

Task Force Part I – April 2015
Our Task Force will have been successful if...

All members of the Task Force worked in teams to discuss examples of what we'd like to see in our district as a result of our work. Table teams documented their ideas on chart papers for viewing in a gallery walk. Each member had an opportunity at the end of our meeting to spend up to three dots, identifying ideas that resonated most with them.

In the interest of time and efficiency, items from the chart papers have been organized around themes/ideas below. The language in bold was written by the co-chairs and may or may not best represent the group's thinking. Total votes (dots) are noted in parentheses. If no number is listed, the item did not receive any dots.

- 1. Diversity of staff is evident, as a district and within each school/instructional setting**
 - Increased minority staff (20)
 - Find a way to hire/retain people who are representative of school demographics (2)
 - Our staff is diverse (1).

- 2. Our curriculum is truly inclusive, meeting the needs of diverse learners**
 - The curriculum is diverse and inclusive of African-American history, culture and contributions to the development of this world (13)
 - Curriculum reflects student population, is relevant (3)
 - Our curriculum is engaging to all (1).

- 3. Equity is evident across all academic programs, classes, and opportunities for students**
 - More diversity in honors, gifted, advanced classes (13)
 - All students are encouraged to choose more challenging classes. Must start at middle school (12)
 - Equity across district programs – gifted, AP, early childhood, etc (10)
 - There is a significant increase in black students taking AP and honors course successfully
 - Subgroups represented proportionally in academic/behavioral/extracurricular, etc
 - Boys must be more engaged in upper level classes
 - If we have an equal amount of students achieving at the same level
 - Less special education referrals.

- 4. Behavioral/discipline data reflect equitable practices, positive relationships, and high student engagement**
 - Decrease in discipline (2)
 - If numbers reflect discipline equity (1)
 - Our teachers/staff treat students equally; needs are met fairly and consistently.

- 5. All children are equally ready for school and have equitable access to opportunities**
 - We as KSD have preschool for all (12)
 - Everyone enters KSD on equal terms (1)
 - Everyone enters all levels of school on equal terms/equal emphasis on each level.

- 6. All students can be themselves in Kirkwood, knowing they will be included and have their needs met.**
 - Students, staff, and families identify as having multiple allies (6)
 - Students feel comfortable in our schools – valued (3)
 - We are meeting the needs of each individual student (2)
 - Students can be their authentic selves (2)
 - All children and their families are well-served (1)
 - We keep students at the forefront (1)
 - Support social/emotional needs of students (1)
 - Create motivated, successful students.

- 7. We have high expectations and provide differentiated supports to ensure each person has a narrative of success within our system.**
 - We believe in our students and never give up (6)
 - High expectations (1)
 - Everyone believes “education is important” – we change the mindset around education (1)
 - All students see themselves as “students/learners”
 - Students believe the CAN...grow, do, learn
 - We continue to challenge our students AND challenge the norm.

- 8. We regularly examine district attitudes, practices, policies, and results to understand issues and areas of need; adjustments are made to ensure success.**
 - Exemplify courageous leadership and honest dialogue, whether positive or not; tackle tough issues (10)
 - We are open to NEW ideas (7)
 - Understand why we haven’t been successful (6)
 - We set clear, quantitative goals (1)
 - Everything we do benefits all children
 - Assumptions are tested and questioned openly
 - If we change the definition of success
 - We aren’t afraid of the push back
 - Setting realistic goals
 - Improvements are seen in academic achievements for African-American, with continuous improvements year over year.
 - Elementary school scores increase
 - Increase ACT scores of African-American students.

- 9. We engage staff, families, and community members in a meaningful partnership built on shared support and responsibility.**
 - Community views the issue of education equity as a priority (2)
 - Engage and employ community’s caring and willing attitude to help each child (1)
 - We value diversity and welcome difference
 - If we engage more of the great community
 - Sensitive communications
 - We make black students aware of the achievement gap and what we are trying to do in order to close the gap
 - Buy-in by teachers, effective communication
 - All groups represent all students.

Task Force Part II – April 2015

Questions & Data Needs

All members of the Task Force worked in teams to generate and discuss questions for study for consideration by the group. Teams also listed possible data needs/topics the group may want to explore going forward. Ideas were captured on chart paper for viewing by others. All questions and requests that were listed are noted below. Because there were multiple teams working at the same time, some ideas may be listed multiple times.

Questions

- What are the beliefs/perceptions of students in KSD?
- Are students aware that there is an achievement gap?
- Are we prepared to do what it takes to close the gap?
- What characteristics do peer-performing students have?
- How to serve every student? (Make sure they get same opportunities)
- What are the specific measurements and assessments used in determining the gap?
- What data do we have on attitudes and dispositions of district staff?
- How do personal adult perceptions impact the gap?
- Do students who are aware of the gap think it needs to be addressed/closed?
- Does success look the same for all students? Is there a set timeline or level for all students?
- What is student perception? What are their standards (personal and academic)?
- What perceptions do our teachers have of themselves? Are these accurate?
- What standards do our teachers have for themselves and our students?
- If it is important for students to be in the classroom, why are they missing class?
- Do we have A-B-C (antecedent, behavior, consequences) data for disciplinary actions?
- What districts are most successful? What are they doing differently?
- How has Pattonville closed their achievement gap?
- What are successful charter schools doing differently?
- How might we increase parent/community involvement?
- Are there trust issues within our schools? Our community?
- What are schools doing to advocate for children in need?
- How can we positively “contact/touch” the parents (phone calls, notes, visits, etc)
- How are we sharing (or sheltering) data within the community?
- What is our academic goal?
- How can we build awareness/engagement?
- Is there a correlation between parental involvement and student success?
- How can we build trust with African-American families?
- How can we sustain this work when we get pushback from the community?
- What do our students need (give the kids a voice) to feel that they belong?
- How can we see ALL the data?
- Why doesn't this transfer to all?
- What is our definition of success?
- What is the correlation between how long a student is in our system and their achievement?
- How can we retain black teachers?
- Historically, how are decisions made in the district? Have we considered all stakeholders?
- What/how can we learn from others? How do they move beyond the data?
- How can we address personal bias and cultural differences?
- How can we look at data from other perspectives?
- In the face of state testing, how can we stay focused on other forms of student success?
- How might we use KEES, PDP, walk-throughs to guide teacher accountability and training?
- Inventory diversity in literature – What books are available to students/families? Does diversity exist in curricular offerings and supplemental resources?
- What are the experiences of minority students attending school in Kirkwood? What about staff members?
- How do you build diverse relationships?

- What creative strategies exist when students violate the code of conduct? What are alternatives to discipline?
- How are we going to think innovatively?
- Are our assessments free of bias?
- What are schools doing that have found success?
- Will there be resilient district-wide support for continuing the change, even when people express discomfort?
- What services are provided to students (i.e. PAT, tutoring, VISTA, Atlas, OASIS)?
- Will we expect more frequent benchmark data collection and analysis from teachers?
- What measures will we put in place for students who enter the district late and have deficits?
- How do we involve our parents to help children learn? (Need data from parents on what this looks like)
- What do our students say they need?

Data Needs/Requests

Demographics

- What is the exact number of African American students per grade, per building that are below proficient?
- Demographic data, growth data
- Free and reduced lunch data
- Student attendance data
- Percentage of African-American students in Kirkwood School District
- KECC student/family demographics and Educare/Headstart student/family demographics
- Data about incoming kindergartners – Percent coming from quality preschool experiences?
- Transportation data

Achievement

- Data used to determine the gap (i.e. EOC, MAP, ACT)?
- Percent of students reading below grade level and how it impacts achievement
- Achievement/test data (i.e. MAP, EOC, ACT), disaggregated by subgroups
- Class size and achievement
- Achievement data – comparison to other school districts, local and national – grades, standardized testing
- College statistics – Are we preparing our students for success in college?
- Achievement scores – continuous Kirkwood enrollment versus transfer
- Historical data
- Reading level of students at each grade level (examine the disaggregated reading level of all students)
- Graduation/attendance/transitions to post-secondary
- Strand analysis, especially in math and ELA
- Benchmarking data in early grades – Are we missing anything (writing? vocabulary?)

Discipline

- Data about discipline, suspensions – Is there bias?
- Discipline/suspension data – through different lenses; how many referrals by teacher versus student?

Perceptions/Climate/Culture

- Internal surveys about student/alumni/family perceptions
- Surveys (character education/sense of belongingness)
- Student involvement data

Personnel

- Percentage of minority certified teachers
- How many school administrators have participated in social justice training? Do these leaders have greater success with African-American students?
- Staff retention data

Programs/Curriculum

- Data around program/curricular changes

Identification/Referrals

- AP/Honors classes
- 504/SSD referrals
- Gifted percentages
- Social/emotional data
- What is the extent of disproportional results across multiple factors including: academics, social, behavioral, special education, etc?

Task Force Part III – April 2015
Rapid Brainstorming – Ideas for Making a Difference

All members of the Task Force were asked to brainstorm initial ideas to ensure the achievement/success of all students, with a specific focus on our learners who are African American. All ideas are represented below as they were written on sticky notes, grouped by perceived content/intention around themes and ideas. Items are numbered to assist members in future conversations around these ideas, not due to rank or priority.

Accountability/Expectations

1. Track and account for disparities in special education classes and discipline; don't give up on those who don't understand
2. Hold teachers accountable to educational equity through KEES
3. Hold teachers accountable for failure to treat all students as equals
4. Hold staff/admin accountable for closing the gap
5. Hold ourselves more accountable for student success (own it)
6. Have a program that tracks progress of each individual students so teachers can track progress
7. Go to schools and inform them of problems; we can't fix problems we don't know about
8. Students are encouraged to challenge themselves at every level
9. Make all achievement important
10. Continue to raise the bar; have high expectations
11. Have a solid plan
12. Ensure sustainability
13. Student exposure to Higher Ed experience early on – set high expectations
14. College/career focused counseling starting @ 9th grade
15. Engage students in setting personal achievement goals
16. Do not accept excuses
17. Make kids want to actually learn and succeed at doing so
18. Raise GPA standard
19. Higher standards and more accountability for all students --> higher stakes
20. Introduce at young age the importance of succeeding

Behavior/Discipline/SEB Supports

1. No out of school suspensions
2. Keep kids in school for transgressions
3. Deep examination of discipline data and reviewing practices
4. Don't allow suspension for disrespect
5. Teacher training on classroom management; teach teachers how to keep the child in the classroom
6. De-escalation training for all
7. PD for teachers to develop behavioral management so no kids are sent out
8. Social-emotional supports for all students
9. Eliminate out of school suspensions
10. Social justice discipline processes
11. Rethink how we do discipline – intentional and purposeful work on referral data
12. Professional development around behavior management through a cultural lens
13. Find alternatives to out-of-school suspensions
14. Alternative to suspension over “respect” issues

Clarity of Expectations/Definitions

1. Have a defined understanding of what we mean when we say achievement gap
2. Clearly define success to the students
3. Redefine success; measure success differently
4. Go over expectations with each child every quarter
5. Dig into the data to see where the gap starts
6. Define achievement apart from test scores
7. Stop using MAP as a measuring tool
8. Hyperfocus – one goal at a time

Cultural Awareness/Competency/Social Justice

1. Analyze data by teacher to determine cultural barriers to African American student achievement
2. Analyze environments in buildings to ensure all races are valued and welcomed (What do you see?)
3. Have cultural competency conferences
4. Value diversity by being honest with ourselves when our data is inequitable
5. Have members of the committee take information back to our schools
6. Examine personal bias through mandatory social justice training
7. Required bias/social justice training for all, starting with administration
8. "Different" teacher training (i.e. authors Jawanza Kunjufu, Ajuma Muhammad)
9. Equity audits without our schools
10. Improve teaching staff skills that would focus on closing the gap
11. PD for all teachers/staff around bias and social justice
12. PD available on diverse learning/teaching
13. Mandatory social justice training for all staff and board members
14. Walk-throughs for culturally relevant teaching
15. Cultural relevance audit of curriculum/assessments
16. Cultural competency accountability for all teachers
17. Mandatory diversity training for all staff
18. Provide ongoing PD in ways to have age appropriate conversations about race, equity, etc

Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment

1. Teach white children what black people have overcome and accomplished for hundreds of years
2. Extra reading and writing
3. Teach students study skills
4. More one-on-one differentiation at all levels
5. More direct instruction – very scripted
6. Expand mentoring programs
7. Level playing field with reading and vocabulary
8. Make mandates which are not optional in the classroom
9. Curriculum material culturally aware
10. Upgrade curriculum
11. Have students see themselves in education
12. Create opportunities for at-risk students to engage curiosity
13. Restructure assessment tools
14. Allow for black children to see themselves in history and having a successful future
15. Continuously challenge student minds
16. Teach everyone the same information
17. Kinesthetic learning and assessment
18. Project based learning
19. Robust curricular offering to help students identify interests
20. Opportunities to infuse cultural examples into curriculum (teaching and learning)
21. Teaching African American history from Kindergarten
22. Writing in all areas (non-negotiable)
23. Incorporate African American history and contributions to full curriculum (literature, science, math, etc)
– See Amistad Project in NJ
24. Greater focus on service learning
25. Weave character education and service learning throughout district curriculum
26. Use more diverse teaching styles
27. Require teachers to collect, grade, and analyze benchmark data frequently
28. Teach staff to focus on the whole child
29. Introduce culture and history accurately in grade school
30. Music as a learning tool in PK-3
31. Individualized instruction
32. Focus on literacy/phonics PK-3
33. Look into/purchase literacy program for primary grade and require fidelity in its instruction
34. Curriculum revision to include culturally relevant content and pedagogy

Family/Community Engagement

1. Relationship building
2. Promote positive African American role models
3. Initiate a community-wide survey on the rating of the school district
4. Educate our entire community about our learning gaps
5. Open meetings for community members to attend
6. Provide opportunities for parent participation in school system (mandate one day)
7. Respect parents at conferences and everywhere else
8. Bring more members of the community into the schools
9. Special invite to parents living outside Kirkwood to join this group
10. Listen to parents
11. Engaging parents of African American students – perspective on experiences (also students)
12. Set up community homework/literacy help centers – computers, etc
13. Parent literacy programs in our schools
14. Increase parental involvement
15. Parent coaching/orientation
16. Expand services to families with students that are lagging behind
17. Increase community concern/involvement with closing the gap
18. Building relationships
19. Get all parents in the school at least once per academic year
20. Parent captains in middle school – achievement parents
21. All parents feel welcome at schools and are encouraged to participate. Not daytime hours exclusively.
22. Adult/parent education, buy-in, trust, relationships
23. Community partnership to connect with alternative learners
24. Make everyone aware (parents, teachers, students, etc) about the gap
25. Faculty/staff/community retreats
26. Honor the homes/traditions of all students
27. Student and family welcome teams
28. Find out what are the needs of the black community
29. Community involvement and support
30. Youth groups or programs/clubs for students to keep or start them on the path to academic excellence
31. Engage the parents and the community
32. Have community-based programs
33. Partner with Chess Hall of Fame
34. Talk with families about expectations in each grade level
35. Communicate with community to encourage volunteers
36. Engage students/parents/families
37. Relationship building with families
38. Mentors for families
39. Parent-to-parent outreach to build relationships
40. Gain the trust and voice of all parents
41. Open school to the community; let parents feel at home
42. Community coffees to get ideas
43. Be completely transparent about this as a goal
44. Increase positive phone calls, notes home, etc @ all levels
45. Family literacy training
46. Teach our community how to help
47. Educate our community about our data and what we are doing
48. Bring in African American mentors to classrooms
49. Community mentor for every child
50. Partnership with Black Professional Organizations to bring more professionals in the classroom – black engineers, MBA, doctors, lawyers
51. Empower parents to be more involved in their child's education
52. Redefine parent involvement and support
53. Demand parent involvement
54. Home visits for all students at all grade levels
55. Teacher home visits

56. Focus groups with parents that are impacted; find out the why
57. Mandatory 100% participation at conferences
58. Redefine family
59. Formalize the "Live with a Kirkwood Family" program
60. Parenting skills course

Funding/Resources

1. Permanent funding mechanisms
2. Increase external resources, i.e. government, state, federal, local

Personnel/Staffing

1. Continue to hire diverse staff
2. Increase the African American staff at all levels
3. Hire and retain black classroom teachers
4. Grant students opportunity to grade the teachers and staff; report findings
5. Teach administrators how to hire empathetic teachers
6. Award bonuses to teachers who bring about improvements in grades and scores
7. Increased minority representation (teachers)
8. Hiring/staffing in line with student population
9. Increased certified staffing that would focus exclusively on closing the gap
10. Hire enough reading specialists so that students will not drop below grade level in reading
11. Hire more diverse staff
12. Hire and retain more teachers and admin of color
13. Staff recruiting team – all grade levels and demographics recruit for district
14. All students see themselves represented in staff
15. African American ratio of teachers improved
16. Diverse staff
17. More African American teacher from PreK-high school
18. More make African American teachers
19. Extra support for classes like ELL/CWC model
20. Pipeline program for African American teachers
21. Increase # of African American teachers
22. Ensure minority teaching/administration
23. Deal with staff prejudices
24. Hire more certified African American classroom teachers
25. Hire more black teachers
26. Hire diversity coordinator for district

Preschool/Readiness

1. Increase minority enrollment in preschool education programs
2. Pre-K for all
3. Preschool for all students
4. Intensive language development programs in preschool and kindergarten
5. Access to high quality preschool
6. Free preschool
7. Pre-K early intervention
8. All children have equal access to quality early childhood education
9. Pre-K at age three for all
10. Preschool – Quality for everyone
11. Universal Pre-K for all
12. All pre-K programs in the district equal
13. High quality preschool for all children
14. Make preschool/early childhood education accessible to all students
15. Universal preschool

Professional Learning

3. Teacher exchanges
4. Administrator exchanges
5. Book studies

Research/Learning From Others

1. Explore local schools that are experiencing success in closing the achievement gap
2. Outside of district help from schools with high academic achievement of minorities
3. Find successful districts and schools to model for us
4. Make outside of district professional conversations available to teachers
5. Teacher focus groups
6. Ask experts in education
7. Partner with a successful school district
8. Learn from other school districts
9. Solicit outside resources
10. Bring in outside consultants to educate the educators on cultural issues unique to African American families
11. Hire consultants that work specifically with students that are challenged with these specific goals and tasks

School/District/Community Culture

1. Listen to African American teaching staff. Many have been offering ideas for years.
2. Listen to our staff who are nonwhite
3. Reframe issues as a global deficiency
4. Create a learning community where everyone reaches their full potential
5. Everyone recognized that there is a flaw in our system
6. Encourage learning culture
7. Listen to the stories of those whose stories are different from our own
8. Truly celebrate diversity/culture
9. College going culture for all students
10. We must be more inclusive and welcoming
11. Help the African American teachers feel more valued and comfortable
12. Be willing to change
13. Respect both ways – well, three ways
14. Find ways to break down the “Kirkwood” culture of exclusivity
15. Spend the first two weeks of school building relationships in the school
16. Continue open discussions
17. Love-Care-Desire to see achievement
18. Encourage and celebrate out of the box thinking among the staff
19. Focus data conversations on teachers and not always on “what’s wrong w/students”
20. Focus on the individual and how they learn
21. Leadership must not support or entertain the “nay-sayers” or those who complain loudly about increased accountability

Students

1. Increase leadership
2. Talk with current students and ask them what they need to succeed; ensure student voice
3. Ask students what they believe success looks like
4. Engage more African American students – hear their needs
5. Encourage AP entry – high standards for all students
6. Ensure post-high school placement that meets all student needs
7. Student advocates/leaders
8. Kids teach kids; mentorship programs, tutoring programs
9. Encourage black boys to take more challenging courses
10. Mentors for all
11. Relationship building with kids
12. Listen to and incorporate the voices of our students

13. School mentor for every child
14. Help students establish relationships with their peers
15. Leadership development programs for all African American students
16. Require students to take leadership roles in their schools
17. Make high school kids know importance of taking AP and Honors courses and succeeding
18. Go to middle schools and make them aware of AP and Honors classes
19. Make them know about AG and that they can still be successful
20. Make kids aware of AG
21. Tutoring/interventions for students

Systems/Structures/Programs/Policies

1. Examine who will benefit from what we do and who will not
2. Restructure the middle school to meet the needs of students
3. Year-round school for elementary and middle to increase literacy and math skills
4. More space/staff for students who have fallen behind (individualized education)
5. Year round school
6. Restructuring the high school for literacy in order to meet graduate requirements
7. Restructure the elementary school for literacy achievement
8. Smaller class sizes
9. Lower class sizes, work loads
10. Special achievement groups in elementary school
11. Honors/AP classes reflect diversity in school %
12. Class structure 1st thru 3rd grade
13. Electives in elementary
14. PE every day
15. Gifted instruction for all
16. Reduce barriers to AP, Honors classes
17. K-2 and 3-5 buildings
18. Two teachers per classroom
19. Gender-based classrooms
20. Literacy labs
21. Fifth to sixth grade transitions
22. Early childhood, elementary interventions, summer academy
23. Test for gifted differently
24. Think creatively about activities, clubs, sports, etc – structures
25. Ensure quality tiered supports are in place at all levels, all schools – respond when/before issues are big
26. Summer enrichment programs – not necessarily educators
27. Summer fun program connected to school
28. Restructure classes (not by ELA, math, etc)
29. Career development/awareness K-12
30. Encourage more extra curricular activities
31. “Bend the Book” sometimes instead of always “By the Book”
32. Transportation available to all
33. Create Academic POD within the school that awards not necessarily A or B grades but improvement
34. Get out of the egg carton model of schooling
35. Eliminate high stakes testing
36. Start an organization/group that counsels and are there to be support for students who aren’t/are succeeding academically
37. Require students with rigorous classes to take study halls
38. Longer school day
39. Summer school
40. Expanded school day and Saturday half-days
41. Mandatory arts and music
42. Mandatory athletics
43. Same gender classrooms in elementary school
44. Stop Kirkwood nepotism hires – leads to Groupthink

45. Program that regularly brings together students of color from all levels of the district (young can look up to old, old can be mentors)
46. Established programs must be put in place to help rapidly close gaps for students who enter the district with deficits
47. Give better incentives for high GPAs
48. Holistic/Wrap around services
49. Social support groups – high school homeroom based
50. Require students to be involved in many activities

Unsure of where to place these

1. Be creative. Why not?
2. Happy and healthy
3. If every child had an advocate at school
4. Boy engagement - What does it look like?
5. Think outside the classroom/box
6. Don't be afraid to say we must change
7. Look at Kirkwood's last gap committee
8. Incorporate daily goals into everyday school and home life
9. Learn from our mistakes
10. Accept brilliance from a brown face
11. Meet every child's needs
12. Show the reality of a poor education
13. Analyze the data to determine if socio-economic issues are coming into play
14. Increase presence visually of people who are diverse