



Capital School District: Focus Group Report

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Agenda

- Opening/recap
- Deep-dive into focus group report
- Plan for community forums
- Closing and next steps



Overview of presentation

- Review of scope of work
- Background on effective FSCE
- Methodology and approach to collecting focus group data
- Discussion of overarching themes and exemplar quotes
- Recommendations for action steps



Background

CSD requested TA from CEE for efforts relating to building trust across stakeholder groups and develop collaborative partnerships in order to address issues.



Study Purpose

- This study provides insight from various stakeholder groups regarding their perceptions of equity, trust, communication and transparency between the school district and the community.
- The District will use the findings presented here with the following intent: 1) to build trust between stakeholder groups and 2) to engage stakeholders in working with the district to resolve issues.



Study Design

- Five focus groups
 - District/school administrators
 - Educators and staff
 - Parents and families
 - Community Members
 - High School Students

Sample

Focus Group	Number	% Female	% White	% Black	% Latino	% Asian	% Other
District and School Administrators	7	71.4	85.7	14.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
Educators and Staff	12	58.3	50.0	33.3	0.0	0.0	16.7
Parents and Families	7	57.1	42.9	57.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Community Members	4	75.0	25.0	75.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
High School Students	9	44.4	33.3	55.6	0.0	0.0	11.1



Procedure

- Dates: April 10-12, 2018
- Semi-structured protocol
- Approximately 90 minutes in length
- Audio-recorded for transcription and analysis



Findings

- Three overarching themes:
 - Equity is about fairness, access, and cultural awareness
 - Underlying equity issues need to be addressed
 - Trust breaks down when communication and relationships break down
- Additional themes:
 - Structural barriers to equity
 - Resources necessary



Equity is about fairness, access, and cultural awareness

- Participants in all focus groups had a great understanding of equity, what it is, and what it is not.
- Across all groups, participants suggested that meeting the needs of a diverse community required a deeper understanding of cultures.



Underlying equity issues need to be addressed

- Participants raised concerns about:
 - Problematic assumptions and biases
 - “Life sentence” student labels
 - Lack of diverse staff

Problematic Biases and Assumptions

“We talk a lot about bias, but I hear people say, ‘Oh, you know, I don’t even see color or I don’t even see whatever it is.’”

“I think they look at a lot of our [Black] parents...as we don’t care. We just want to push our kids off. We have no education. It’s like you can’t just assume by looking at us.”

Life sentence of student labels

This is not a life sentence for them and they do not need to remain [in] this program- that they can come in here and get the tools that they need whether it's academic or behavior. And then they can come back to being with their peers."

"You have a whole group of people that are going to be a menace to society. That is what is going to happen because that's what you've created because you've not allowed them back into our community."

Lack of Diverse Staff

I think it's important to see people who look like them. It doesn't mean that people who don't look like them don't have good intentions because we prove every single day that they do. But...it definitely means a lot to a child that they can look in their school and they see someone who looks like them.

I think diversity is very important, so they were in a school and their peers looked like them, but the very people who stood in front of them to teach them, did not. I had a problem with that.



Trust breaks down when communication breaks down

- Communication
 - In-breeding communication methods
 - Lack of reciprocity
 - Lack of access to technology
 - Parent-advocate as squeaky wheel
 - Complex technologies, inconsistent information



Cont

- Relationship-building
 - A few bad teachers
 - Not enough time or space
 - Lack of support

Communication

..that connection can't all happen in a [school] building. So, when I hear you talk about you can't get the parents there, well what about trying to get to the parents? They may be more receptive and open if you came to their home and had the conversation with them.

Being a squeaky wheel sometimes can be a detriment to your kid, because a teacher at Capital, this year, there was an issue with math, and I needed an answer. I sent an e-mail that I had a follow-up question, and it just happened to be during the class that my kid was in. He turned to my kid and said, "Tell your mom to stop sending me e-mails" in front of everybody. He laughed it off, and I didn't. That's the kind of thing...that needs to be accepted in a mature way.



Relationship-building

There's a lot of teachers where it's like people love them because they are such good teachers and they connect with them so well but then there's also a bunch it's like either way, they hate them or they love them. Then there's only a few where you can't stand a certain teacher in the school.

That is one of my concerns is that we just keep, you know, the kids and the families continue to ... their needs keep growing so we keep taking on more and more and more and what's the breaking point. How are we supporting our teachers and our support staff within our schools?



Additional Themes

- Structural barriers to equity
- Resources necessary

Structural barrier to equity

- Transition from elementary to middle school
- EL and special education identification
- September 30th count
- Testing and standards
- Accountability between district and community



Resources necessary

- Mental health and counseling resources
- Year-round calendar
- Community and business partnerships
- Mid-level courses

Recommendations

General

- Create explicit goals and a shared language specifically related to equity to construct a common vision or framework to align district and school activities, including instruction and communication.
- Provide more ongoing equity and anti-bias training for administrators and educators that helps develop strategies to implement in daily work.
- Restructure school days or schedules to provide more reflection time for administrators and educators.
- Create a pool of resources and support systems for educators to help teachers constructively respond to issues on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendations

Communication

- Analyze current communication methods and assess whether those methods fit the needs of the community; Technologies should be selected based on the designed and selected method, not vice versa.
- Initiate communication with families and communities in their homes or where they gather, for example religious or community organizations.
- Ensure that materials and information for families and communities are translated in a language they can understand and facilitate communication by helping families and communities (both English-speaking and non-English-speaking) understand the significance of information, meetings, and events within the cultural context of Capital School District's school system.
- Encourage all forms of parent participation and express appreciation for all levels of participation through simple gestures, such as saying "thank you" or writing notes.



Recommendations

Relationship-building

- Create time and space for more personal and professional interactions.
- Provide training or professional development sessions specifically related to building relationships through daily work.
- Create a non-judgmental climate by focusing on progress towards standards rather than meeting standards and alleviate stress by hiring more support staff in order to distribute the workload and provide more time for supportive interactions.



Conclusions

- Overall, focus group participants viewed Capital School District positively.
- Findings show that establishing and maintaining trust across the district involves consistent, transparent communication and supportive relationships between all stakeholders on a daily basis.



Discussion

1. What surprises you about these findings?
2. Given the findings, how do you want to move this work?
3. What else would you like to know?



Planning for Community Forums



thank
you!