



School City of East Chicago

Excellence In Education

## COMMUNITY TOWN HALL SUMMARIES

SUPERINTENDENT NEXT STEPS:

Completed

In Progress

Not able to do at this time

**BLOCK MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**SEPTEMBER 17, 2024**

**What goals do you have in place to increase the graduation rate?**

Currently, a student takes a course and fails and they pass him on to the next level and still fails. He wasted a whole semester not learning anything and just fell further behind. The student will be offered credit recovery - they will get help soon after they fail the class before proceeding to the next level or failing the whole semester. This will happen in elementary, middle school, and high school. They will work closely with the teachers and the family. We have Credit Recovery now at the High School. But the program hasn't started yet. Has met with the leadership team at CHS. Before the end of this semester, the program will start. It will be available for all grades 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades. The Freshman class will be the first.

**My daughter is from Mexico and she needs help with English.**



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The District has a Parent Cafe with different community resources. Plans on having a Parent University which is in the talks they need to decide when to hold it. Have videos/classes in English/Spanish.

**How long does the superintendent plan on staying? SCEC has no stability, always changing, and affects everyone. What are you going to do that is different?**

Plans on staying awhile. Stability. This is his first go at being superintendent. Get support from the principals, teachers, students, and stakeholders. We need a Strategic Plan and we plan to work on a five-year Strategic Plan and get everyone involved. Double math scores have small group instruction. Wants to use the same concept he used in New Jersey and Philadelphia. He needs to be here awhile to make it work, for professional development. He will be visiting the classrooms to take a look at instruction.

**Parents want to know about the threats that took place at Block.** There was no call and there has to be a better system. She found out on social media. He has a team. There are steps to follow: 1st Leadership team meets and addresses the situation. The police were called 2nd Families were communicated with a call from Mr. VanVlymen. 3rd Communicated with Class Dojo/Skyward Email. Social media is over-communicated which we cannot control. We need to make sure the information is accurate before the call is made.

There is a protocol. Investigate, make sure everyone is safe and communication goes out. He made the call and texted a letter. Unfortunately, he is limited to 400-480 characters and can't get everything in. But an email is sent out and a phone call.

Threats have been addressed. The team met with VanVlymen and the team met with the law. A message has to be sent to the student. The student must understand that this is taken very seriously. The Prosecutor's office is taking these threats seriously and so does SCEC. These threats are considered a felony.



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Plans on hiring a district translator/interpreter. The ELL population is growing and sometimes the teacher is relying on a student to translate.

My child doesn't speak English. The bus numbers sometimes change and they are late at times. Her daughter was at the corner waiting with other students. The bus never came. Mom was with her child while the other students went back home. Also, at school, they had to call her to pick her child up because her daughter didn't get on the bus she normally gets on.

Have more security at Block.

Have hall monitors.

Planning to have mentors to help our students.

Clear backpacks.

Bathroom monitor.

Transportation- They are short on bus drives. Sometimes they do change the number because they have to go another route.

There should be interpreters. At other meetings at the elementary school, they always have interpreters. Perhaps they would have had a bigger crowd. People don't want to come if they don't understand.



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Will have interpreters at the next meeting.

Language barrier - what are you doing about that? Staff is being pulled from their job to meet their needs.

Pastors from One Church One School - they can go where they are needed.

Need stronger police presence. Have officers come by and walk randomly. Have police presence and increase law enforcement. Also, getting a resource officer.

The Prosecutor's Office and the Chief of Police spoke with the students and should include the parents.

Vaping-

Metal detectors do not pick up the vape. They don't check everyone, and they can sneak something in. The backpacks have too many pockets and they don't take the time to search all pockets. Why not eliminate backpacks? Or use a simple bag with a drawstring or a clear bag.

Sensors in bathrooms - The school should invest in sensors.

Fundraising - Why don't they fundraise so students can go on trips? Students are already working on fundraising.

Teachers need to tighten up in the classroom with the Chromebooks. Have IT blocked. Students instead of doing what they are supposed to are on other sites. Using Dark College Board. Students are actually speaking with an adult and that adult meets them outside the school to sell them the drugs.



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## CARRIE GOSCH EARLY LEARNING CENTER

OCTOBER 3, 2024

### **What was the graduation rate last year**

Dr. Bournes - Graduation last year 80%

### **Breakfast and lunch - some students don't eat the food. Same thing all the time.**

Hasn't eaten with the students yet. That's something he has planned. When the report is done, he will start with this project.

**Are there any job fairs being planned?** SCEC has a new HR Director and she is working on a job fair. They will advertise the vacancies and tracking. Will be hiring para's, staff, and teachers.

**Need more professional development for Autism.**

Vending machines - other schools have vending machines in their schools.

Dr. Bournes will check into it.

The parking lot is an issue. Has many holes, and you can't see the lines to park. They need to be repainted.

They have a great principal Ms. Rancifer. She is a great leader.

**The lunch menu is not consistent. It may say one thing and the day of it has been changed.**

Dr. Bournes - asked if this happens a lot. Rancifer responded yes.



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## **A parent asked about the flyer she received regarding tutoring.**

Dr. Bournes - responded that we have Sylvan tutoring at this moment.

Alvarez - Letter and flyer were sent home with students who qualify for Indiana Learns which is another tutoring program.

More security is needed. They ask parents for IDs for safety purposes. But feels more security is needed.

## **How do you plan on increasing the retention in reading?**

Small group instruction to increase math and reading.

There will be more town halls middle of the year and the end of the year.

**The A/C does not work. During summer school it was very hot for everyone. Rancifer added AC does not work in the whole building.**

Parents when they pick up their child, pull up and don't park. It's a safety concern that someone/child can get hurt. Need more help in the parking lot.

## **What can we get better at...**

Communication.

Get parents involved.



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## EAST CHICAGO CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

- Feels like a lot of support, and is very helpful with the language barrier. Her child is new (just arrived) and is getting a lot of support. Her child feels very comfortable with all the support he is getting.
- My child also comes home from school and is very excited and feels the support.
- After-school programs. Parents need help with English.
- CHS is a very big school and, sadly, parents don't come out. They don't care.
- Child in soccer and he also feels the support of the team. They are very happy.
- CHS has sports and different clubs, but she feels it is not marketed well. Her child has autism and is not aware. Promote extracurricular activities. Email parents regarding the sports.



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- There are a lot of parents but if there is trouble they would be here.
- Worries child speaks little English and is afraid it will affect her child.
- The child is behind in math (Spanish) child is a freshman.
- Has attended other meetings which are only in English. She likes the idea of having interpreters at the meeting to translate for them so they understand. The reason why parents don't come.
- PowerPoint to have in both languages (English/Spanish).

## What can we get better at...

- The website.
- Trustee Gomez - asked if parents would have an interest in a Mariachi group. It was mentioned that CHS had a teacher Mr. Lane who had a mariachi group at CHS.
- Guidance - get Erica Baisley more help.
- Partnership with Purdue, IUN, and other colleges and universities.
- Increase partnerships for students to have a variety of career pathways.
- Children miss the bus and sometimes the bus is full and they can't take the students. Worries about when it gets cold.
- Bus drivers should notify dispatch and inform administrators to direct the overflow.





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**HARRISON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**OCTOBER 7, 2024**

## **What is the graduation rate?**

Dr. Bournes -State calculated in 2023 70.8% and in 2024 80%. Graduation rate comes in with the freshman class which will graduate in 4 years. We will track them so they don't fall behind.

- Have online and parenting classes on how they can help their child academically.  
Dr. Bournes - planning parent universities, parent cafe, plus we have tutoring going on now with Sylvan plus we have the Indiana Learns which gives parents an option of a variety of in-person or online tutoring classes.
- Ms. Alvarez responded - each school has a CEL (Community Engagement Liaison) they each have a Family/Parent Room with community resources, literature on how to help your child at home, they plan workshops for parents, they can help with resources to help families out, etc.
- EL Para's need more training. Getting so many students who need help with the language barrier.
- Tutoring for reading and math.  
Dr. Bournes - We have Sylvan going on now and we also have Indiana Learns which is offering a variety of tutoring providers.
- Classes for parents in English.  
Dr. Bournes - they are exploring the option. We had parents also asking for the same classes at the CHS Town Hall meeting.



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- Are there any sports for the little kids? They usually offer it for the 5th and 6th graders. The younger children also want to get involved in sports. Dr. Bournes - We have Bidy Ball which just ended its Fall season, but they will start again in the Spring.
- Teacher shortage  
Dr. Bournes - needs an adequate number of subs to support the teachers, if a teacher calls off and we don't have subs, the class will be doubled up with another class. We also have a shortage of custodians and bus drivers. Yes, we do need assistance with our large classes. Custodians have had to double up their workload. We need extra subs, paras, and EL paras.
- Why does it take so long for the counselors to respond? Her daughter is a freshman at CHS and is going through medical issues. Her daughter is missing a lot of school. The teachers and counselors/staff should respond promptly. She doesn't want to take her child out of SCEC but if she needs to she will go online K12. She also completed the 504.  
Dr. Bournes - staff should be responding within 24 hours no more than 48 hrs but preferably 24 hrs.
- My child was sick at school and she wasn't sent to the nurse. She wasn't notified as well that her child felt sick at school. She understands some kids act like they're sick and that is probably why the teachers do what they do. However, the parent should be notified if their child feels sick. There needs to be more parental communication between the parents and teachers.  
Dr. Bournes - when a teacher speaks with a parent they shouldn't have the excuse that they have so many students in the class. This will just alert the parent.
- When it's raining outside or it gets cold, students are outside. Why can't they come inside and wait?



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Dr. Bournes encouraged them to speak to their principal.

- The attendance policy- are they trying to get parents in trouble?

Dr. Bournes- there is a new State law that impacts attendance. There are services that the family can be referred to if that is why the student is absent so much. The school is here to support you.

- When the student is absent the parent needs to send a note as to why they were absent. If they have a doctor's note the absence will be exempt.
- Tardies are an issue as well. They come in tardy and class is in session and they are lost. They are interrupting the class that is already working. So many tardies accumulate to so many days absent.

## LINCOLN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**SEPTEMBER 16, 2024**

- Parent from Washington - Daughter had a teacher when she started school and now she has a substitute teacher. She doesn't want her child to fall behind and it will be hard to catch up.  
Superintendent - We need certified teachers and attract them with higher pay. It's competitive. Want to minimize the interruption in the child's grade level. Find a teacher, they have to wait to get board approved and clear their background check.



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- Volunteer Orientations - More parent involvement. Understand parents have to go through the class which is 3 to 4 hours long. Parents must serve 3 hours of volunteer service. Why can't that be waived especially with special needs parents? Parents should have tags.
- Gonzalez - why can't the schools make their orientation easier for parents to attend? Alvarez responded - Orientations are about 30 minutes long. The service hours were put in due to parents showing up for field trips but when help is needed at the school we can't get help. As far as the orientations, orientations are held at every school on a rotation basis. Parents can go to any of the schools that are having an orientation. Parents also have to sit in the classroom and have to go through a background check.
- The parent is an approved volunteer and has problems. They don't allow her to go to her child's class who is a special needs student. Dr. Gonzalez didn't know she was having that problem and it will be addressed.
- Things are running better than they have. Separation of church and state. He knows they have had an impact in the schools with their presence— behavior issues, tutoring, etc.
- We may have some antiquated processes. After Covid, many people did not come back to the church. We need to access digital resources. Perhaps a Zoom, quarterly where they can watch at home and at whatever time it may be. Parents can help in education.
- How do we get parents? Incentives - community resources - relationships. By building relationships you can probably get a discount or donations.
- Use bulletin boards to recognize the businesses that partner with Lincoln.
- CIs have been a big asset to the school and St. Lukes. They go on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Very dedicated.



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## How can we get better?

- Special needs children feel left out of programs. Include them. Use money from the State to get more help.
- Lincoln has mostly all of the applied skills. They have the best team and they can support each other and save travel time. It is overwhelming for the building but at the same time, it's best.
- Accountability across the board.
- Have IEPs flexible - must meet the needs of the parent. Keep practices held by Zoom. Special Ed will only meet till 3 pm and the administrators can't, or it's their lunch. Not fair to the teachers, parents, and students.
- Relationships need to get better in the building- just better communication.
- The door is not working. She is not going to let people come in. The employees and the students must feel safe. Some parents are very persistent and we need to keep the children safe.
- More Security - Per Dr. Gonzalez, she is getting one more person tomorrow.
- Playground - Teacher/mom no mulch. Her husband was willing to donate the mulch and do the work but it was denied.
- Basketball installed.
- Lincoln School has a nice size of land that can be utilized more.
- Parent Washington - There was a pond of water last week on Wednesday. The superintendent was not aware of it.
- Parent - make playground handicap accessible.
- Seesaws safe, slide gets too hot.



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## MCKINLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

- They don't have a crossing guard every day. Sometimes she and another teacher will walk the students down by the edge of the school's boundary line. This summer a student was hurt. Main Street - a block down - no guard.
- Grandparent - Block - Speech Therapist is still using Zoom. Covid is over and they need to go back person to person. Last year she received an email that they only Zoom. IEP meetings; teachers don't stay for open house. She has sent emails and has made calls and no response. There is no communication. For Open House all teachers should be made to stay. Parents want to know how their child is doing in school. Don't throw them to the side.
- Parent - New to the district - They come from Illinois. How secure are her children in school?  
Bournes - we have had several issues at Block and Central. We have had none at the elementary schools. There are different types - The middle school had a threat with a gun to harm someone/shoot up the school. School responded, ECPD was called and they do not take this lightly (a joke). The Police were expected to do and the student was arrested. The Prosecutor will charge it as a felony. The Prosecutor and Police at any time a threat is made and they feel the student body is in danger use another protocol. Need to evacuate and keep students in a safe shelter. The principal is trained to handle different types of situations. SCEC has "Say Something, See Something" and call the hotline if you see anything and report it. If the students are not safe they would call an eLearning day (this is a rare occasion). This is a major problem across the nation right now.



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**WASHINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

**OCTOBER 1, 2024**

- **What can we do as parents to make a plan work**

Dr. Bournes - come and continue to attend these conversations. My job is to get feedback from parents, staff, and students. By being here and getting as many people to come out. Don't come by yourself, but bring someone with you.

- **What is your plan for Washington students to progress higher?**

Dr. Bournes - Be very observant going into the classes and speak to the students, staff, and teachers. Effective small-group instruction has 4 to 6 students in a group.

- Her child is in 5th grade in Ms.Clark's class. She has a lot of students. She knows there is a shortage of teachers. Classes with 30+ students. **How can parents help the teachers?**

Dr. Bournes plans to retain qualified teachers. The Plan is to have small groups but it won't work with a large class. Planning parent universities, student leaders.

- **How can a parent help in the day?**

Dr. Bournes - Volunteer - Can come in and help for example 1st and 2nd-grade help with flash cards/vocabulary, 3rd through 6th - teachers can work with parents. Alvarez - volunteer process explained.

Ms. Hogan - Explained that teachers have a heavy load. She explained the process for Washington. A teacher needs to complete a form with the volunteers coming on a certain day. She needs to have structure so the instructional time is not interrupted.



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- There is a group of parents including herself that are ready to volunteer but are not allowed. Last year it was a disaster. That last year only certain volunteers were given the opportunity to come in and volunteer. When Mrs. Purcell was in charge everything went very well.
- Alvarez - explained after the liaisons were laid off. We later had Teacher Liaisons but it did not work. A teacher couldn't handle what she needs in the classroom to do the work of a liaison. That's why we were able to hire CEL people last year. Washington did have 2 people but they never showed up, one did get hired and resigned, and then we had one who worked as a CEL for 2 or 3 weeks and went back to her former department. **We are looking for a CEL at this time.**
- Parent - she's an employee and to chaperone on a field trip they make it hard. The 3 hours of volunteer service and complete the volunteer application with background check then attend orientation.  
Dr. Bournes - asked Alvarez do employees need to go through the whole process and gave an example if he wanted to be a chaperone could he just go? Alvarez explained she was trained and that everyone must complete an application. Something could have changed that we don't know. He wouldn't be denied because he is the superintendent. Alvarez stated we have a new administration if he wants to change that procedure.
- Dr. Bournes asked does an employee need to do the 3 hours.
- **Why are teachers leaving?**  
Dr. Bournes - when an employee leaves they are asked to complete an exit survey "Why are they leaving", and have a conversation with them before they leave. It could be the classes are too large, no control, more salary, time to negotiate, be more compatible.





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- Parents want more information. We have dedicated teachers. In the month of September, a notice is mailed to parents. If your child has been with a teacher who does not have their license or is being taught by a sub for more than 4 weeks.
- Hogan - down to 1 teacher for kindergarten needs to hire.
- Dr. Bournes - Once hired they do not have to wait for board approval. Since we are now going to one board meeting a month.
- Parking lot is a problem...Parents don't respect... drop off zone they park and walk their child when they are supposed to just drop off and keep the line going....Parents are in line and they have people making a second line and trying to cut in or drive in from the one way. Need police ...more help in the parking lot. Need more crossing guards.
- Parent - parents are willing to help in the parking lot.  
Dr. Bournes - needs consistent people who will volunteer.
- Parent - It worked better when they had to drop off the students at 7:30 am 7:50 is not working.  
Dr. Bournes asked Ms. Hogan and she agreed that 7:30 am works better.
- Parent - It will get cold outside so why can't the students come in?  
Hogan - responded that she has no one to supervise the children. Parent - They can help with that.  
Dr. Bournes again says we need volunteers who will be consistent.
- The parent said they could rotate.



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- The parent said her child came home from school disgusted that he couldn't eat because his table was not cleaned. It was sticky. Hogan - explained that is K12 the food service. But they are also short-staffed. They are trying to serve the food and there is no transition time as well.
- Parents said they are willing to clean the tables, the teachers' classrooms, and the washrooms  
Dr. Bournes mentions concerns about consistency.
- Parents are concerned that the Dual Language (EL Program) is forgotten. They want the program to succeed.  
Dr. Bournes - needs to find funds to hire additional para's in the classrooms. EL population growing.
- A parent asked about the breakfast procedure -  
Hogan - it is a Grab and Go. K-3rd graders pick up their breakfast in the cafeteria. There is a table set up at door B. Students 4th through 6th grab their breakfast there and go straight to class.
- A parent asked about recess. She also knew that the big gym was not being used because they had to replace the floor. Hogan - responded that the gym was flooded but the floors have been replaced. The small gym is not being used at this time because the HVAC equipment is in there. But they don't use the small gym for PE. Teachers use the small gym for activities. But teachers do take the students outside to the track behind the school.
- A parent complained her daughter came home with a permission slip for a trip to Starbase. Her daughter forgot the permission slip and came home and told her mom that the teacher was upset and told her she had to bring that permission slip signed. Mom got upset and felt she was obligated to go. It was the manner the teacher



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reacted to her daughter and the mom refused to sign. Hogan/Purcell - explained it is a good trip. They learn a lot.

Hogan explained if her daughter doesn't go on the trip she will sit in another classroom with work to be done. It is a regular school day.