

Student Listening Session June 29

Joe Williams (0:00-0:42): So great day everyone we're going to go ahead and get started. My name is Joe Williams and I will be your moderator all today. So this is uh probably the uh session we have been anticipating the most today. We get a chance to talk to our scholars and we call you scholars not students we have high high expectations for you all about some of your uh you know concerns some ideas from you all but the one thing I want to do before we start this conversation is number one ask you a question. How many of you are uh familiar with or you know or have heard of Kid President? You've heard? Y'all don't know Kid President? You don't know Kid President Rashawn?

Rashawn (0:43): I do

Joe (0:43-2:14): Ok, ok I couldn't see your hand though. Alright so those of you that know Kid President, Kid President basically you know speaks about things that he would do if he were president so that's the minds we want y'all to have about this you know. Not that you are the superintendent or my role as executive director of middle schools or Mr. Wilson's role as executive director as high schools, but if you were, what are something you would, what you would like to see, you would change, you would want to see that's different. Now, speaking about Kid President, the one thing that Kid President did do that no one in here will have the opportunity to do is meet Beyoncé. She's not out in the hallway so just forget about that. So don't, you're not going to be able to do that but it's so funny because I remember speaking to some kids about two months ago maybe three and you know Beyoncé is way you know after my time you know uh I was a big you know person that was infatuated with Janet Jackson so I said you know it's like if Janet Jackson were in the whole room went quiet so please tell me you know who Janet Jackson is. Thank you! Now we can have a conversation so um you know one of the things that's most important to us is that we would not be here if it were not for all of you. So this is a time for you to tell us what some of your concerns are like I said earlier, uh what you feel uh your needs are, and uh to kind of get the conversation started I would like for y'all to go around the table introduce yourselves, tell us where you're from, and uh we'll kind of get started that way so we'll start here with, is it Zella? Perfect look at that.

Zella (2:15-2:25): My name's Zella, I'm a youth volunteer with (something) Family and a recent Wando alumnus. I'm going to be studying social work at Worem Olson in the fall.

Vigi (2:25-2:33): Hi my name is Vigi O. I'm a rising freshman at Johnson County School of the Arts and I'm a band major there.

Morgan (2:34-2:47): Hi my name's Morgan Roddey I'm a also uh go to Johnson County School of the Arts I'm a rising senior and I'm a theater major.

Siera (2:47-2:56): Hi I'm Siera, I'm from West Ashley High School and I plan on being my own CEO for my own web design company.

Helena (2:57-3:16): My name's Helena Upshaw, I'm a rising senior at Academic Magnet High School and I plan on majoring in computer science next year.

Lupe (3:07-3:33): Hi I'm Lupe and I'm a rising junior at West Ashley High School and I really hope to be a manager for sports teams.

Latalia (3:17-3:34) *says something inaudible wait laughs.* Hey can you hear me? Ok Hey guys I'm Latalia Brown I'm from (?) High School I'm going to be a senior next year whoop whoop! Haha I'm in educational technology department working here, yeah.

Cassandra (3:35-3:47): Hi I'm Cassandra and I go to Charleston County School of the Arts I'm a rising senior. And I'm a vocal major and I'm also a spokesperson for Charleston area ministry.

Jada (3:48-3:58): Hi I'm Jada O I'm a rising senior at Charleston County School of the Arts where I'm a fashion major and I'm looking forward to editorial as well.

Caleb (3:59-4:07): Good morning my name is Caleb Smith I also attend Charleston County School of the Arts. I am a theater major there and a rising senior.

Kim Wilson (4:08-4:11): I'm Kim Wilson and I'm the executive director of secondary learning.

Gerrita (4:12-4:18): I'm Gerrita Postlewait and I'm the superintendent. Good to meet all of you.

Eric (4:19-4:25): My name's Eric Zombrano and I am about to attend High school and my dream is to be an engineer.

Adrian (4:26-4:30): My name is Adrian Pinkney and I'm a rising senior at Star High School.

Angel (4:31-4:35): My name is Angel Pinkney and I'm a rising senior at Star High School.

Taylor (4:36-4:52): Hi I'm Taylor Kahn-Perry and I'm a rising senior at School of the Arts and I'm a creative writing major and I'm interning with the office of strategy and communications this summer.

Abel (4:53-5:01): I go to Military magnet and my name is Abel Torres and I'm in 7th grade

CnaKezra (5:02-5:06): My name is CnaKezra and I go to B High and I'm a rising senior and I want to major in graphic design.

S. Brown (5:07-5:16): My name's S. Brown I go to Garret Academy of Technology and my tech is digital art and design and I'm a rising senior.

Rashawn (5:17-5:24): My name is Rashawn Brown. I got to Garret Academy. I'm a rising senior and I'm majoring in architecture design.

Maggie (5:25-5:34): Hi my name is Maggie R. I go to West Ashley High School and I'll be a rising sophomore next year and I hope to go into speech therapy.

Abby (5:35-5:42): Hi my name is Abby Gardner and I'm a rising freshman at SOA and my major is theater.

Lilly O (5:43-5:59): Hi my name is Lilly O I'm a rising freshman at Academic Magnet and I formerly went to school of the arts as a theater major.

Noah Ratliffe (6:00-6:04): I'm Noah Ratliffe I go to Charleston High School

Joe (6:05-7:42): Alright what an interest, you all swagged out. I was going to ask Jada, is my swag ok? Ok good alright. So it seems like some of us are really kind of still a little nervous. A little nervous? Everybody just shake it out really quick shake it out shake it out come on now shake it out. So this is going to be a good conversation so one of the things I wanted to do to kick off this conversation is to kind of ask you all a question and when I thought about how we were going to kick off this session I thought about my experiences as a scholar as I went to elementary school, middle school and then high school and one of the things that you remember the most are those that are great so I remember and experience that I had with one of my teachers who was our media specialist and she was awesome and it was when I was going through a real difficult time in my life at home. And so with that being said I had to transfer schools and when I transferred schools I was a little bit down about that and I happened to meet the media specialist at our school and it was at Simmons which is right here downtown and she said you know you are going to do this, you are going to participate in this program, you are going to speak, you're going to be a part of this group because she saw something in me. So you remember people like that so what I want to do is ask you all how to break the ice. Tell us some things that to you characterize a good or great educator. Anybody want to start off by just doing that?

Cassandra (7:43-8:18): I know personally, I have a lot of teachers that don't seem to care and when I see that a teacher actually genuinely cares about her job and wants better for her students, his or her students, then I find that I am more like into the lesson and things like that. And also being mindful that they are not the only class we have and school is not the only situations that we have going on so be considerate of things happening outside of school as well as in school.

Helena (8:19-8:31): I agree I think the best teachers are the ones that stick with you after you leave their class and help you to expand into college or other opportunities outside of school.

Siera (8:32-9:12): I agree with both of them and I also just wanted to say there is a wonderful man named Master Chief Strickland. He was my master chief over at West Ashley High for about two or three years because he took me in and he supported me throughout my 8th grade year whenever I was homeschooled and then whenever I became a freshman he also brought on that way so he definitely took care of his classmates and he also made sure that we went after our goals and would always make sure that we were ambitious and would motivate us to do everything and his thing would be motivation leads to dedication which leads to success.

Taylor (9:13-9:38): I think teachers that take an interest in you, can y'all here me, uh as a person instead of just as a student make the most difference because they have one year with you as an AP Biology student or an Honors English student but you have your whole life to be a person and so they take interest and the person that you are during their class and you're after their class that definitely makes a difference.

Caleb (9:39-9:45): I think uh did I cut somebody off? Oh you can go

S. Brown (9:46-9:59): Uh I was going to say I think it's important for us to get to know teachers personally so we can kind of like understand where they are coming from too because they also have a life so I think it goes both ways.

Caleb (10:00-10:26): Uh I believe that when I walk into a classroom, the teacher that actually asks for my name and then asks where I'm from and everything like that, I think that's probably going to be the most effective teacher for me. The teachers that are most like efficient, invested, and compassionate to teach me and get me prepared for not only school and college, but life in general are the teachers that I would want to experience in schools.

Zella (10:27-10:43): I've always valued teachers that have come to education with a more trauma informed approach and those who are more flexible with our different situations and attentive to bullies.

Lupe Chavez (10:46-11:10): And also teachers who tend to make great relationships with students. Like if they listen to you and they help out with anything, whether it's just for an essay or they help you stay organized. Cause one of my teachers, whenever I asked to help me with a project or maybe an essay, he will help me throughout the whole entire process. He would make me feel welcomed all the time and I know that whenever I need help I could always go to him.

Vigi (11:12-11:35): I would say from personal experience that it's the teachers who aren't afraid of the fine line between your teacher and someone that you can talk to are the best teachers. Because there's nothing more that you want when you go to school to feel welcomed and like you can talk and not be afraid of who you are. And I think that it's the teachers who allow you to be who you are and allow you to talk to them about who you actually are the best teachers for me.

Jada (11:37-12:10): Two things that I've been attracted to with some of the best teachers for me is one - teachers that know how to connect what their teaching in the classrooms to professions that are of interest to their students because I know a lot of kids are like "why am I learning this, like what's the value of it" and as soon as they say "well you can use this in graphic designs such as dadadada" like that's gotten more students engaged. Like oh okay so I can actually use this, I'm going to use this to make money one day.

Laughter

Unknown (12:12-12:13): It's all about the money.

Jada: (12:14-12:56): Yeah, well not completely but um. And then the second thing I think would just be able to allow students, especially when it come to things like history or speaking on literature, to be able to provide their perspectives and how they feel about it because I know teachers have to be in a very mutual standpoint, but I think allowing the diversity in the classroom of perspectives feed onto other people that some students may not get when they go back home allows them to kind of be exposed to something new and they can choose whether to take that on when they go home and do more behind that but they can't say they've never exposed to something that you know.

Unknown (12:57-12:59): Anyone else before we move on? I want to make sure everyone gets the chance, Abbey?

Abbey (13:00-13:18): I think I value the teachers that I can trust with something I have to say. If it's something like personal and the first thing I would think is I can tell this teacher what I need to and I would trust them to help me through something.

Latalia (13:19-14:20): I feel like teachers who like hold a positive attitude, if they have a positive attitude, so that spreads to their students. If their open minded and have a positive attitude and greet students and see how the kids are doing and actually invest in students, it would make a classroom easier to go through because I have one teacher, *unknown name*, and he's always, if he's, he's invested so much time in each student in the class. No matter how much students he has he always makes sure he invests himself to each student. He wants to know what's going on at home, school, anything you got going on, he wants to know. I feel like if each teacher built a relationship with each student in a classroom it would make it easier because if you know he's your student you can have better classrooms because you would know how to teach different kids because every classroom you have is going to be different because of the different students in your class. So you take the time and get to know each student, and know the situation and know their traits, then the classroom would run much easier and much better.

Helena (14:21-14:32): I just want to say that a lot of students have trouble because they feel like they're wasting their time in day to day school and the best teachers are the ones that have proven that and showed them that what they're doing is important everyday.

Lilly (14:33-14:52): I tend to appreciate the teachers who understand that there is more than one way of learning and that not everyone is an auditory learner, not everyone learns well from watching someone do it, sometimes they have to be hands on and do it themselves. And I appreciate the teachers who try to teach what they're teaching in more than one way, so all students can understand it.

Joe (14:54-16:46): Alrighty. You all are rocking it out by the way, so I know *unknown name* in the corner couldn't remain quiet, she's got to say something. I'm talking about you! You were like whoop whoop you're a senior. That's going to be your name from now on. Alrighty, so, heard a lot of things. I heard of teachers being attentive, I heard about building relationships, making things relevant. To kind of sum up a lot of what we heard going around the table, so if you look up in front of you or to your sides, these are some things that we are focusing on and we call it our strategic plan, these are some goals. So when I ask the question what is a good educator or a great educator or a great teacher to you gave us some of those things. As a part of this process, we want your input as to how we can make things better. So when you start to state some of those characteristics of great teachers or great educators, how do you propose that we encourage or promote that within all of our educators because that's a difficult thing. You know because I don't want you to call any names of course, don't call any names, some of you are still in school and you need to get some passing grades now. But you know, it may be that, and I can say in my experience it was that all of my teachers weren't like that media specialist that I told you about, that made me feel comfortable when I was going through a tough thing at home and she had no idea. That made me feel like I was special. That made me feel like I could do anything I wanted to in the world. Sometimes not every teacher has that within them. So how do you propose that we go about helping teachers understand that this is what you all need and want as them as educators.

Cassandra (16:41-17:39): I think that a lot of times with teachers or parents or anybody who deals with children and teenagers and things like that, you have to remind them that they have been in the place

we have been and at one point in their life. So you have to kind of like take them back to where they came from. Just like how you were explaining to us that you had your media tech person who went back for you, so you're going to want to do that for a student now, right? So if they were able to really take them back in time to where they had somebody for them that made them more comfortable, they will understand that students want the same thing that they wanted back then. It's never going to change, students are going to want somebody who cares and who is really willing to invest in them.

Helena (17:41-18:09): What I would suggest would be holding conversations at the beginning of the year, kind of like this. The teacher should ask the students what they might be doing wrong or how they could best help the person and what some people talked about understanding the student from their background or where they come from. That would be really helpful to just have that conversation at the beginning of the year or maybe halfway throughout the year and whenever the students have issues so that they aren't talking about the teacher behind their back, they are actually making a difference in the classroom.

Siera (18:10-18:58): I kind of have like a similar idea what one of my teachers, *unknown name*, did. He's retiring this year. He does like current events and he talks about those current events and then he bounces off ideas with us. Like what we think about them, like what our opinions are and will discuss with us about those things. Like for example, whenever the election was going on, he'd explain to us different things, like how the electoral college would work and like popular votes and all that, how it works together. And so he would explain to us all kinds of different things. So I think that would really help with having teachers be able to do the education side but also be able to connect to the students, that way you get their personal opinions.

Lillian (18:59-19:22): I agree. I think there needs to be more communication. Open communication. Between students and teachers outside of the curriculum because I know a lot of students sometimes are afraid to talk to their teachers because of the consequence from it and I think they need to know that if they have an opinion on how they are being taught or if they want something to be different, they need to be able to approach their teacher on it without a consequence.

Morgan (19:23- 20:38): My mother and father have always taught me that it starts at home and it ends at home. That's what my mom says to me before I go to school everyday. She says remember it starts at home and it ends at home. You take what your teachers have given you and come home and we do it together or you do it by yourself and then you increase your learning on your own. But I think that right now there is a large focus on teachers being the sole educators in our lives and they as if they are alone and that they are taking on the burden of teaching as everything we need to know and that they don't have any help from anywhere else. And I feel like a lot of teachers are shifting the focus of their classroom to be more important focus on increasing our test scores rather than making these personal connections with us because I personally have teachers who before I go into my testing say "don't forget your test score depends on my job so you guys better get in there and do better" and they don't mean anything harmful by this but they are being very blunt and letting us know that what we do affects them now and they feel as if they are alone. So I feel like one thing we can do to improve this is to let teachers know they are not alone and the test scores of their students aren't the only thing that matters to measure their success because right now they think that's the only thing that measures their success.

Joe Williams (20:38-21:01): can we stop right there with what Morgan just said. Test scores are the only thing. and we can come back if anyone else has something to say about, you know, give us some ideas

on how you propose we, you know, help bring along with educators that weren't stated in our initial question but, we talk test scores are the only thing. What else? How else could we evaluate our teachers or our educators?

Taylor (21:02-21:36): I think I heard, a couple years ago, that there were certain states that were starting to keep portfolios of student work um, and so its like all the papers and quizzes and things like that that a student did throughout the year. And so its student specific so if you look at it on the first page and look at it on the last page and you see some growth that's like a way to measure ok this student learned something that's specific to that person's goals and holistic to different subjects and things like that.

Morgan (21:40-22:49): I would agree with what Taylor just said, um I do a lot of work in special needs class rooms just because I want to when I further my education in college I want to work with special needs students, but I'm constantly in the deaf and hearing impaired program at my school where they mentally handicapped kids. I'm at different elementary schools helping in self contained classrooms and actually doing an internship next year in a classroom at Harbor View elementary with the self contained students. I'm doing theater intervention in there. So I think Taylor makes a great point that it's important to know the growth for different level of students especially on this spectrum of mainstream and handicapped students whether it be mental or physical handicaps. It's important that we show where they start at the beginning of the year and where they end at the end of the year so that we can see the personal growth could be that they talk or they have a first word, they spoke to their teacher that year. That they laughed in the classroom or that they went outside and played with their friends. Just because their math score didn't increase 10 points that shouldn't measure what that student's growth was that year, there should be personal growth that should be factored in as well.

Joe Williams (21:50-23:09): And before we continue, and before we have anymore comments I want everyone raise your finger like this and point at yourself like this. You all are the experts and these microphones can't be moved around so we liked to hear from all of you, ok? You all are our experts and that's why we have you here today, every single one of you. Ok? Alrighty, anyone else?

Caleb (23:10-23:57): Uh, just to go back to what we were talking about improving the efficiency of teachers. I think the idea is lost that the teachers are the teachers because they've already excelled in the subject that they are teaching. So that the students that they are teaching is kind of lost or they feel as if though oh I've excelled at this so it should be easy for them to understand. When that shouldn't entirely be the mindset that they have. And another thing is that there's a lot of access that teachers have there's a lot of tools that teachers have that should use in order to assist them in teaching, but a lot of times you see that lost and a lot of teachers rely on that instead. They use those tools in order to teach their class for themselves instead of them teaching their class if that makes sense.

Stella (23:58-24:10): I'd like to see teachers equipped with de-escalation skills to help their students sort of roll with strong emotions instead of like immediately putting their nose in the corner so they're no longer learning.

Taylor (24:13-25:11): I wanted to add to kind of this is branching of what Stella just said, but teachers have a lot of power students are at school like 35 hours a week. Like that's a lot of time so you could do a lot of good in that time and you can do a lot of bad in that time. And it's not just about ok, in this night even its like they need to complete this paper. It's a whole person who is going through a whole set of

emotional things that day um and so I mean going back to the beginning about seeing students as people instead of just as students. And then um about teachers help like programs to help teacher effectiveness I think teachers talking to each other and that can happen on a department level or a school wide level or even a district level. Like I made a connection with this student today and here's how it happened um because they're the people that know best because they do it everyday and they can all still learn from each other.

Joe (25:12): Ok, thanks.

Cassandra (25:13-25:53): Also, so you know she was saying how teachers need escalation and things like that. I remember when I was in elementary school you had counselors that were actually emotional counselors and they were able to help with like how you feel and things like that and stress like that things like that. I feel like now they're only focused on IGP meetings and how am I going to get you to college which that's good that's definitely important but you need to be mentally sound to do those things to get to that point and so if we don't have counselors that can help us emotionally then I mean what's the point of even trying?

Helena (25:54-26:08): I totally agree, the guidance counselor's obviously come up every year and say how they are available for IGPS college prep, but they should be available for you know interpersonal problems bullying stuff like that

Zella (26:09-26:19): It's time that our LGBT students depoliticized students or teachers need to accept us, it's mandatory. We deserve to have a place to learn.

Joe (26:20-26:48): And that's a good Segway into what my next question was going to be, we've spoken about teachers and I'm so glad that you all brought up counselors and now we want to speak about other individuals because you notice that I said educators what can we as educators do? So outside of teachers we brought up counselors, what about our principles and our district staff? How can you see us supporting you all in your efforts?

Helena (26:50-26:56) Well first of all events like this. I think um these are really important for getting the getting the voices of the students.

Morgan (27:00-27:07): A bunch of us here go to school of the arts and we have an assistant principal Dr. Robert P. He is one of the most amazing men I have ever met in my whole life.

Joe (27:08-27:09): That's until you met me.

Morgan (27:10-27:35): Well of course, what can I say? He is the epitome of what I think an assistant principal should be in the fact that he's very interpersonal with his students. If you come to him with a problem, he goes out of his way to try and fix those problems. I think that's one of the things that a lot of us value at our school. We know if we go to Dr. P for something, something that we couldn't go to our counselors for, we know Dr. P will try and do his best to fix all of our problems.

Cassandra (27:36-28:09): Also I just know for a lot of schools I remember there was one year where I like never saw my principal. Not one day and it's like I get that you're busy and you have to deal with not only the things that's in the actual school itself but like outside with the whole entire school system

but you it's still your responsibility to be there and like know your students like what's the point of you being there and fighting for us if you don't even know us? Or know our faces at least? Or we don't know your face.

Siera (28:10-30:42): One thing that we always do at West Ashley high I think like what we do in the middle of the semester, we have a thing called pause and also for like progress reports. Um I actually have my school's principal as my pause teacher so he's worked with me throughout all three years of my high school year with like academics but not only that, like interpersonal things and I actually this past year went through like a really hard time. I went to the hospital like 3 different times and he literally called up my parents after I think one time and was like "Hey why isn't Siera at school? I haven't seen her, where is she?" And he basically like handled everything because at our school if you are absent so many days you are supposed to go to seat time and you're supposed to pay like a good amount of money for that seat time because I missed like 17 days of school but then he excused it all because he's like "You were in the hospital 3 different times there should be no reason why you should be doing seat time" so like he totally understood my situation which I think was pretty great. What he also does is like meetings with the different class years as well and talks with us like how to improve things, how to like get these different scores and like what these scores mean because like for example we did a thing called Work Keys this year and that's for like all the junior class and we were asking "Why are we doing this? Like, we've never heard of this before" and he's like "Well, you do this because at like different work places they look at those scores to see what you scored and these are those different scores and this is a score you want to try to get to. If you don't you can always take it again. You don't need to stress about it because if you stress about it, it will make it even worse." So he would always do things like that and that's what made the entire school felt like we were all on the same page. At West Ashley I think we are more of a community and we all pretty much know each other pretty well and we always do well with our teachers. I've never really had any problems at my school with my teachers because we were always doing like interpersonal things that the principal would encourage us to do like for example like whenever we come into the classroom, the teacher is always standing at the door, saying hello, giving us handshakes and stuff and like also they would do things like good things in the mornings and like every single class period all the teachers go "What are your good things?" that kind of thing. And that's how they would always connect on a personal level with us. So, like that's one of the best things that we've ever done.

Lupe (30:43-31:00): Yeah I agree, West Ashley is like one big family and our principal whenever there's like a problem in the school our principal always tries to fix it and I like appreciate is as well. Like whenever we, like just being kids, like picking up our trash, he'd always try to fix the problem which I

Siera (31:00): Yeah like at our vending machines

Lupe (31:01-31:27): Yeah at the time I was like why would he do that but know when I think about it it's just like yes, ok that did fix it. We learned our lesson. We know we're not going to do it anymore and like he's, like I remember one of my friends, like our administrator, one of the administrators was being really rude to her. So she went ahead and talked to him. He talked to the administrator and kind of fixed the problem so I really like really like our principal. He's really cool.

Joe (31:28-32:08): Twins? Adrian. Anything? You remember? We're your bosses. He's working for me this summer so. Alrighty so um if you look at the slide, you will see some things. You see number 1 is teaching and learning, 2 improving, 3 supporting learning, 4 managing resources, 5 communicating, and

6 community priorities. Um, when you look at those, what would you say is the number 1 thing in your eyes? As far as the goals and our strategic plan.

Siera (32:09-32:47): Um I would say the communicating because if you don't communicate, you can't really do any of those other things on that list. Because if you don't communicate about like managing your resources, if you don't communicate what type of teaching or learning you do, if you don't communicate about improvement or supporting your learning or you can't even communicate to get those community priorities out because the number 1 thing that we all do is speak. Um like any type of way like writing is still speaking, any type of dialect is still speaking, sign language, anything is still speaking and speaking our voice out and being vocal.

Lupe (32:48-33:24): I agree like communication is basically the main thing I am focused on. Like my marketing teacher, he always like he is very interesting and he helps student out whenever they need help like he makes them feel welcome. And he understands that like each student has a different way of learning things so one day during class he asked us "How can I make this like my lessons more understanding" and we say like be more vocal, be more hands on so he would try to incorporate like what we said in our discussion and to his lessons and I feel like everyone in that class really liked him because he was like a really nice person.

Lilly (33:25-34:00): Um on this list I see a lot of these, I see data with it except for support and learning and I think that comes along with a lot of communication because on the communication it says goals, activities and results, but it also needs to be like they said a level of interpersonal problems and I think that comes with support because the other ones I see numbers and test scores and how well your grades are but supporting yourselves and your teachers is extremely important for good grades and good test scores.

Joe (34:01): Go ahead, Caleb.

Caleb (34:02): Uh I like, I would probably say number 4 which is managing resources. And the reason I say that is because there is a lot of low performing schools in this state that aren't exposed to the same amount of supplies that schools such as Wando and SOA are exposed to but then we look back on test scores and the performance rates of those schools like, why are they not performing well? Well, we don't give them the same resources that we have and they can't really do anything if they are not exposed to that so I think managing resources and reallocating funding to go to schools like that and actually nurturing the children in those schools in order to make them successful when they come out of the school, it's very important.

Abby (34:46-35:09): Um I would say that communicating is like one of the most important things because like it like opens opportunities for all of the other things and like I think teachers need to give more opportunities for students to like talk to them about anything that they want to and then it would make the students feel more comfortable talking to the teachers.

Eric (35:13-35:44): I honestly think that community priorities would be the most important out of all of them due to the reason that you should probably address everyone if they have any personal problems or issues, and try to keep everyone on the same page. Say they're not keeping up in every single class or having issues out of school, they need to help them try to get on the same page as everyone is.

Rashon (35:56-36:10): I was thinking it was managing resources too because if we don't have the resources we need to learn or to exceed then we won't be able to do anything in life. That's what I was thinking.

Cassandra (36:10-37:09): I think communication is part of the solution for each of these things. I don't think it should be separate. Communication kind of goes under every single one of them. For my number one would also be community priorities as said down there. Just because if you know your students again in the community they live in and the environment that they'll react to and are living in- let me rephrase that they environment that they're living in affects how they are as a person and affects how they are going to react to certain things and certain learning and just responses of teachers to students and actions and things like that.

Latalia (37:09-37:55): I just said like where they come from plays a huge part in who they are as a person.

[JW: We have under community priorities, address local priorities established by the board of trustees, you're asking us to add a piece to that. Which is what you just stated. Correct? And you're saying that that's important. Anyone else want to give some input into that? You all are our experts.]

Lupe (37:57-38:30): Like of a teacher or an educator doesn't understand where we're coming from where we live at and how are they supposed to know what we're going through. I live in N. Charleston so it's like a 15-20-minute drive to W. Ashley, one of my teachers also lives in N.Chs so he understands when I'm a little late, he understands there's traffic going to west Ashley, so for anyone who lives father away from your school and they don't know that or they don't care then that doesn't help at all.

Sierra (38:30-39:42): I also agree with what she's saying, but I also have another thing to add onto that. There's all kinds of different types of people at the school and knowing who they are, but also getting like the different types of people involved with each other. For example, at our school, although yeah we have tons of athletes and tons of drama students, we're all interpersonal involved with each other and we know what's going on, like we always make sure- say our performance is around the same time as a game, we always make sure it's separated, but at the same time we always go and support each other. So with the community, you have to make sure that yeah there are all these different types of people but they all need to communicate. With communities and everything, you have to make sure that yeah they're from a different community, but this person has also been in that same situation so they can relate on this topic. So with W. Ashley, we're all different types of people, but somehow we end up like being a community together.

[JW: That opens up another door for us and you know you spoke about supporting each other and kind of community of collaboration and again we look at you at our experts and so what are some suggestions or ways we can foster that in all of our schools? I know you gave a few examples- yeah pass the mic]

Zella (40:12-40:25): I think it's time that we see a LGBT inclusive sex-ed curriculum. It's 2017, it's time. We deserve this.

[JW: Noted. Anyone else?]

Taylor (40:34-40:47): This is kind of going off of that. I think that anytime that you're focusing on trying to increase rights for marginalized community, you need to talk to that community. So organizations like we are family is a great way to start doing that.

Morgan (40:48-43:06): I know we just implemented a new discipline policy and I can say from personal experience that I don't think it completely works. And I say this with all due respect because we're just voicing our opinions here. I had a personal experience this year where I had someone post something online about me that then spread to the whole school and by whole school I mean everyone had screenshots of it on their phones. It was a story that someone had written that had my name and names of my classmates and names of my educators and things like that and because of this new policy, it took me 3 weeks to have something done about it, and the student was walking the halls with me pretending like nothing had happened because nobody had said anything to him, and it was because, and like I said I talked to Dr. P about it, but here was nothing he could do because of their new policy. His hands were tied. It was to the point where I would avoid going into the halls where this person was because it was awkward and uncomfortable and it made me scared to be in school with this person and school is a place where you shouldn't be scared you should go there and feel like you're accepted and this is a great place to learn. And personally, I go to one of the best schools in the district, and I say that because I don't go to a title one school or a low income school, I have the privilege of going to magnet program school I can only imagine what this discipline policy looks like in low income and title one schools that actually have serious serious problems going on with discipline and these educators and administrators can do nothing about it because this new policy give you strikes and things like that. I don't think a strike should be given as far as hurting someone at school, bringing a weapon to school, like that I don't think it should be a strike policy, I think we should reprimand students for punishments 1st times because nobody is going to learn if you give them strikes it's going to continue to happen, that's the whole point of a strike, we'll give you two more times but if it happens a third one then that's the time we're going to reprimand you. I just don't think that's completely affective. I think students who are breaking these rules aren't going to stop breaking the rules. That's just my opinion.

Sierra (43:07-44:28): I agree with this completely. The one problem that I do know happens at W. Ashley High and y'all have probably all seen it on the news- we probably have the worst fight problem I've ever seen, we had at one time 7 fights in one day just among students and it wasn't just because it was like all these different types of people it was the same kids that always fight and cause disruption in the school so just giving them strikes they're going to keep doing it. For example, if you're late to school now, if you're late past 7 times, and I think that's changed since my freshman year, you go to lunch detention. Well now if you get late past 7 times you just go to ISS for the entire day, which honestly I think that's just ridiculous because there's so many kids who are terrible students who will just be late on purpose so they just don't have to go to class and I think that's crazy because then yeah you know we're late and things happen, but if we're late and we just go straight to ISS, that doesn't really teach us anything, all that teaches us is we can just be late and get out of class and we'll be completely excused for the day and we just get to chill.

Abby (44:33-45:07): About the whole discipline in general, I feel like- I go to [inaudible] which I feel like is one of the most accepting schools there is that I've ever heard of because I have friends at a lot of other schools and you hear a lot about people hating on the LGBT community and the adults and authorities don't seem to really do anything about it, they say stop bullying but won't be specific, and I think that needs to improve.

Latalia (45:08-46:43): When fights and all that break out, and it happens, they put the whole school on lockdown they take away privileges of all students, not just the ones who had the mishap, but all students. And for me personally, I'm a good student, I don't get in trouble, I don't get referrals constantly, I do what I'm supposed to do, and when our privileges get take it's like okay I didn't do anything wrong, I'm being punished for something I did not do and I think the punishment should be on the students who do stuff that commits the crime- they should be punished for that, not the students who did nothing wrong because our seniors this year, we had a lot of stuff going on too, and the seniors said I wish I could do this all over again because it wasn't fun it wasn't the best year I had, and so if you're going to punish somebody, punish somebody who needs to be punished not the ones that didn't do anything. Still give the privileges to the kids that do what they're supposed to do, come to school when they're supposed to and with the tardy thing, I come to school sometimes late, traffic, life happen, and I feel as though if I'm still coming to school and getting my education, I feel as though that matters. If you want to come to school to learn, what does me coming to school late have to do with my learning, you're putting me in ISS all day, you're taking me from my education, taking me away from class, I need to learn, but you're putting me in ISS all day, what am I learning in ISS? What are you trying to teach me in ISS that I can take away when I graduate?

Lilly (46:45-47:43) I want to go back to the bullying subjects, like she said I also went to SOA, which is the most accepting school you can go to, and everyone loves you and embraces you for who you are and they let you do that, and I know a lot of schools don't and I know there's a lot of bullying for people being themselves, and there shouldn't be. I know it's difficult to say "stop bullying in schools" because it's not possible to stop everyone because they're going to be people who want to hurt other people you can't stop that. But I think people need to accept others for who they are and there should be a problem with it. So even if you don't agree with is, you shouldn't be allowed to hurt someone because of it. And that applies to teachers also. They entire school needs to be more accepting. I had the privilege of going to an amazingly accepting school, but I know a lot of student don't and it affects them through their entire life because they feel like they have to be someone they're not just to get through, and it shouldn't be like that.

Helen (47:43-48:32): I like how each school has their own discipline system because I feel like they should be able to prioritize what's important. Like I think personally at my school, being on time isn't stressed as much as it should be, and we might not have issues with other issues but that's what really affected me, and honestly we aren't punished enough for being late because that's a really important work skill. But for other schools, acceptance/bullying, you need to bring teachers in because you might not be able to change the way people bully, but you can

change the way they're punished for it, and try to stop them as soon as it happens. Immediate action would be the most important.

Zella (48:33-48:53): I'd like to see the students who are called out for having discipline issues, I'd like to see the discipline system be less about chastising them and more about routing them into care instead of letting them fall through the cracks and be demonized.

Caleb (48:54-49:59): I think all and all it's very important for us to like we said before- if we want to build relationships between teachers/educators/students I think it's very important for us to not over exaggerate a consequence because all and all parents give us consequences not because they hate us but because they love us so I think it's also very important for us to understand that if you do something wrong, you can't just think that you're going to walk around without receiving consequences. Those people are put in place in the system to give you consequence not because they hate you but because they want you to improve and want you to expand as a person. So it's very important for us to understand that these consequences and disciplinary actions are put in place to improve us not to hurt us. For those who neglect it, that's a whole different issue. Those who also abuse it, is also a whole other issue. But all and all it's important for us to understand that they're there to help us not hurt us.

Helen (50:00-50:13): I do think just teaching in general is a lot like parenting. You need to put the student 1st, your children 1st, they say parenting is the hardest job you'll ever love, and so is teaching you become a teacher because you put your students first and want what's best for them. So it's important to think of that.

Sierra (50:14-53:48): I wanted to quickly go back on the bullying subject. The one thing that I did really like about my mentor is that every single time he saw a problem in the classroom or saw someone picking on another person, the first thing he'd do would be like go to the bully box, that square right there is the bully box, but that's not the only thing you can do. There's always a consequence that can happen. Also like for the administrators and people at the school, be more aware of our social media and be like Facebook is not the only thing we're on now, it's also Instagram there was like a crazy account that we had that was called West Ashley rumble and it had like literally all our fights publicized and it only recently got taken down, but it was crazy, and there was even a YouTube channel for it. And I'm like are you serious how do our school administrators not know about this, well I realize that not a lot of school administrators realize how social media affects everything around us. For example, we're not going to read something in a newspaper, we're going to pay attention to a trend on twitter or Instagram or Snapchat and that's what we're going to pay attention to. So for a while, people at W. Ashley were saying oh well if you post that online you're going to get some kind of tag or something for, I can't remember, but that was only on Facebook which was crazy. So just being more aware of everything that we do on social media not only at the school because where most of the bullying happens is online. I was personally bullied online for doing what I love to do, I like doing YouTube types of things and I'm an entrepreneur, and kids were coming to my YouTube channel saying I was ugly and can't do things and I wish I could've done something about it, but no one knew anything about it. So I went to Master [inaudible] and he was like I

can't really do anything about it because the administrators don't really know who those kids are on YouTube and I'm like well I don't know what to do either so I don't know. So things like that, having people be more away. Things happen verbally and physically here at school, but it also happens online. You can't be just like oh well they act totally fine at school, they're a nice person, then online they're a totally different person than who they are at the school so I mean like sometimes I feel like I have to put on a fake face when I'm near the person who bullied me online because everyone thinks that they're this amazing human being because they act all posh and wonderful at school, but online they're this disgusting evil person towards me and I'm like why are you acting this way at school. I didn't do anything wrong so that's the one thing that I've always notices. Social media and being aware- everyone needs to be more aware of what we do online. A lot of kids are like you don't need to do that they're very sneak and want to keep everything hush hush, but like honestly it doesn't need to be that way. Everyone needs to be involved in what's going on in the social media stream.

Jada (53:50-55:37): I think that one of the main things that hurts how affective the relationship is between the teachers and the students are is that a lot of the times the teachers don't- some of the rules that are in place for all the students and that are supposed to be enforced on the students aren't enforced on all of the students, such a dress code or when it comes to disciplinary actions and I see a lot of the times, teachers that see the students that they're familiar with and that they know and love in their classroom breaking the rules, they don't say anything vs. the students that are maybe too shy to come up to them or whatever the reason is or that they don't know, they will instantly dress code, or they will instantly say here's a detention. And that student could possibly not be doing anything wrong, but because maybe the student that they know and love said that this student was doing this- it turns into an us vs. them situation and if the whole point of us as students and with the teachers and admin and staff is to create this trusting community and environment you can't say well I'm not going to dress code her because she's built a different way so she can wear those shorts differently. It has to be everybody it can't be certain students or certain people and that is definitely important with dress code and disciplinary actions and really just interactions between teacher and student in the classroom.

Taylor (55:39-57:03): I have three quick things to say. The first one if you reprimand someone enough times, you can scare them out of doing anything, but if you have a conversation with that student about why they felt the need to act that way and what they didn't teach and why it's wrong is when you're actually educating a student. I also think that discipline that takes students out of classroom is fundamentally counterintuitive unless they're really interfering with everyone else's opportunity to learn, I think that there's other ways to get the message across, because when you tell someone they don't deserve to be in their class getting their education anymore, it can be really ostracizing for that student, and I think that brings me to my 3rd point, students should never feel as if they're not being respected as people regardless of like what they did and I think that the best teachers are teachers who foster environments of mutual respect, and that should go for administrators also and like Jada was saying with some teachers treating other students differently, every student should have that baseline, every

student should be respected by everyone working to take care of them because that's the point of school.

Lilly (57:06-57:56): I think punishment should be thoughtfully applied to a situation. I don't think you should get a lunch detention for chewing gum, but then bully someone, go to the office, and have nothing happen. You get a warning and you walk. Because that happens and I don't see why chewing gum in class is worse than hurting another student and it shouldn't be because going to the office, getting a warning, and walking that's not a punishment, that's saying oh if I can get away with it this time, I can do it again but then someone is walking down the hallway, and their fingertips don't go exactly to their shorts and they get in trouble. So I think the situation has to have a punishment designed for it. And we have to think about how bad some things are than others. Chewing gum in class should not be the same level of punishment as bullying another student.

Latalia (57:57-1:00:09): Back with the bullying thing, you know how like this day and age, we're all about our technology, we can't do anything without our technology, and in my department where I'm interning at, we're basically trying to shine a light on cyberbullying, because social media and technology are developing, and that's where most of the kids are going to bully or slander other people. So we're making lesson plans for grades k-5, 6-8, and 9-12, so we're trying to develop a way for teachers to get to students affectively and get the topic of cyberbullying across and handled and also teach them how to be safe online what they should or shouldn't be posting, because everything you post online does affect you in the long run. That's what we're doing in our department and it's very important because people are committing suicide because people are bullying them on social media and cyberbullying isn't something we're talking about right now but it should be a main thing that should be talked about in schools.

[JW: I like that you brought up what you're doing, because like I keep reiterating, is you all are the experts, so it's good when you have some types of solutions so we want to applaud you. Anybody else because part of it is we want your feedback as to some things we can implement and do, and we've heard a lot of your concerns, so before we turn it to the audience in reference to everything we captured today, I did ask you a little bit about how we ensure that teachers are welcoming and inviting, and you gave some feedback on that but some things to capture everything we spoke about today as far as what are some suggestions from you all- what are some things like you know you heard what the young lady said about developing these programs- as a powerful group of young individuals/scholars, what are some of the things you can do to be very active in this movement of improving the educational process for all.]

Cassandra (1:00:10-1:01:04): So we were talking about discipline and how certain disciplines and personalized disciplines and things like that. So [inaudible] Ministry has been working I believe with the school district to work on this thing on Better Practices, I don't exactly know what it's about, but pretty much it includes sitting down with the students to see why they're doing what they're doing and how it came about and how to handle the situation instead of just giving them them detention and ISS which is totally counteractive to your education. So pretty

much I believe it's being implemented in 5-7 schools next school year, but I believe that's what's happening.

Abby (1:01:05-1:01:53): I think that students should be more away of teachers' relationships with other students and what's going on in general. I know that teachers like to pick like the opposite of favorites, I know they instantly like to pick students that they don't have any faith in, like in my social studies class, I instantly saw that she would pick on the people that would talk- they don't value their learning as much, but she doesn't make the try to value their learning and she just kind of gives up on them, and that's like a lot of teachers and I think students should call teachers out for that politely and try to notice stuff like that.

Lupe (1:01:54-1:02:17): And also I think us as students should be a little more understanding because I hear a lot of students complaining that a teacher isn't teaching something, but in reality, they're the ones talking or not paying attention or sleeping during class, and they blame the teacher when they fail the test, but they're the ones who didn't want to be there or learn at all.

Lilly (1:02:19-1:02:59): I think what would be helpful is more events like this but not for an entire school district, but for schools individually and without consequence because I know a lot of students are afraid to say what they're feeling for fear that they're going to get in trouble for it. They can't tell a teacher the way you're teaching me right now isn't the way I like to learn, they can't really say that because that'd mean a bad reputation with that teacher. There needs to be a time where students can say how they feel about how they're learning about students in their environment without fear of getting in trouble for it and I think like these would be extremely crucial in schools not just for an entire district because an entire district can't do something about an individual school sometimes.

Latalia (1:03:00-1:03:49): I feel as though if you hear what students say- if you want to better your school environment and school spirit, if you bring students together and hear them out giving them a voice, then you will see what the problems are you'll get to the root of why students are acting the way they are why this style of teaching isn't working for the students, you'll see it, you ask them you give them a voice and act concerned- be open. Give the students a voice is basically what I'm saying. I like this, I like sitting here and feel as though we can be open and talk about our thoughts and feelings.

[JW: Anyone in the audience that want to add anything to the conversation?]

Jorge (1:04:13-1:05:34): So, I used to go to SOA and my mom took me out because she wanted to give me a boost of reality because not everything is sunshine and rainbows so I went to Northwood's for ¾ of a school year and half of the stuff that was going on at SOA did not happen at Northwoods at all and basically all the kids were doing what they wanted. And the teachers already have the mindset of the students are going to fail so why try and basically the kids felt that way so they fail half of the kids that went to the school and I just want to know why do we have to travel so far to get a good education when there's school right here that don't have good teachers.

[Round of applause]

[JW: I just want to admire how courageous you all were in coming up here and speaking and even for those who came to listen you gave us some feedback and let us step into your world as scholars and see what it is you go through everyday, things you appreciate, things you want us to look at, and we do appreciate you all for that. Before we close out, we would like for Dr. Postlewait our superintendent to give some closing remarks.]

Gerrita Postlewait (1:06:42-): Thank you, you are a hard group to keep up with! I have pages of pages of notes. We don't try to process on the spot, we take our time to synthesize what you said to listen deeply, and we will come back to you and say this is what we have heard. Is this an accurate reflection on the messages you were giving us today? So understanding this will be flawed because it's very fast without time to really think deeply about all of the wisdom you have shared today. I heard lots of things but to boil them down to 3 things, I heard that students are the center of the enterprise of public schools. I heard that student voice is essential in order for that enterprise to work successfully. I also heard under that idea of student voice, that you want to continue these conversations with some structured way to do that so that you're assured of some continuation throughout the year. Another sub-bullet on that is that you need a way to talk about things that are important to all schools and you need a way to talk in a safe place about things important to individual schools. The third thing I heard is that you have some really good ideas about how to deal with disruptions when they occur whether they're disruptions that hurt you personally or whether they're disruptions that keep good teaching from occurring so affectively learning can result. And you'd like to be involved with having voice around some critical decisions and a sub-bullet of that is you have a really good idea about what makes a really good teacher, and your analysis of that is probably more affective than any sort of assessment that people who aren't in the classroom everyday could make. So I think that there are ways to talk about how we use student voice in a way that's fair and would provide improvement feedback loops to help teachers understand how you're experiencing what's happening just as I'm trying to understand how teachers experience some of the work that we did at the district office this year because our job is to serve teachers well so that they can serve you well. But we need a continuous feedback process to make sure that everyone who is part of the process including, Zella, those who feel like their voices aren't heard know that there is a way for them to be heard officially and that there's a way to see that there's a difference that occurs. So, that is my big take away about what you said today. I admire your courage and even though I'm really old [laughter] I just want to say seriously that everyone here today has great hope for this community and this country's future listening to how informed you are, how wise you are, how courageous you are, how articulate you are about expressing those things of concern and offering some suggestions, not just coming to the table to complain, but to offer some constructive ways to move forward. So, there's a lot here to process but I wanted to add my voice to those who are here and we want to thank you. So in our adult way of showing thanks, let's give this group another huge round of applause. [applause] We really want those of you who participated to stay across the hall and enjoy some lunch for being here today.