

Principal Focus Groups – April 26, 2016

Emerging Themes

Topic One – Technology

1. Not enough knowledge of Google opportunities especially Google Classroom
2. Communication – need to know how to communicate professionally with all stakeholders through technology.
3. Parent conferences are not done by text or email.
4. Social media and its consequences.
5. Information on the web, email, social media is public information.
6. Leverage technology for learning, differentiating, product focus, individual learning.
7. Keep them off their phones at school. Monitor students
8. Need to know how to find technology resources and then how to use/adapt for classroom use.
9. Not self reliant enough, expect handouts, need initiative to investigate on their own.
10. Need to learn data analysis software and how to use it (like Excel)
11. Flip the classroom – projects that result in students producing something.
12. Make the students actually use technology in their lessons not just presentation. Learn to integrate technology into the classroom
13. Middle school – Keep technology from being a distraction.
 - a. Not device but resources available.
14. Elementary – Learn how to use Eduphoria, dmac, and disaggregation instruments.
 - a. Test data – tools to disaggregate and scan.
 - b. Need to look at real data
 - c. SPED IEP, paperwork – need hands on experience
 - d. Software to track student growth -I station
 - e. Students need to learn how to use SmartBoards, etc.
15. Secondary – Eduphoria and resources for analyzing student data.
 - a. Socratic.com
 - b. Break down data
 - c. Gradebook
 - d. Attendance data-base

Topic 2. Diversity

Major themes mentioned by more than 50% of the groups

- a. Differentiation/Differentiated Instruction
- b. Poverty
- c. Dyslexia/ Section 504
- d. Special Populations
- e. ELL certification prior to graduation
- f. GT training prior to graduation

Suggestions for Elementary Program

2. Special Populations
 - a. Knowledge of is insufficient need to be able to teach different populations.
 - b. Beyond accommodations need to differentiate.
 - c. Compliance in all respects
 - d. How to read and complete paperwork.
 - e. Know and understand TEKS
 - f. Meet with “real” teachers to discuss special students
 - g. Understand the special education is the law and not an option
3. Differentiation
 - a. Knows student characteristics then know how to teach the students
 - b. Know how to differentiate each lesson.
4. Assessment
 - a. Difference between formative and summative assessment and how to use each.
 - b. Use of data to drive instruction.
5. Field Experience
 - a. Need to know the beginning and the end of school years.
 - b. Need more specific experiences
 - c. Need more hands-on experiences
6. Dyslexia
 - a. Know difference between dyslexia and normal child development
 - b. Need specific training
7. Section 504
 - a. Know it is legally binding
 - b. Differences between 504 and special education
 - c. Know how and when to refer to 504 services

Suggestions for Middle School

Dyslexia/504 – Learn to read accommodations, learn to identify and teach.

Suggestions for High School

1. Gifted Students
 - a. Differentiation
 - b. How to challenge not assign more work

- c. Address before becomes a discipline issue.
 - d. Training prior to graduation.
- 2. ELL
 - a. Know who and what languages
 - b. Differentiate
 - c. Certify prior to graduation
- 3. Do not teach to groups of students (ELL etc.) do RTI, differentiation.

Other

- 1. Poverty/economically disadvantaged students
 - a. Understand mindset
 - b. Attitude toward education
 - c. Compassion
 - d. Determine how to support students
 - e. Use Maslow's hierarchy to remind self what may be going on in student's world.
- 2. How to teach gifted is non-existent
- 3. Talking to parents – parents do not accept child's limitations

Topic Three – Preparation of Candidates

Elementary

- 1. Classroom management – learn to build relationships with students
- 2. Differentiated instruction for all and daily
- 3. Differentiate among high achievers, GT, and low performers
- 4. Poverty – can't address Bloom until you meet Maslow
- 5. Content Readiness – need more math
- 6. Data analysis – know how to view, know how to use data to guide instruction, know where to find data, know how to track data
- 7. Rigor
- 8. Learn how to find resources
- 9. Assessment – weak use of formative assessment, RTI, knowledge of TIERS, continuous assessment
- 10. Collaboration – learn to be a member of a team and work with someone else in the room.

Secondary

- 1. Emphasize student centered instruction
- 2. Engage students where they are
- 3. Keep students engaged
- 4. Know how to monitor data
- 5. Formative assessment, researching, teaching to mastery
- 6. Learn to write objectives properly
- 7. Align tests with lesson objectives

Better Prepare Candidates

Elementary – Understanding curriculum alignment both vertical and horizontal

Secondary – Campus Improvement Plan should be knowledgeable

Prepare for New Appraisal System

Help candidates prepare these 3 skills: reflection, setting objectives, using resources

Topic Four – Dispositions

Four Broad Areas – Professional Practice, Professional Qualities, Professional Relationships, Professional Development

Professional Practice

Areas of Concern: Dress, Ask Questions, Demeanor, Social Media, Flexibility

Professional Qualities

Areas of Concern: Content knowledge, TEKS, Observation skills, Lesson Cycle, Critical thinking, problem solving, application of SPED knowledge

Professional Relationships

Areas of Concern:

Working with parents: communication, being proactive, face to face meeting, when to call, welcoming environment, listening skills, de-escalating techniques.

Learn culture of school

Focus on campus where you are

Professional Development

Area of Concern:

Will be life-long learner as a teacher

Parent Involvement

TOPIC FIVE – PREPARE BETTER TEACHERS

1. What's lacking in knowledge

- a. Content knowledge to pass Certification Examination – require prior to clinical teaching
- b. Understanding the TEKS
- c. Adapting curriculum and instruction
- d. Greater variety of instructional strategies
- e. Strategies in student-centered learning
- f. Dynamics of Professional Learning Communities
- g. Inclusion
- h. Special Education-how to teach reading.
- i. Knowledge of Reading Strategies-all candidates
- j. Classroom management and discipline, especially positive discipline

2. What's lacking in skills
 - a. Effectively run stations
 - b. Write effectively
 - c. Time management
 - d. Grouping of students for instruction
 - e. Parent communication skills
 - f. Higher level questioning
 - g. Follow a lesson cycle
 - h. Collaboration on a team
 - i. How to take criticism and recommendations
 - j. How to effectively document essential interactions
 - k. How to appropriately use social media

Topic Six

Topic Six was to have the principals tell us how the candidate perceives their preparation program. The responses were aligned with topic five and reflected the impressions of the candidates by the principals. The groups struggled with the concept and a better stimulus item will be developed for the next principal focus group meeting.