

F A L L 2 0 1 6

WWSU Community Engagement

“Authentic community engagement is an ongoing, participatory, inclusive process that ensures diverse voices and perspectives are heard and considered when important decisions are made about our schools and children.”

Community Conversations Study Circle Update

The Study Circle process was a forum for community discussion and feedback around the school’s action plan for the Vermont state mandated Personal Learning Plan and Act 77. The process was funded by a grant from the Nellie Mae Foundation. On four consecutive Monday evenings in March 2016, community members from different sectors including students, teachers, parents, and business owners gathered to participate in small groups. Adult and youth partners from the school and the community facilitated each group. The feedback from the all the study circles was organized into core themes and presented at a final celebration. These themes appear on page two of this newsletter. **A brief survey will go out shortly to measure whether participants feel that their voices were heard and their perspectives represented in these themes.** Ongoing work will continue to ensure that the themes are addressed. Please see the update on the Professional Training for Staff.

Professional Training for Staff

SUPPORT and TRAINING for STAFF was identified by study circle participants as a CORE THEME. Washington West continues to work toward achieving this goal.

EQUITY TRAINING

Over the summer the whole Washington West faculty and staff received Professional Development in the subject of Equity.

This work continued at the October 7th Inservice with support for planning instruction aligned with the principles of Universal Design. This practice ensures that all students will be able to engage in the instruction by removing barriers to learning.

LISTEN

Want more information about the study circle process? [This podcast](#) features interviews with participants from the March 2016 community conversations. The podcast was developed by the Tarrant Institute for Innovative Education, where community member Life LeGeros works as a Professional Development Coordinator.
Podcast- <http://bit.ly/2fXmly4>

Save the Date!

Socrates Cafe
New Date: Jan. 30
“What knowledge and skills are essential for citizens to engage in today’s world?”

Survey
November
Look for an upcoming survey about the Study Circle Core Theme results.

Community Pathways
eberrings@wwsu.org
The Community Pathways Committee continues to explore how to expand and enhance opportunities for students to connect learning with the larger community.

Core Themes

Core Values

- High quality, dedicated teachers
- Importance of community
- Student-driven, personalized learning
- Real world, relevant learning
- Balanced use of technology
- Trusting student/teacher relationships
- Small size/scale of our schools



21st Century Skills

- Develop shared understanding of 21st Century Skills
- Develop self-advocacy skills for students, encourage student voice
- Focus on social-emotional skills
- Modify teaching strategies to include group projects, project-based learning, use of appropriate technology
- Encourage innovation and creativity
- Provide professional development to staff and support to align with these outcomes

Proficiency-Based Learning

- Build understanding with staff and community
- Think about schedule and other ways to maximize access
- Support teachers in their role as advisors, mentors, guides

Student Voice

- Student voice matters
- Create culture, build processes for increased student voice
- Ensure broad representation of voices
- Train staff to support student voice
- Clear, open communication



Personalized Learning

- Wide range of learning opportunities for all, provide equitable access
- Support school/community partnership, build resources
- Clear communication to define options
- Think flexibly about time (e.g., schedule)
- Provide professional development to staff for their changing role as “mentor”
- Build accountability, keep standards high

Overarching Themes

- Learning should be project-based, and have real-world connections
- Build/ sustain connections with the community
- Be flexible as system with scheduling and other structures
- Provide professional development to staff
- Improve communication
- Succeeding in this model