

## Middle School Student Focus Group

June 15, 2021

2:00 PM - 3:00 PM

### 5th Grade Discussion

- What makes your school either safe or unsafe?
  - Unsafe
    - Need cameras in classrooms
    - Teachers on stairwells (unsafe)
      - Fights
      - Rules and dismissal
- How do you define the word orderly as it pertains to being at school?
  - Fights outside
  - Rules okay
  - Kids don't listen and don't care if they get in trouble
    - Rules and dismissal
  - Instigators
    - Do the same thing over and over
    - Threatening
- What would you like to see celebrated at school? How could this best be done?
  - Teachers celebrate
  - Moving Up day 8th grade
  - Set goals and work towards them
    - Incentives
    - Fun Friday
    - Breaks
- Learning
  - Lots of review/slow
  - Make learning into a game
  - No homework
  - Choice board
  - Projects
- Social Media
  - Kids take pictures and videos all the time
  - Posting when other don't want them to

## 6th Grade Discussion

- What makes your school either safe or unsafe?
  - Unsafe
    - Hallways and stairwells (mini fights that last only a few seconds so teachers don't know)
    - Waiting outside in AM to come in
      - 5th graders get into arguments "It's scary"
  - Safe in classroom and lunch (but pressed for time)
- How do you define the word orderly as it pertains to being at school?
  - Straight line
  - Following all the teachers' rules
  - Quiet and productive
  - Having an expected schedule
  - No fights
  - No individuality
- Should there be a way that kids can regularly communicate with school leaders about the workings of school (schedules, course content, procedures)?
  - No, too many kids, would be things that are not important
  - Think it should go to counselor first, then they tell administrators
- What would you like to see celebrated at school? How could this best be done?
  - LGBTQ and pride not acknowledge but other are
  - Like "learn a new language week"
  - Recognize birthdays
  - Celebrate different holidays or at least acknowledge they are happening
- What is the benefit of knowing about the professional learning of your teachers?
  - Not sure
- Student surveys suggest that students struggle with academic vocabulary. Do you feel this is the case? How might the school, as a body, best support students with learning academic vocabulary?
  - Vocabulary is difficult, sometimes teachers introduce it then don't bring it up for a few days but still expect you to remember
- How strong is the connection between what is taught and what is tested in your classes?
  - Strong connection, sometimes if you miss a class you miss that content entirely but most of the time questions have clearly been discussed specifically in classes
  - Not everything taught is tested, but that's ok
- If you are having trouble learning, do you seek out assistance? If not, why not? If yes, where do you go and how do you get the help you need?

- Depends on the class
- Some don't like peer help
- Some would rather look it up or ask parents
- Some ask right in the moment, in class
- What should schools know about student social media use? How does social media impact the schooling experience?
  - Social media on school property is school business
  - Student social media should be private, for parents to worry about, too much for schools to worry about
- Students should be able to talk to counselors about school's non-school issues (some kids don't have anyone else)
  - If a kid reports an off school grounds issue that isn't a big deal they (the school) shouldn't get involved
- Students should feel comfortable, like their teachers **could counsel** them (check highlight with scribe)
- Allow people to work at different paces (too slow, too repetitive)
- Classes should be formed based on how fast/easily they learn
- Need a break after NYS testing (rest of the day should be more carefree)
  - Some teams did, some had normal PM schedule

## 7th Grade Discussion

- What makes your school either safe or unsafe?
  - Fighting to be cool
    - Delays transitions
    - 5th grade teachers traveling with students is better
  - Stairwells - grade transitions
  - Special
  - Lunch
  - Too crowded
  - Bringing fights in from outside of school
  - Instagram - Batavia Fight Club 71+ accounts
  - Batavia Shade Room
  - Snapchat World Posts
  - Students in hallways distracting in different classrooms
  - Safe
    - School security
    - SRO
    - Fear of administration helped curb behaviors
    - Bathroom passes
    - Hallsweeps
- Should there be ways that kids can regularly communicate with school leaders about the workings of school (schedules, course content, procedures)?
  - Communication
  - Teachers in classroom
  - Loudspeaker announcements
  - Paper schedules
- What would you like to see celebrated at school? How could this best be done?
  - Spirit weeks
  - Spotlights - student and teacher
  - Birthday on Ts
  - Pictures of field trips
- Student surveys suggest that students struggle with academic vocabulary. Do you feel this is the case? How might the school, as a body, best support students with learning academic vocabulary?
  - Vocabulary challenges
    - math/science
    - Vocabulary with examples, not just definitions
- How strong is the connection between what is taught and what is tested in your classes?

- Progression of lessons is important, need to connect to one another
  - iReady 4 out of 5 didn't line up with course lessons
  - Point system not fair for higher levels
- If you are having trouble learning, do you seek out assistance? If not, why not? If yes, where do you go and how do you get the help you need?
  - Yes
    - Students
    - Teacher
- Grades at most two weeks after due
- If you were in charge...
  - Hats and hoods allowed (2 votes)
  - Dress code more equal
  - PD teachers - social/emotional
  - Answering students questions
  - Discipline - sent out after two strikes irrelevant
  - More pencils in classrooms
  - Food in vending machines
  - salad/snack bar
  - Cafeteria food needs improvement

## 8th Grade Discussion

- What makes your school either safe or unsafe?
  - SRO
  - Security officer
  - Teacher
  - Do not feel safe
- How do you define the word orderly as it pertains to being at school?
  - Walking right down hall
  - Following rules
- Should there be ways that kids can regularly communicate with school leaders about the workings of school (schedules, course content, procedures)?
  - Use suggestion box so they can say whatever
- What would you like to see celebrated at school? How could this best be done?
  - Diversity, like how we did it this year but kids were not really engaged or paying attention.
  - Grade - highlight them on screens
  - Recognize merit roll and honor roll with letters in the mail
- What is the benefit of knowing about the professional learning of your teachers?
  - Can have deeper conversations with teachers and ask more questions.
  - Helps us be more aware and not always wondering
- Student surveys suggest that students struggle with academic vocabulary. Do you feel this is the case? How might the school, as a body, best support students with learning academic vocabulary?
  - The words themselves are not tricky, but the way that certain questions are worded can make the overall question hard.
  - Possibly review difficult words more with kids who are struggling
  - Teachers ask clarifying questions when reading text that may have difficult words.
- How strong is the connection between what is taught and what is tested in your classes?
  - Most of the time what is taught is what we are tested on. There are some times when we have questions for things we have not learned.
- If you are having trouble learning, do you seek out assistance? If not, why not? If yes, where do you go and how do you get the help you need?
  - Sometimes but not usually in front of other kids - embarrassing to ask in front of others.
  - Will go to the teacher at the end of class to ask 1:1.
  - Will stay after for help or go on Google meet with the teacher.
  - Sometimes teachers will re-teach in class.

- What should school know about student social media use? How does social media impact the schooling experience?
  - Feel we should check in like one time every quarter to get a pulse on social media use.
  - A box to use to make anonymous reports of inappropriate social media use
  - Social media causes some drama and can carry over to school and interfere with learning.
  - Too much cell phone use in school and during class.
- Improve learning
  - incentives (candy)
  - Competitions
  - Move forward with teaching but go back to review
- Advice to teachers
  - Kids don't want to star at Chromebook
  - Let us pick our groups (to an extent)
  - Don't put them with kids they don't get along with
  - Not giving overwhelming homework
  - No homework on weekends
  - shyoul d have eased us back into work load
  - Not so much homework
  - Give kids option to check phones in cae parents text.
- What can we do to support you?
  - Praise kids who do well
  - Try tp get kids who need help to get them to stay without calling them out in front of others.
  - Create pods of kids to get help after school so they don't feel singled out
- Dress code
  - Needs to be updated
  - Feel kids are not distracted with shoulders
  - Who not hats? Never understood why not allowed, never taught reason.