



The questions listed below were collected from parents and members of the community by way of outreach efforts of Beyond Housing, a community development agency located within the Normandy Schools Collaborative (NSC) boundaries. Depending on the question, the answers were provided by NSC staff and/or the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). We thank Beyond Housing for their support and actions to help Normandy students and the community.

Questions from the Community to DESE and Normandy Schools Collaborative

November 2016

Accreditation, Testing, and Progress

Q. What does the pathway to an accredited district look like?

A. Under the Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP), an unaccredited district must earn more than 50% of the points possible on the Annual Performance Report (APR) for multiple years in a row to be considered for reclassification to a provisional level. Accreditation recommendations to the State Board are based on APR status and APR trends, and may include other factors as appropriate, e.g., CSIP goals, previous Department MSIP findings, financial status, and/or leadership stability.

The Normandy School Collaborative (NSC) APR percentages for the last three years are:

2014	2015	2016
7.1%	30.4%	54.6%

Q. What are the metrics DESE is using and how does the NSC stack up relative to those metrics?

A. For 2016, the NSC Annual Performance Report looks like this:

Standard	Points Possible	NSC Points Earned	NSC Percent Earned
1. Academic Achievement	56.0	15.0	26.8%
2. Subgroup Achievement	14.0	4.0	28.6%
3. College & Career Readiness	30.0	20.0	66.7%
4. Attendance	10.0	7.5	75.0%
5. Graduation Rate	30.0	30.0	100%
Total	140.0	76.5	54.6%

Q. Several factors, including legislative actions, require significant changes to the state's assessment plan over the next several years. Under these circumstances, can an accurate profile of school districts be created, and if so, how?

A. Evaluating districts in the face of changing state assessments is challenging, but it is not impossible. While different assessments cannot be compared directly, a district's progress over time can be measured through a statistical analysis. Additionally, the APR includes multiple measures including graduation rates, attendance, and college and career readiness measures. The specific methods of analysis are outlined in the Missouri School Improvement Program Comprehensive Guide here:

<https://dese.mo.gov/quality-schools/accountability-data/annual-performance-report>

One way of thinking about the comparison is to think about triathletes. We can compare their performance in swimming, running, and bicycling to their previous performance and to the performance of other athletes. Well- rounded and well-prepared athletes tend to do well in all three types of events. The analogy is not perfect but may prove useful as the changes in assessment occur during the next few years.

Governance and Accountability

Q. What is the future of the Joint Executive Governing Board?

A. The Joint Executive Governing Board will remain in place until the district has regained accreditation and can remain stable. At that point, a transition plan for the governing board will be discussed.

Q. We understand that the former commissioner made an unannounced visit to the district to talk to parents about the value of charter schools. Have specific charter schools been approved for Normandy? Does the JEGB or the community have any say-so in the establishment of such schools in the Collaborative? What is your goal regarding charter schools for our children?

A. We are unaware of any activities in the NSC related to charter schools. No charter schools have been approved for the Collaborative. A charter school can be opened in any unaccredited school district as long as it meets the requirements of Missouri statutes.

The Department's goal is high quality community schools for students throughout the state.

Q. Media has reported that Department would "monitor" the various districts' interaction with the Collaborative. Will any of these players -- districts, DESE, etc.-- be held accountable for anything?

A. Partner districts and agencies are acting to support the NSC out of their own goodwill and at no cost to the NSC. It would not be possible or appropriate for the Department to hold these districts accountable. However, the Department supports these efforts. Should the NSC feel that the help being offered is not in the best interests of the NSC, they are free to decline or modify any offers.

Q. Since our children are now under state oversight, what responsibility does the Department take for the quality of their education?

A. The Department is taking several actions to support school improvement at the NSC. The Department has an Area Supervisor who monitors the work of the Regional School Improvement Team (RSIT) in the Collaborative. Further, the Department has three specialists monitoring the school-improvement work paid for through federal funding sources. The State Board of Education regularly receives reports from Dr. Pearson to monitor progress in Normandy. Department staff members regularly communicate with Dr. Pearson and visit the NSC in person to check progress and consider any further actions that would strengthen the schools.

Parent Communication

Q. What is the best way for parents to communicate with teachers and the Collaborative? How will the Collaborative improve communication with parents?

A. There are several ways parents can communicate with teachers and district staff. Teachers, principals, and other staff can be reached via email, written letters/notes, or by phone. Phone numbers for schools are available in the telephone directory, internet, or on the NSC website, www.normandysc.org. If a parent does not have a direct number for a teacher, they can call the building secretary and ask to be connected to the teacher. If the teacher is unable to come to the phone, please feel free to leave a message and your call will be returned.

The Collaborative is making use of several other tools to improve communication with parents and the community. The district's new learning management system, **Engrade**, is a new tool that allows parents to view homework, assignments, and student grades by logging into a secure website. The Normandy website is updated regularly with information for parents and the community.

District information is also shared with families and community members by way of automated phone calls and emails, fliers, messaging on building marquees, and social media. If parents are not receiving communications, please contact the child's school to ensure the district has current phone/email information. The Collaborative is active on **Facebook** (facebook.com/normandyschools); **Twitter** (@normandysc1); and **Instagram** (@normandyschools). Social media is a cost-effective way to get information to our parents and community.

Q. How does Normandy feel about parents being involved at their children's schools?

A. Parental involvement is critical to a student's success inside and outside of the classroom. The Normandy Schools Collaborative fully supports parent involvement and encourages parents to take an active role in all parts of the education process. Parents and other volunteers are encouraged and welcomed. To help maintain a safe environment for students and staff, all volunteers must complete an application which includes a background check with the state. Volunteer forms are available from the school office or the Office of Student Support Services.

Discipline

Q. There has been discussion in the media about school discipline and the number of students being suspended from school. How is school discipline being addressed this year? How are teachers prepared to handle discipline in the classroom in contrast to last year?

A. The Collaborative continues to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions and has seen a significant drop in the numbers when compared to the last two years. Because students do not learn if they are out of school, more behavioral issues are handled by in-school suspension programs, other in-school alternatives, and parent conferences. In addition, teachers and principals have received additional training to provide a safe environment for learning. The training includes systems and interventions that support improving student behavior. Misbehavior is an opportunity to teach valuable life skills like negotiation, compromise and self-control. For behavior situations that may require additional supports, all schools have counselors on staff to help address issues that may require more targeted attention. The Collaborative has implemented "Second Steps," a social/emotional skills curriculum, is being taught to students in grades K-8. NSC is currently identifying additional social/emotional support for students who have higher rates of discipline problems, with the intent of further reducing school suspensions.

Q. Why is Normandy waiting until 2018 to implement the no-suspension policy for grades PreK-3?

The Collaborative is working to implement a comprehensive wraparound services model that will allow all mental and health service agencies, along with NSC staff, the ability to ensure effective services are being provided to students. As we continue to build upon existing programs for students, it is essential that these programs are in place before we enact policy.

OSS results from behaviors that generally impact the safety of the child, their classmates and even staff. We must be sure that we have the supports in place for children that need the help – psychological and emotional – and know that these strategies will work. We are putting services in place now with the plan to collect data to see if the services are effective. We can then assure the Board that we can enforce the policy while meeting the needs of all children.

What follows is the planned process for implementing a policy to eliminate out-of-school suspensions in grades preK-3 by 2018-2019:

1. Informed the Joint Executive Governing Board (JEGB) of the intent to implement OSS policy (done at Nov. 11, 2016 Board Meeting).
2. Establish a network of supports (wraparounds such as counseling, behavioral health specialists, mental health supports for students and families from BJC, district social workers, ongoing Second Step Curriculum) that can be sustained through partnerships and fiscal allocations.
3. Complete a 2016-2017 analysis of the impact of services on reducing the number of OSS for this grade span. This analysis cannot be completed until the end of the 2016-2017 school year.
4. Report the findings from that analysis to the Board.
5. Develop the policy in the Policy Committee with feedback.
 - Get feedback from principals on our systems
 - Get feedback from community and other stakeholders

6. Executive leadership makes recommendation to the JEGB. The JEGB will review, recommend changes to the policy if needed, vote on the policy and approve.

7. Continue to track the OSS patterns and assess what is currently working to reduce out-of-school suspensions.

Q. What resources are available for parents whose child may be a victim of bullying?

A. Bullying is unacceptable and the Collaborative takes bullying allegations seriously. If a student is being bullied, parents should contact the school principal immediately. If the issue is not resolved at that level, parents should contact the Office of Student and Family Support Services at the Collaborative central office (3855 Lucas & Hunt Road) for additional resources regarding prevention and eliminating bullying.

Q. Can you add more behavior resource help at the elementary schools and NECC?

A. The Collaborative is developing a plan that will maintain all of our support services as well as communicating more intentionally about the services these organizations offer and the children being served. "Second Steps," a social/emotional skills curriculum, is being taught to students in grades K-8. Principals and administrators continue to review all current supports and areas requiring improvement in both academics and behavior.

Q. We need better bullying resources for schools and buses.

A. Bullying is not tolerated in our schools. As part of the wraparound services, anti-bullying is taught as part of several programs we provide to students. We have also hired aides to ride buses where behavior has been an issue. The Collaborative is looking into ways to offer additional resources for preventing and dealing with bullying.

Teachers

Q. Some parents complained that teachers in previous years were ill-prepared, inexperienced, and even scared of the children. How are teachers prepared this year in contrast to prior years? How has the administration addressed poor teacher performance of the recent past?

A. For the 2016-2017 school year, the Collaborative experienced much less turnover than the previous two years. The Collaborative has continued to improve its screening process when hiring new teachers. Like last year, part of the interviewing process was for each candidate to teach a lesson in the classroom while being observed by the building administrator. This assists in assessing the candidates' ability to build relationships, solve problems, as well as demonstrate the candidate's level of content knowledge. Teachers who were evaluated and found not to be effective in the classroom were not asked to return. Once hired, the Collaborative is also providing teachers additional supports to help them be more effective and successful. Some of these supports include retired teachers hired to mentor new teachers, instructional coaches, and ongoing professional development on effective teaching strategies and classroom management.

Q. How does the Collaborative handle complaints about a school or teacher? What steps are taken?

A. If a parent has a complaint about the teacher or the school, the first step is to talk to the building principal. The building principal investigates the concern, providing intervention where

needed, or preferably, a resolution to the issue. If the issue is not resolved at the building level, the person with the complaint may go to the district level -- the Office of Student & Family Support Services -- to complete a Parent/Community Concern Form. The Assistant Superintendent will investigate the complaint, working with the Superintendent's cabinet and other resources if necessary, to resolve the issue or get an answer to the complaint.

Q. Will staff participate in professional development around cultural sensitivity and differential learning strategies?

A. New teachers were introduced to the principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching during New Teacher Orientation earlier this school year. A second training was offered during the October Professional Development, and a third session will take place later this school year. As part of our partnership with Wyman Center, we are also offering training to help teachers work more effectively with students who have experienced trauma. Teachers are studying research-based strategies that equip them to differentiate instruction, based on student abilities. Small group instruction in both literacy and mathematics is one example of how teachers are differentiating. Ongoing professional development will be provided in these areas to staff.

External Groups and Support

Q. What external groups/programs have been restored this year and how are they working for our children? How are we measuring whether or not they have/are helping our children's academic performance?

A. This school year we have partnered with Wyman Center to coordinate our external wraparound programs to ensure these programs are providing academic, social and needs-based supports to our students. The evidence-based programs include the Teen Outreach Program, Girls Inc., the Boys and Girls Club, Preferred Family Health, and the Family Engagement Liaisons. Wyman will annually review (some more frequent) these programs to determine the impact on children's academic performance. The Collaborative is also working with organizations and businesses to provide learning opportunities to students. Some of these programs are: Gateway2Change (social justice program with EdPlus); 21st Century Learning/America Scores (Better Family Life); Mad Science/St. Louis Science Center (science enrichment); and fine arts programs (Arts & Education Council/Maritz grants).

Q. How is the district improving its external support and involvement from parents and community, such as mentorships?

A. The Collaborative is also partnering with Centene Corporation, Monsanto, and Express Scripts to provide high school students work experience through internships. The Collaborative is also offering dual credit and dual enrollment courses for high school students through institutions such as University of Missouri-St. Louis, Lindenwood University, and St. Louis Community College-Florissant Valley.

Normandy has also revived its high school robotics team, thanks to funding from Emerson and the Will.I.Am foundation. Additionally, Ranken Technical College, the Normandy Middle College Program, Gateway to College, and Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) are unique curricular offerings that expand college and career readiness skills for our students.

Last year the Collaborative launched Family University, a district initiative which provides workshops and sessions covering three areas: academics, social and emotional development, and communal resources. To better meet the needs of parents and families, this initiative will be coordinated at the school level through the building Family Engagement Liaisons.

Q. What are the plans for more resources in the schools for families - mental health, gifted programs, and after school enrichment?

A. The Collaborative continued its Saturday Learning Labs for students this year. The program provides enrichment and small group teaching for students in reading, English language arts, and mathematics. Advanced Placement and Honors courses have been restored in our high school as well as gifted and talented education (GATE) classes at the Normandy 7th-8th Grade Center.

Normandy is also working with the Wyman Center to provide a variety of wraparound or support services for students and families. Wyman completed a study of the specific needs of students and families, then will make recommendations as to how these services can be provided. This allows the Collaborative to be more effective when it comes to providing social services for students and families.

Other

Q. What extra-curricular activities are offered in the district? Why is everything being done at Lucas Crossing, rather than having each school offer something for their community and their students?

A. The Collaborative offers a variety of extra-curricular activities for students including sports, fine arts, and other interest clubs. Many programs and services are held at Lucas Crossing because of its central location within the Collaborative. It is also one of the bigger schools so it can accommodate more people. However, each school has its own programs which are available to its students. For example, at Jefferson and Washington Elementary schools, students are able to participate in free afterschool programming provided by 21st Century grant, a partnership between Better Family Life and the Normandy Schools Collaborative. There are other programs at NSC schools including the St. Louis Chess Club, Sistakeepers, and America Scores.

Q. When will the transfer list open up for children to transfer out of Normandy Schools Collaborative?

A. The process started in January and closed in February. Parents interested in applying for transfers will have to submit an application during the 2017-2018 enrollment period.

Q. What plans are in place to strengthen the partnership with the bus company? This includes the process of adding students, timely communication, including but not limited to, incidents, staff consistency, and more.

A. We work very closely with our bus company and meet regularly with the Transportation Director to address concerns from parents and staff. Because our relationship needs to be seamless, we try to incorporate the transportation staff in many NSC functions like school open houses and departmental meetings. Twice per semester the Collaborative meets with the bus company/principals to discuss concerns. We also hold 'driver coffees' to discuss their concerns

and ideas. On the communication side, we implemented a five-day waiting period on route changes to allow sufficient time to inform families of changes made. When needed and resources allowed, we have provided aides on buses to address our most urgent behavioral incidents on buses.

Q. Can the Normandy Early Childhood Center have a bus? They have buses for the Kindergarten Center which transports students from the entire district; this bus service could be set up the same way.

A. This is something the Collaborative is considering however, we are currently unable to provide this service due to budget constraints.

Q. What is the Collaborative's procedure for addressing a medical incident that occurs at school?

A. If a student is hurt while at school and the nurse administers treatment, an incident report is filed and the nurse contacts the student's parent. If additional medical treatment is needed, emergency medical professionals are contacted immediately.