



ACCELERATION SCHOOLS
WE WILL EXCEL
CHARLESTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Acceleration Schools Student Focus Group Summary

FEBRUARY 2023

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS:

**Chicora Elementary • Mitchell Elementary
North Charleston Elementary • Pepperhill Elementary
Stono Park Elementary • Morningside Middle
Simmons Pinckney Middle • Burke High**

Total Number of Students: 47 students, Grades 3-12

QUESTIONS ASKED:

- › Who do you go to when you need help?
- › How do you know how well you are doing in your classes?
- › If you were told to create your dream school, what advice would you give your principal or teacher to make school better for you?
- › Elementary/Middle – What protocols do you use in math/reading classes?
- › Elementary/Middle – What is your experience with Bridges/IM/EL?
- › High – What is your experience with your EOC classes (ELA/Math/Biology/History)?

SUMMARY:

Discussions with the students went well, and students were all thoughtful and respectful. As we talked about each of the questions, some questions elicited more robust responses than others. Principals and school admin were present in this round of focus groups. Several students said their school was great and didn't have any suggestions.

All students had an adult to go to when they need help, either for school-related or personal concerns. These adults included teachers, coaches, administrators, and counselors. Some students mentioned going to someone who wasn't their direct counselor but with whom they had a strong connection. One elementary student did say they can't trust any of their teachers. When asked why they went to that adult, students said they felt that they could trust that person, that they wouldn't tell on them, and that they were helpful.

When asked how they checked their class progress, older students (5th grade and above) were familiar with PowerSchool, either from checking it themselves or having parents show them their grades. Students said they can ask their teachers about their grades, or teachers will call students up individually to share scores. All students who were asked said they have goals set at school and know how to check the progress towards those goals. A few students said they knew they were doing well in class if the material made sense and they were able to do the homework. One middle school group said they can tell when they're getting off track and stop paying attention.

Students were excited to discuss what their dream school would look like. Elementary and middle school students mentioned better school lunches and more access to technology, including unblocking some websites and being allowed to go on their phones during breaks. Elementary students also wanted more recess. Students of all ages requested more opportunities and activities, from different types of classes like more foreign language to more clubs like cheerleading, robotics, STEM focus, art club, and book clubs. "Less drama" and incidents came up across schools – students want a school without fights, cursing, and bad behavior. Middle school

students specifically called out wanting more respect and a school that's more welcoming; they want a place that feels like home. Some students also requested more challenging work, and others requested more time and more opportunities to make up work they missed or failed. Other ideas included more assistant teachers, longer study halls, new playground equipment, and more time in special areas like art and PE.

Most elementary and middle school students were able to identify protocols used in their classes once they were prompted with examples. Think-Pair-Share, Turn and Talk, Keep/Flip/Change, and Stand Up-Pair Up came up across schools. One group mentioned a bathroom protocol and a protocol for approaching the teacher when they're working with another student. Students were able to share strategies they use in math like number line and ratio tables. An elementary student said it's helpful to have a lot of strategies, while several middle schoolers preferred to work alone.

Nearly all students said they enjoy their reading classes and that the books they're reading make them want to read more. *Esperanza Rising*, *Divided Loyalties*, *Love That Dog*, *Summer of the Mariposas*, a book about Jackie Robinson, and *Promises to Keep* all came up positively. One middle schooler said reading *Omnivore's Dilemma* made them think about what they eat, and they started reading food labels. Most students said they would be unhappy if they took their current school books away – elementary students said they would be upset and want to know what happened in the stories, and middle schoolers said it would be hard to learn something new now that they're used to this curriculum. For math, most students like *Bridges*, though one student said it was hard.

For high schoolers, we had more limited feedback on EOC courses since we only had one or two students per grade and each course is offered in one grade. Students said they enjoyed their diverse conversations in their English classes, like learning about "our history" in Black History Month instead of just reading "normal stuff". Students had mixed feelings on their math classes. In biology, the sophomore student said they didn't like it at first, but after talking to the teacher they were able to understand and like it more. A junior said their history class was difficult, but if you paid attention, you could learn what you needed to know for the EOC exam.

SPECIAL AREAS OF NOTE:

- › Bullying came up across schools
- › Several school groups mentioned issues with bullying
- › They were able to define bullying as ongoing and both physical and verbal.
- › Most students said they knew what to do if they witnessed bullying
- › This issue is clearly prevalent and top of mind among students at all grade levels
- › One student called out that there is too much testing
- › Specific Requests
- › High School:
 - › Don't punish all students for the behavior of a few
 - › Give kids the opportunity to do what they like so they don't act out
- › Middle Schools:
 - › A more welcoming environment for school
 - › Mixed feedback on CREW helping school environment
- › Elementary Schools:
 - › Don't block every website
 - › Get candy for answering questions right
 - › More specials time



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