

NORTH THURSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Community Conversations
Equity and Inclusion in Special Education
Tuesday, March 23, 2021
5:30 p.m.
Virtual Event

For Thursday's work session, in addition to Cabinet, the following district staff have been invited to be available should the Board have clarifying questions or wonderings: **Kari Lewinsohn** (Director of Special Education), **Tyler Stiner** (Director of Special Education), **Dianne Heckman** (Director of Early Learning /Special Education), **Kory Kumar** (1st year Ed Specialist, 15+ years elementary/middle school special education teacher), and **Michela Laverty** (HS special education teacher)

- 1) ≈ 150 people pre-registered for the event.
 - a. ≈ 75 School Board, Cabinet, district administrators and staff
 - b. ≈ 75 Parents and Community members
- 2) In attendance
 - a. ≈ 55 School Board, Cabinet, district administrators and staff
 - b. ≈ 20 parents and Comm Members

We learned there may have been some technical difficulties in accessing the meeting through the zoom link. In addition, based on the participant log, there may have been some confusion as participants entered the meeting prior to the Community Conversation, attended briefly during the Board meeting in session, and then left the Board meeting.

To provide an opportunity for parent and community member engagement to those who pre-registered but did not attend, we sent an email Thursday afternoon with a link to video of just the Community Conversation along with a link to the two breakout session questions for them to respond to in a Google form. The link closed Sunday at 9:00pm and we had 1/55 respondents. The notes taken during the breakout session can be found here: [03.23.21 Comm Conv Breakout Session Notes.docx](#)

Following the Community Conversation, an After-Action Review (AAR) of the event was done with all Facilitator/Notetakers and Cabinet members in separate meetings. We debriefed what went well, the challenges, suggestions for improvement, other, and identified common themes from the breakout groups. Here is the link to the full [03/23/21 Comm Conv After-Action Review \(AAR\)](#).

A few highlights include the following:

1) What went well?

- a. The panelists were amazing! Panelist selection was strong.
- b. The pre-planning, format, schedule, choice of panelists. Questions ahead of time; galvanized the presentation, everything made sense, coherent, flowed well.
- c. Parents felt heard in the breakout session. They were able to share their stories and offer their ideas.
- d. Board members were very well prepared to lead the work; they were very well organized, caring, and prepared. Board member presence and participation in the breakout was good.
- e. Great first open-ended question and productive second question. Information from breakout was meaningful.
- f. Zoom meetings are the way to go with the CC!! Parent driving with child in car able to participate in zoom Community Conversation.
- g. Inclusion is a great access point to special education.

- h. Moved at a nice, quick pace. Left us wanting more when it was over.

2) What were the challenges?

- a. Challenging to be the facilitator, notetaker, and timekeeper at the same time.
- b. Needed more time in breakout group.
- c. Zoom link. Tech support. More staff to assist with behind-the-scenes management and issues.
- d. Combining the Board meeting with the Community Conversation.
- e. Ability to be nimble with breakout groups depending on actual number of attendees.
- f. Language interpreter considerations if providing simultaneous or consecutive interpreter services.

3) Emerging Themes

Professional Development – Cabinet, Instructional/Operational Directors, School Admin, Gen Ed Staff, Parents, and Special Ed Staff

- a. PD for gen ed admin, teachers, and staff about students with disabilities (SWD) in accommodation, how to measure successfulness and partner gen ed with SWD in the gen ed classroom.
- b. Special ed cannot be the only ally moving plans (equity, inclusion, Universal Design for Learning (UDL)) for SWD forward.
- c. Staff member, parent who went above and beyond; someone paving the way, should be the norm for all students!
- d. Gen ed teacher PD about students with disabilities (SWD).
- e. Gen ed teacher knows my kid/ My team does not know my child.
- f. Staff have low expectations of SWD.
- g. Staff flexibility to be creative with programming.
- h. How can we educate parents and teams to know and access resources, IEP and transition services?
- i. Education for parents on what the IEP Team is, what it means, what the role of each person is. Really explaining about what it means to be an IEP Team member and what is involved in being on that team.

Neighborhood School Programming, Non-categorical Classrooms

- a. Need for non-categorical classrooms, less segregation, S move in/out as needed. Instructional Learning Center.
- b. Moving away from disability classrooms, provide services at neighborhood schools.
- c. Provide services at the neighborhood schools, eliminate transportation barriers when programs are not at neighborhood schools.
- d. Neighborhood school programming.
- e. Access is important for success stories.
- f. Expanding inclusion for students outside of the school building; sense of belonging in the community.

Increase/Expand Inclusion Opportunities at All Grade Levels

- a. Elementary age self-contained students are often integrated, not necessarily included in meaningful ways, in the grade level classrooms. Self-contained S at secondary level not always integrated or included in general ed content area classes.
- b. Everything cool with inclusion at high school need more at elementary and MS.
- c. Want more inclusion opportunities for elementary.
- d. Students need to be engaged in their program development starting in elementary.
- e. Buddy program – program emphasis to develop understanding with each other for SWD and without disabilities.