training for staff/student/parents, aggression/de-escalation and scheduled trauma informed practices at regular intervals. The top training teachers attended that proved helpful were PBIS Committee, Restorative Practices/Circles, Tu Nidito (Grief counseling),

Empathy/Mindfulness training by Pima County, conscious discipline, Harry Wong training 1<sup>st</sup> days of school and TIP (traumatic informative practice).

### MTSS

The initial task of the focus group was to determine if the “MTSS process” was established at their school sites and to share how this process was communicated to staff. Teachers indicated the “MTSS process” was communicated via several opportunities such as professional development, PBIS (Graphic matrix/ Consistency/HSKs) trainings, through buy-in, and in PLCs/CTTs.

Some components of site strategic plans for providing interventions for student at sites consisted of 14 categories:

- Behavior by way of PBIS, incentive charts, CICO, skill development and groups
- Staff by way of PLCs, CTT, extended day, PD and tiered supports in classroom
- Technology by way of IXL, Success Maker, Imagine Learning, School City, etc.
- Gap-Fillers by way of one-to-one reteach, RTI, math intervention, tutoring
- Extrinsic by way of 4 B’s rewards, PBIS, after-school, and detention
- Programs by way of social groups, AmeriCorps and Reading Seed
- Specialists by way of Dropout Prevention, Student Services, mentors, etc.
- Volunteers/Outside Support by way of U of A interns, Pathways, etc.
- Data by way of weekly progress, data collection, assessment, and intervention
- Meetings by way of MTSS meeting and MTSS team meetings
- MTSS Team by coordinating with school psychologist, MTSS Coordinator, etc.
- Support by way of teacher assistants in every classroom, after school tutoring, etc.
- Extra Interventions by way of mandatory/In-class/after school tutoring, TLS, and Daily 5 groups
- Parent Collaboration by way of parent conferences, home-life knowledge, etc.

Lastly was looking at barriers and potential solutions to the MTSS process. Some of the many concerns for potential barriers were lack of identification in the earlier grades, in-district transfers, lack of time for meetings, and no resources. Some potential solutions were transfer in Synergy especially for in-district, training for MTSS coordinators/teachers/meetings for lower grades to ask proactive questions, and one central specific valid intervention list that everyone works from.

### Finance

The Focus Groups had to focus on obstacles you see with our current grant process (including private grants, gifts and donations and crowd-based funding). The obstacles were categorized into three areas:

- Donations – limited use, lack of knowledge/information, process to use is difficult, red-tape nightmare, donated funding to schools to specific teachers and not allowed to use.
- Private Grants – Going through lots of hoops, too many restrictions, inefficient communication, dealing with Finance unprofessional interactions, lack of knowledge of who to send paperwork to in the district, and no training on grants or grant writing.
- Crowd-Based Funding – unknown process, lack of training opportunities, need to make it easier for teachers, mixed information coming from administration and central offices.

Next, the Focus Group looked at how Finance could better support schools when it came to tax credits, gifts & donations, and student clubs. Some recommendations were:

- Tax credit – Transparency of ALL school staff of budget, Improve publicity (say “Give kids the extra credit” vs “Tax credit”), Better process for paying vendors, improve the approval request process, and better inform all regarding what is allowable purchases are from tax credit donations – better transparency.
- Gifts & donations –training on how this process works, Increased communications to disseminate information with district, communities, stakeholders, Create transparent G & D charts districtwide to share goals/objectives, improve where we want to go,
- Student clubs – Create a handbook or update with advisors and parents, simplify process, more transparency, allow designation of access to student council and office manager. Training on how account works and site-based funding and dispersal.

Lastly, the Focus Group would like Finance department to support/offer a process laid out completely with timelines, sources, decisions, and available funds. Financial training to access all types of funding sources (special needs/demographics), and treated with kindness when calling about questions or having someone consistently answer the 225-6130 number.

### Operations

The Focus Group began by rating the cleanliness of schools and buildings followed by identifying problems and then possible solutions. The Focus Group rated cleanliness of schools and buildings. Cleanliness of schools and building ranked at a 5. [Ranking 1 unappealing to 10 very appealing].

The problems identified were: long time to clean up areas such as playgrounds/classrooms/offices and bathrooms, many common areas filled with

trash, custodians spread too thin, schools are not very clean, several plumbing issues that are not resolved efficiently, ownership and accountability for the problems.

The possible solutions were to hire more custodians, reward systems, teacher reminders of cleanliness, signs/identify high trash areas, consistent adequately trained custodians, incorporate custodians into PBIS lessons to build culture, work with operation to clean school yards/perimeter of the schools, uniform/consistent schedule for cleaning windows/sweeping floors/clearing out trash/bathrooms in each building and celebrate custodians who go the extra mile and maybe include merit pay.

Secondly, the Focus Group rated curb appeal of schools and buildings. Curb appeal ranked 5 to 6 in the survey. [Ranking 1 unappealing to 10 very appealing]. The problems identified were: parking lot – not friendly, lighting, fences look rusty, signs/logos sun burned/faded, overlapping and unclear property sharing stymies development, marquees are broken, trash and weeds everywhere, pot holes, cracked pavement,

Recommended solutions consisted of:

- Adding gardens,
- Additional landscaping/trim/planting new trees,
- Removing old playground equipment,
- Power washing walls,
- Team up with the community for murals,
- Work with Serve Tucson to do community-led clean up days,
- Fix/repair marquees,
- Work with community/neighbors/businesses to get them to clean up their private property around the school,
- Set up parking concrete curb blocks and maybe paint them school colors,
- Re-evaluate/provide adequate parking, and  
Replace old doors and signs.

Lastly, the Focus Group looked at the efficiency of work orders. Teachers felt that having an engineer on site, parent phone calls, and administrator support worked best. In addition, the support of office managers and staff who help with work orders would be possible solutions to consider.