

KES Town Hall Meeting Tuesday, September 21st, 2021

Updates on things going on inside the building: Last year we left off creating a brand new vision and mission. This started with a strategic planning meeting with staff, students and parents. Then moved on to all stakeholders to get their feedback.

Vision: We empower well-rounded confident leaders who aspire to serve others and achieve their full potential.

Our mission is to create an environment that fosters safety, self-worth, and curiosity in students through interactive, enriching experiences, positive communication, and inclusiveness.

In strategic planning meetings this year, we will discuss plans and action steps surrounding this vision and mission.

Mr. Vaughn asked parents to share the word that is most important to them for their children enrolled at KES (safety and self-worth were the big takeaways).

We redid the ABCs of Knightly Behavior:

Ask questions

Be responsible

Continue trying

This is also to promote the vision and mission and students are receiving tickets for showing these behaviors. Chant was also revised to reflect the same.

Last year there were two big focuses: Science of reading (literacy) and the Whole Child (Social Emotional Learning). We started morning meetings last year. Each room connects with kids and “gets a pulse.” These activities helped build the whole child and taught soft skills to help kids be successful. In literacy, we helped teachers understand the “why” of reading and how kids learn to read. This goes back to the mindset of phonics. Whole language had become popular but updated research pushes us back to the science of reading. Last year, through professional development, the “why” was taught. Each grade level had training on word study. We are building the understanding of words. Resources have been purchased which will help with MTSS. The state of North Carolina made us shift right as we were starting to do it ourself. Every elementary teacher has been trained in LETRS:

<https://www.voyagersopris.com/professional-development/lettrs/overview>

We are optimistic this will help in our building!

WOW Lessons: Last year, because of all the different modes of learning (at-home/in-person), we missed a lot of the WOWs of school. We are encouraging teachers to bring back the WOW experiences. Fifth grade is planning a service project for refugees and will have a refugee

speaker on Friday. First grade is doing an extension project on apples and studying Johnny Appleseed.

Last parent email: Mr. Vaughn included information on health and safety. People have lots of opinions on this.

- We are eating in classrooms with the exception of fifth grade. Mobile units and food do not mix well so fifth graders are eating in the cafeteria.
- Full custodial staff is finally back, so that should be very helpful.
- Next week, half of fifth grade classes will go to the cafeteria so they can have more space in their space.
- Lunch has been a big point of contact so we are trying to space out as much as possible.
- We have adjusted seating charts and reduced the number of students around each other.

Questions:

Will field trips happen?

We are allowed to have field trips. We are creating some in-house field trips. If numbers are in the right spot, there may be opportunities to leave the school for field trips in the second semester.

Fifth grade lunch time is very early, can it be changed?

We have over 1000 students in the building, and we need to start lunch early to accommodate all students. Students are mostly awake since 6:00am and working academically since 7:30am. There's no ideal time to start lunch that we need to get every student through. Lines can get backed up. Some lunch times are also super late. We need this to get through all of those sections of lunch.

Regarding homework: recommendation to start having upper grades do homework so that it's not an "eye opening" experience next year in middle school

There is little research to support the role of homework. Questions we ask ourselves: do we need to prepare them for what we view as "not right" in the future? Limited research supports 10 minutes of homework per grade level as the most time that should be spent. This is a hard topic. We should have a conversation with fifth grade parents: this is what you can expect...here are some strategies that have worked...etc.

Will fifth graders go on the overnight trip to Camp Thunderbird?

Mr. Vaughn remembers his first year at KES, students went to Charleston. It was far and it was expensive. He is not opposed to Camp Thunderbird if we are moving in the right direction. We would have to consider our options around safety. Could it be done in one day instead of overnight?

New COVID letters with “impactful cases” phrasing? Will we also get these letters?

We just got the email this afternoon. We think this is something parents are going to be in support of - more communication. We will send out the same information other schools are sending.

Follow up: does this mean the school is back to communicating to families?

We will relay information received from the Health Department.

With quarantining back, will teachers be available before/after school again for assistance?

Work is on Canvas. After hours, we still have those “quarantine hotlines” originally sent out. Some hours will be modified. New days and times will be sent out for next week. Always reach out to your teachers. They are always welcome to answer questions and assist through digital communication. If you ever need printed copies of Canvas work, please reach out and we can get those prepared for pickup. Outside set up will be back soon so quarantined kids have access to materials.

How does contact tracing work with the health department?

Parents share information on positive cases or symptomatic students directly with Nurse Nash. KES is very happy to help out with communication as well. Families that have a contact happen outside of the school should share with the health department and we are grateful if you would also share with Nurse Nash. Read the latest district communication UCPS for more thorough info.

Odyssey of the Mind reminder?

There was an informational meeting before this meeting. If you would like the recording, reach out to Mr. Vaughn. It is a fun, worthwhile program that has been very successful. It is like that “WOW” experience of playing while problem-solving.