

North Albany Senior High School Advisory Committee

Workshop on 18 March 2016

Introduction

During a workshop on 18 March 2016 the Advisory Committee provided detailed feedback to Commissioner's staff on a draft survey for students in Year 7 through to Year 12 for the Commissioner's School and Learning Consultation. Committee members also took part in a group discussion about what helps and prevents children and young people from staying in school and enjoying their learning and education. After the group discussion, they provided further feedback on ways the group discussion could be improved or done differently.

The following questions were asked in the group discussion:

Question 1 – Relationships

What are some of the ways (good and bad) that relationships with teachers, other adults and students affects learning and coming to school?

Question 2 – Learning

What are the best ways for students to learn at school? What makes it easy or hard for students to learn?

Question 3 – Support

What types of support do students need to enjoy learning and want to come to school?

Question 4 - Families

Thinking about families - What are the ways they are important for how kids feel about coming to school and learning?

As a result of the Advisory Committee's feedback, changes have been made to the discussion questions for the School and Learning Consultation group discussion activity.

Views on school and learning

The following provides a summary of the Advisory Committee's views, provided in response to the questions above. The Advisory Committee provided additional

comments to further explain their views when they were given a draft of this summary. These comments have been incorporated.

Relationships

The most important relationships described by the Advisory Committee (the students) were with teachers and other students.

The students felt that it matters whether students get along with their teachers and other students at school. Good relationships at school 'encourage children to look forward to school' and mean they are 'more comfortable to ask for help'. However when relationships are not good it 'makes students not want to go to class' and they 'won't ask for help'.

A good relationship with a teacher/teachers means students have 'someone to talk to'. If relationships are good students can feel that teachers are 'always there for you'. Teachers who help, are younger, more fun and give rewards affect school and learning in good ways.

It is important to have friends at school. Good relationships with other students mean not being lonely and getting help from them when in need. When relationships with other students are not good it may involve bullying, broken friendships, rumours and 'out of school stuff'. Poor relationships affect students because they are distracting.

Learning

Active learning was the most frequently suggested 'best way' for students to learn, meaning 'hands on' activities or work and being able to talk to get help. The students said it is hard to learn when there were 'way too many worksheets', only workbooks were used or when they were not able to work in groups. They thought technology, documentaries, incursions and excursions were good ways to learn.

The students felt it was important for learning to be interesting and fun and for there to be a 'good working environment' and rewards. When the work is too easy or too hard or there is 'too much at once' students found it hard to learn.

Other students had a significant impact on students' learning, with friends making it easier but bullies, rumours and 'annoying [behaviour]' making it difficult. It is 'hard to learn when you sit next to disruptive people'.

Teachers made learning easier because of their knowledge and also when they were happy. The students noted it was hard to learn if they felt teachers were grumpy or too strict.

Some of the students felt that being hungry makes it hard to learn and others suggested 'Crunch&Sip' to help learning. Music and stationery were seen to be important for some students.

Support

When thinking about the support they need to come to school and learn the students explained that 'all kids learn differently so [need to] accommodate for that'.

It was acknowledged that 'teachers don't have enough time to make sure every student in their class understands the work' and the students suggested 'more after school study support so students can get more help from teachers'. They also suggested 'teaching kids in a different way so they understand and aren't bored or unmotivated. For example, changing text books for interactive outdoor lessons'.

The students felt it is important to realise 'that mental health is a big problem in schools – kids are never too young to be sad' and to give them extra help and support'. Students also need to know there are other options (eg headspace and the school psychologist) but they also need to know how they can get an appointment with them.

In addition to teachers, students identified the need for support by 'so many people' in the school. They made suggestions such as 'gathering of kids with the same problems' and 'others with the same circumstance'. They also feel students need 'support to reach their goals'.

The students identified that students need a 'happy and safe' school environment. Being surrounded 'by happy, kind and supportive people' is important support for them. Also important is for school to be 'fun and interesting' and for teachers to be excited about school, because this helps students feel motivated. Some students felt that external guest speakers and social groups such as clubs and sports are important support.

The students commented that negative peer pressure was not supportive.

Families

The students identified families as being an important overall influence on how students feel about coming to school and learning. They are 'who you live with'. 'Families are kids' influences.' 'Families need to be there to keep their kids on the right path'. Families (and parents in particular) provide encouragement and guidance, for example, through their religious beliefs and maturity.

Families were also felt to be important through their direct support (or otherwise) for school and learning. 'Depends on the family as to how the kids will act at school'. 'Living in a good learning environment will make you more likely to want to learn'.

'Families want their children to succeed and have a good career and be successful'. Students identified their families' school experience and views on education as having an important effect on students.

At a practical level families were said to support students by helping with time management and 'how much effort', choosing subjects and providing 'career options and guidance'. Students acknowledged families as giving 'the kids lift[s] and money for school'. Families' 'financial stress' was also identified as affecting how students feel about school and learning.

Summary

The Advisory Committee's views on school and learning can be summarised as follows:

- Good relationships with teachers and other students encourage students to come to school, learn, ask for help when they need it and feel supported.
- Active learning is the best way for students to learn and it is important for learning to be interesting and fun.
- Students need help with learning that takes account of individual needs and to feel supported by a happy and safe school environment.
- Families are an important influence on how students feel about coming to school and learning, providing encouragement, guidance and direct support.