

Attendees: Emily, Claire, Toby, Henry, Mark, Beth, David F, Katy H, Melinda, Leslie, Jayla, Meaghan, May, Rajeev, Joe, Isaac, Lisa, Janna, Julie McD

Agenda--November 4, 2020 Working Group Meeting

Icebreaker

Objective: Presentation on focus group and survey results to gain insights and implications for in-person options

Focus group reports

Survey

- Quantitative report/Q&A
- Qualitative report/Q&A

Discussion

Insights from focus groups and surveys (random small groups)

Small group reports

Implications for in-person learning (large group brainstorm)

Tomorrow--prepare high level insights that may have implications for Newton. Chance to give direction to educators who will make draft proposals for working group feedback next Thursday.

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Focus group reports -

North: Met with two more groups of students (small groups). Experienced the same emotions as the first group, but emotions were not as overwhelming. More optimism and balanced response. Athletes are happier. Struggling with academic challenges, 90 minute block, draining zoom days. Still speaking about mental health issues - loneliness and missing friends/depression, but more moderate vs. first groups who seemed more upset. In contrast with the first session, this group did not have any seniors, and did not have any students of color (that the moderator could identify).

South: The South focus group took place right after the survey was given. Eight students participated, no 10th graders. Included: students on IEPs, some Newton/Boston, ELL, APs, global and new media and preschool students. There's anger in the community, school feels boring because they aren't in the school. Used the word "isolating" this time around. It is more exhausting on zoom than 6 hours in school in person. Need more breaks. Hands on aspects of some classes are good. Varied lessons are best. 9th graders don't like not knowing their classmates, and have limited connection to school. Hard for teachers to maintain their pre-Covid teaching styles. Having more sleep is good. A few want more academic challenges. Concerned about peers understanding the seriousness of COVID. How to detect and contain an outbreak. Concerned about equity around technology. Would do a lot to get back in person. Students don't feel like there is a lot of communication directly to students. Want updates directly. Seniors are concerned NTA isn't part of the High School Working Group.

Survey data:

Katy gave the presentation on survey findings. (See link to report on website under surveys)

How do we present the data to the community?

Open ended questions - Similar themes from the presentation.

Small group discussion: Observations/Insights from the Survey Presentation:

Parents want kids back in school, students also (but less so), teachers not so much  
Academic rigor a priority for parents, not as much for students and teachers  
No one likes the schedule of 90 minutes blocks - improve that no matter what  
The data presents averages, so there are individuals who feel differently, but if staff are not comfortable coming into the building, we need solutions that bring all stakeholders together. People are going to assume the survey says 'this is what we want' means 'this is what we're going to get.' That is not the case; the surveys give a sense of what people want, but our task is to come up with the best hybrid model possible. Maybe we shouldn't frame the survey data, maybe we should let people interpret as they would like. We don't want to lead the witness. SEL was the highest priority for students and staff. SEL wasn't the highest priority for parents - it was engaging teaching. But SEL ranked second for parents. This group needs to figure out the obstacles at the end of the day, and can we overcome them. However, some of the data will be interesting to parents (students vs. parent desires). Break out the data by grade; would be interesting to see if seniors can deal with the current model, freshmen and sophomores not as much. They don't have the connections. Maybe not everyone should go back the same amount. It also shows that student/teachers align more, and the parents are outliers. The higher level theme information/quotes/etc should be added to the info shared on Friday. We need a second working group to be working with teachers to make this happen.

Want to collectively make sure the student voice/input/surveys are heard. They are going to be in the building, teachers too. The perception of the data, and contextualizing it is incredibly important. Focus on academics was expressed most by parents, more than by teachers and kids. Aligned with comments from the focus groups. We should make sure we are listening to zoom fatigue/computer time issues for students. Everyone wants everything but not everything can be included.

Consistency across the three groups in "top two" ranking of "engaging teaching" and "social-emotional wellbeing." Question: how is engaging teaching defined? Otherwise, parent/student and teacher perceptions varied. Students rated their stress higher than their parents. Students say it's hard to be a learner, but they are missing the learning experience. In-person contact with peers and friends - more important for students. Students want to be with their peers. Some may be assuming academic rigor will be increased once we're in person, but we don't actually know that this will happen.

We didn't specifically have a separate conversation around implications, but it was woven into the discussion.

Also, feedback from deep dives will help inform what we're doing. What's our purview vs. what's other people's purview. Some things are going to be done by the administrators. We are making recommendations to DF. We'll give a lot more feedback tomorrow. Then the administrators will come back to us on Thursday of next week with some initial options.