



School Board Work Session
Alternative Education
Thursday, March 24, 2011

In this work session, the Board focused on the alternative program options afforded secondary students in our division. The School Board examined the programs ACPS are implementing to address the issues of students who are not being successful in traditional school settings. In preparation for the session, the Board was provided an article, *An Overview of Alternative Education* and a table outlining the Alternative Education Continuum for the division.

During the work session, Board members participated in three breakout sessions. The following is a description and highlights from each session.

Session 1: What alternative programs are available? (Diantha McKeel & Jason Buyaki) Gary McCool from the Enterprise Center, Ashby Kindler, principal of Murray High School, and Don Vale, representing the Community Public Charter School, led a discussion describing the services these programs provide for students.

- These three programs have to meet the needs of a variety of learners for a variety of reasons.
- The students at Murray High School there by choice from the three traditional high schools. Murray High School's programs and enrollment are limited by the size of the facility.
- Enterprise students have been placed in this program due to disciplinary reasons. A lot of instruction occurs through APEX. The facility is limited – no restrooms are available in the cottages. Students needing restrooms have to leave the learning cottages and go to Murray High School.
- Many students at the Community Public Charter School are below grade level, especially in reading. This program/school will need time to develop.

1. How are student's needs met? (Steve Kolezar, Pam Moynihan, & Eric Strucko) Students, staff, and parents discussed with board members their needs and experiences in their base school and current placement.

- Murray teaching is geared more toward the student style of learning. Teachers are very excited about being there and are very helpful – flexible and incorporate a mastery program for learning.
- Themes developed in the session: small school, small classes, and students feel a sense of inclusion and caring.
- Communication is a key. Parents and students need to understand the programs, especially at CPCS and Murray.
- At base schools, students felt like they were invisible – going to CPCS or Murray made students feel empowered.

- Students would like the opportunity to take more electives.
 - Session was very insightful. The students were very articulate and the teachers in these schools are working well collaboratively.
2. Identifying student's in need. (Harley Miles & Barbara Massie Mouly) Staff from elementary, middle, high, and alternative programs discussed with board members about the ways we meet the needs of students who participate in the alternative programs.
- People are crying out for adequate staffing to provide services to meet students' needs.
 - Facilities: Enterprise Center consists of four trailers and one restroom.
 - The small groups of students allow relationship building. Maybe staff should try and build small schools at home schools – a school within a school model.
 - Transition plans to and from base schools need work. The plan for student continuous instruction is not always clear.
 - Homebound instruction generally happens after school.
 - Exchange of information between programs and service providers is not always clear and in some cases does not exist at all.
 - Family support workers are needed for a lot of families.
 - Concerned about whether services, especially Enterprise, are reactive or proactive. Do we only send students to Enterprise Center after they get into trouble?
 - Staff was advocating for “suspension system” and more vocational opportunities for alternative programs.
 - Budget issues have created a principal issue by serving three schools.

The Board acknowledged that the work session was very informative and identified that facilities was a common theme throughout and that this should become part of a CIP focus.