

Teacher Advisory Council Q&A

September 20, 2016

Is there a district policy currently in place to determine the minimum grade to give a student? (Such as on classroom assessments, progress reports, and report cards) - In the past, no student could receive a grade below 50%, even if they scored well below 50%.

This is not a policy but elementary school principals have set 50 as a minimum because it is almost mathematically impossible to recover from 0's and 9's and grades this low if you only have a few grades. The principals do not feel it is appropriate to put a student in a situation where they cannot be successful. (Joanne Sanders)

Is it possible to get a list of the criteria used to select the Employee of the Week? Are there specific qualifications to be considered for this award?

Principals determine the criteria for the selection at their school. If you feel that people are being overlooked, it is entirely appropriate to share that thought with your principal. (Larry Cartner)

Are our TAC representatives supposed to be sharing all of our TAC questions with our principal?

If an issue is a school-based issue and not a district issue, TAC representatives have been asked to share the request with the principal as a professional courtesy. TAC representatives are asked to maintain confidentiality regarding the individual(s) who asked the question. If the question is a district level concern, the question and answer are shared with everyone, without identifying the school that submitted the question. If the concern is a district-level issue, principals do not determine when/if a question is submitted. (Larry Cartner)

The Exceptional Children's teachers have posed a question about the upcoming Professional Development day requirements: May the self-contained Exceptional Teachers have the opportunity to do professional development with their curriculum?

My suggestion to Ms. Ewers has been to utilize the time set aside on Tuesday afternoon's for these meetings. All other teachers in the district attend grade level or content meetings/pd at this time. The early release days are used for school level professional development. With principal permission, it may be possible to meet at one of the schools during this time. (Joanne Sanders)

At the beginning of the school year, we received a document that stated that the goal was for teachers to have 5 hours of duty free planning time per week. What is being done to reach this goal?

The District recognizes the importance of time to plan high quality instruction. Principals, in conjunction with their school improvement team, should work to provide teachers with duty-free planning during regular student contact hours. Duty-free means teachers are alleviated from the responsibilities of supervising students. Those times still include working on plans, communicating with parents, and meeting in Professional Learning Communities and/or team meetings, which will include meetings with the principal. North Carolina statute states that School Improvement Teams “shall include a plan to provide duty-free instructional planning time for every teacher under G.S. 115C.301.1, with a goal of providing an average of at least five hours of planning time per week.”

Finally, ECPPS BOE Policy 7500 states, “The length of the school day for licensed and professional staff will be a minimum of 7 hours and 30 minutes and will continue until professional responsibilities to the student and school are completed. Administrative meetings, curriculum development, pupil supervision, assigned duties, parent conferences, group, or individual planning, and extracurricular activities may require hours beyond the stated minimum. Daily schedules for each school, including specific times for beginning and ending the workday, shall be established by the principal.”

The District encourages teachers to have open communication with school improvement teams to establish a plan to provide duty-free instructional planning time for every teacher under G.S. 115C-301.1 (Steve Lassiter)

Will the staff be penalized if not being able to make some of the monthly District Grade Level Meetings due to pre-scheduled doctor appointments, college courses, or additional jobs and obligations to attend on the specified meeting dates?

Principals agreed that all teachers would attend the appropriate district level meeting. Absences and conflicts should be discussed with your principal. (Larry Cartner)

Could the monthly District Grade Level meetings be data-driven with a specific agenda that employees could know in advance? Knowing in advance would make the meetings more relevant and productive, and staff would come more prepared instead of just being asked to "share" what we are doing in our classrooms.

The agendas are based on the responses given by the teachers re: what they need from us and are data driven. The agendas are sent the night before because when they have been sent too far in advance the participants say they did not receive the agenda and we spend 10 minutes in emails looking for them. We will try to find a happy median for delivery of agendas. Teachers are asked to share what they are doing because they been successful in teaching a standard and collaboration is an excellent way to learn a "new" way of teaching a difficult standard. (Joanne Sanders)

Will certified staff still be able to earn STAR ATTENDANCE leave this year?

Yes. This was shared with bookkeepers and principals earlier. (Larry Cartner)

Is there any way to reinstate the monthly mentor pay, or provide a one-time stipend for mentors?

Unfortunately, the state no longer provides those funds. (Larry Cartner)

Is it possible to have one or two of the 3-hour early release days for teachers to work in their classrooms?

The half-day early release days are given to schools for the purpose of professional development. However, based on the feedback from last year, we plan to give teachers a half day in their classrooms on September 26 and October 31. District level professional development sessions on those two days have been scaled back to half day in order to allow teachers the other half day in their classroom. (Larry Cartner)

Is it possible to reconsider the newly adopted district policy pertaining to covering tattoos?

The Board has a policy in place that was debated deeply and over a long period. Tattoos were discussed at length and the Board agreed that they should be covered. (Larry Cartner)

Could you please explain the reason behind not allowing ECPPS staff and employees to wear jeans or anything made out of jean material?

The Board debated this provision as well. The Board operates under the belief that all employees should dress professionally. As you recall, the policy was approved last winter and did not go into effect until this year, allowing time for teachers to purchase appropriate clothing. (Larry Cartner)

Is it possible to obtain a sub for a custodian if one is out for an extended period?

Principals are aware the Maintenance Department maintains a list of substitute custodians. If a custodian is out for more than 5-7 days, principals should contact Mr. Parker to request a substitute in the absence of a custodian. (Steve Lassiter)

Students are missing approximately 30 hours a semester out of classes when students are traveling to and from for shared courses on multiple campuses. Is there anything that can be done about this?

The high school principals are aware of the time issues and are working to solve this problem. There were some bus timeline issues during the first week of school. Please know that we are working on a solution. (Joanne Sanders)

Could you please clarify the specific duties and job requirements of the technology assistants and librarians? Can the technology representatives really only help the teachers if an "e-ticket" is sent? We all are aware that sending e-tickets help in keeping our technology assistants within our schools, however, sometimes situations occur with technology that need immediate attention.

School based technology assistants are placed in schools to support classroom and staff needs. They are responsible for installing computer equipment in school and office locations, troubleshooting and repairing equipment problems, and repairing or arranging for the repair of equipment. Technology needs should be submitted through ehelphdesk so that we have a record of all requests and needs. Tickets are needed for me to track school based and district needs. Tickets are also needed to maintain proper notes and documentation of work being done.

The eticket process is maintained for a purpose; however, techs do respond to teachers at point of need as well. A ticket must still be submitted for tracking purposes. If there is a particular problem with a tech, then I will be happy to address any concerns. We want to provide the best support we can. Media Coordinators do not assist with technology repairs. (Amber Godfrey)

With all of our students having a school Gmail account and Power School access, do we (high schools) still need to provide paper copies of progress reports?

Every parent does not access the parent portal. The access is there, but many parents have not accessed the portal for varying reasons. Teachers are required to enter grades in a timely manner but there are times there are delays in this process too. In order to give every parent the opportunity to view student grades, we continue to print the reports. This is certainly something to aim for in the future. (Joanne Sanders)

I have noticed that the same classroom teachers seem to continuously receive the majority of the more difficult students. Shouldn't each teacher have approximately the same amount of "behavior" and "academically challenged" students within their classrooms to make them more equitable?

The assignment of students is the principal's decision and varies from school to school. If you have concerns with the way classes are balanced, it is appropriate to raise that issue with your principal. (Larry Cartner)

Now that you've met with the NAACP twice, can you please elaborate on what the District's plans are to make our African American male students feel as though they are valued and respected just as much as our other male students in the ECPPS district? What are our plans on closing the achievement gap with our African American males?

It was my pleasure to meet with the NAACP one time at the beginning of last school year. Learning and giving respect begins in our classrooms. It is not something that can be mandated, but rather must be learned by example. Respect and feeling valued are not limited to any one group. Our work on poverty will help us begin the process of closing the gap. To close the gap, there must be a stronger partnership between home and school. Many of our students, not just African-Americans come to school under-prepared. This requires schools to teach differently in order to get students to grade level. I am in the process of meeting with some other groups of community leaders to garner their support. The answer to closing the gap will not come from outside, but from within our schools. (Larry Cartner)

I am concerned about the selection of eighth graders for 9th grade Honors Science classes. What criterion was used? What requirements had to have been met in eighth grade to be in Honors in 9th grade?

Per NCDPI, we cannot ask for a specific grade as a prerequisite to a course. The prerequisite can be a different course but not a grade. Counselors look at the student's academic history and if they are earning low grades or have a history of low academic performance, they talk with the student and place them in an alternate class. (Joanne Sanders)