Entry Findings and Strategic Planning

February 23, 2015

Goals of the Entry Process

- To learn as much as possible from the stakeholders about the Somerset Public Schools

- To identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in the Somerset Public Schools

- To build relationships focused on trust, support, and respect and to create open lines of communication between various stakeholders and the Superintendent

- To develop, articulate, and begin to implement a district strategy that identifies priority areas that will ensure academic excellence and improved achievement for all students

Entry Process

Document Reviews:

- o   Student achievement results (MCAS)
- o   District Policies
- o   Student Handbooks
- o   Curriculum
- o   Budget documents
- o   School improvement plans

Interviews, informal conversations, surveys:

- o   Parents
- o   Teachers
- o   Administrators
- o   Community members
- o   Students

Key Questions

- In your opinion what is working well in Somerset? What are the district's strengths?

- What do you see as the biggest challenges for Somerset Public Schools?

- What would you most like me to know about the district?

- What do you most want for Somerset students upon graduating from the Somerset Public Schools?

Initial Positive Takeaways

- Great pride in the Somerset Public Schools, which have a rich history and a strong reputation

- Great teachers; the backbone of the district

- Engaged parents, who want their children to be challenged and prepared for a competitive high school experience and beyond

- The community that has supported the school system very well over the years

- The Arts are strong (particular focus on music)

- Students come to school prepared and eager to learn

- Educate the whole child

Professional Learning Communities

3 Big Ideas

1. Focus on Learning
2. Build a Collaborative Culture
3. Focus on Results

4 Key Questions

1. What do we expect our students to learn?
2. How do we know if they are learning?
3. How will we respond when they do not learn?
4. How will we respond when they have already learned it?

Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools

1. A clear and shared focus
2. High standards and expectations for all students
3. Effective school leadership
4. High levels of collaboration and communication
5. Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with standards
6. Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching
7. Focused professional development
8. A supportive learning environment
9. High levels of family and community involvement

Teaching and Learning

- Inconsistencies and Varied Expectations
  - curriculum, progress reports, pick-up procedures, homework, online work
- Professional Development lacks focus and vision
- Academic Support for All Students
  - intervention for at-risk students
  - enrichment opportunities for all students
  - parents want students challenged more / College-Ready
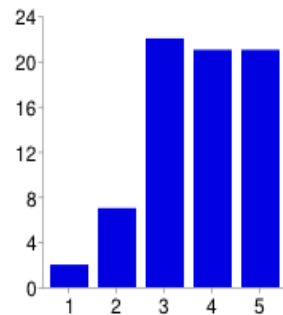- STEM
- Technology
- Curriculum

Teaching and Learning

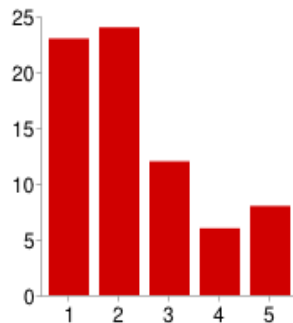I use the district's curriculum documents frequently to guide my instruction.
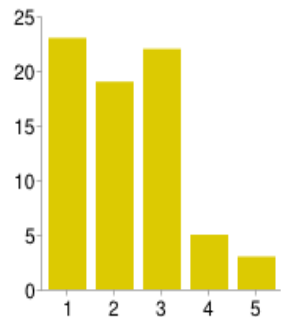
1	23	31%
2	19	25%
3	22	29%
4	5	7%
5	3	4%

I have access to working computers and appropriate technology when I need them.

1	2	3%
2	7	9%
3	22	29%
4	21	28%
5	21	28%

Assessments are aligned with the curriculum and instruction.

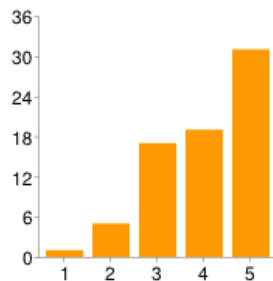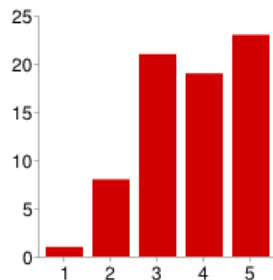|		
1	23	31%
2	24	32%
3	12	16%
4	6	8%
5	8	11%

Teaching and Learning

The professional development that has been offered in the past directly connected to my most pressing needs as a teacher.

1	1	1%
2	5	7%
3	17	23%
4	19	25%
5	31	41%

The professional development I receive provides me with teaching strategies to better meet the needs of my students

1	1	1%
2	8	11%
3	21	28%
4	19	25%
5	23	31%

Priorities According to Parents . . .

Greater than 70% of parents responded that the following are high or essential priorities:

- ensure current instructional resources in classes
- maintain manageable class sizes
- provide up to date technology for students and staff
- increased support for students who struggle in reading and math
- expand STEM offerings in elementary and middle

Priorities According to Teachers . . .

High or essential priorities:

- access to technology for students
- update facilities
- advance STEM initiatives
- increase support for students who struggle in reading and math
- increase professional development and training that target greatest needs

Teaching and Learning

- Update the elementary student handbook so that more procedures and practices are outlined and common among schools
- To conduct classroom walkthroughs with principals so that administrators become more aware of teaching and learning practices between schools
- Develop a curriculum review cycle and an instructional materials review cycle
- Review the curriculum maps that were developed in recent years to ensure that they are useful and relevant to teachers
- Provide focused professional development to teachers
- Create intervention and enrichment supports for all students
- Invest in technology and ensure students begin using technology to learn and apply 21st Century Skills
- Create a Collaborative culture, driven by data, shared focus

Culture, Values, and Relations

- Educator input and voice in district decisions
- Inconsistencies brought to light by redistricting
- High expectations for student learning
  - Parents want their children prepared for competitive colleges
  - Parents want children challenged more
- Need for better internal and external communication
- Public perception of schools is at a relative low point following a rich history of public support
- General lack of trust
- It's okay to admit our faults

Leadership, Finance, and Operations

Leadership
- Consistency (3 new principals/asst. principals; new central office leadership)
- Communication
- Trust
- Planning

Finance:
- Three consecutive years of structural deficits
- Town and School financial challenges have created a sense of questionable support from the Town of Somerset
- Little input from key stakeholders in building previous budgets
- Budget Transparency

Leadership, Finance, and Operations

Student Support Services
- English Language Learners (ELLs)
- Social and Emotional Support
- Special Education
  - Preschool program needs updated curriculum
  - Over reliance on out-of-district programs (ODP costs on the rise)
  - Lack of Special Education leadership over the past three years

Antiquated Systems:
- Over reliance on paper (need to create efficiencies using technology)
- Antiquated email system replaced in October
- District website
- Student information system is not robust

Strategies?

1. Develop a unified learning organization that is driven by the purpose of all students improving their academic achievement
   a. Quality Teaching
   b. Rigorous and Relevant Curriculum
   c. Supports for all students
2. 21st Century Skills/Readiness for SBRHS
   a. Technology Integration
   b. STEM
   c. Supports for all students
3. Management and Operations
   a. Communication
   b. Improved Systems
   c. Network infrastructure (technology plan)
   d. Facilities planning
4. Culture