

STUDENT FOCUS GROUP

Irrigon Jr/Sr High School 2017-2018

Purpose of the Student Focus Group

- To find out what students think about:
 - The quality of teaching
 - The quality of relationships with their teachers
 - The quality of communication with their teachers
 - What works best for their learning

The student groups and the process

- A representative group of students was selected from the 8th and 12th grade.
 - A 10th grade group had also been selected, but due to PSAT testing on the same day, they were not available to participate.
- 10 students were selected within each grade level to ensure that numerous subcategories were represented, including gender, ethnic background, special programs, and academic achievement.
- Student groups met by grade level, separately from each other.
- Student groups were asked the same questions and provided the same process to present their responses.

The Questions

- Questions were selected by the Irrigon Jr/Sr High School leadership team.
- The five questions used were:
 - 1. Are you always clear about what you are learning and why you are learning it?
 - 2. What happens when you make a mistake, both academically and behaviorally?
 - 3. What are some examples of the best teaching you have experienced at this school?
 - 4. What is the quality of your relationship with your teachers? Do you feel you can ask them for help when you need it?
 - 5. Do you get a chance to ask questions in class about what you are learning?

The Process

- Students met during the Advisory period for approx. 30-40 minutes.
 - Mr. Keefauver met with the group of students to outline the task presented to them. Students were encouraged to be open and honest about their thoughts and feelings in regards to their school experiences.
 - Students were given the questions on paper and provided a pencil to write their thoughts. Mr. Keefauver read each question aloud, and provided any extra description when necessary to help with any student confusion.
 - Students were given 10 minutes to read, think, and write down their thoughts on the paper provided.
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The Process

- Mr. Keefauver began the discussion portion of the focus group. Students were encouraged to share, but were not required to share their thoughts verbally.
 - The questions were presented individually again, and students began sharing their thoughts. Mr. Keefauver wrote down students shared thoughts on a question sheet.
 - At the end of the discussion, students were asked to share any other thoughts they had on school as it pertained to the questions or school as a whole.
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The Results

- Quality of Teaching

Students discussed that teachers had a lot of knowledge on their subject matter and felt that their teachers were “experts” in their field. Many students felt that what they were learning was made clear, but there was little connection to the students beyond memorizing facts for the test. Students did not feel they were given opportunities to interact while they were learning or the ability to discuss or ask questions during the learning. Many students felt there was a clear separation between teaching time and work time in the classroom.

The Results

- **Best Teaching**

Many students shared similar examples of what they thought was the best teaching. They felt that teachers that used more than one way of teaching, interactive/engaging, energetic, and connecting it to the student interest. Student had a large focus on teacher clarity, especially at the junior high level. They felt they learned best when teachers were explicit in their instructions, expectations, and feedback. Specific, targeted feedback was also a shared quality at all levels. Students could identify teachers, by name, that provided them with feedback that clarified their misunderstandings and propelled them forward.

Analysis – Next Steps

- Our teacher Leadership Team will review the student feedback to help direct future professional development foci for the building.
 - Identify where we are at in terms of current focus. Identify what our strengths are and prioritize our areas for improvement.
 - Brainstorm ideas to create meaningful building-wide focus areas and strategies for implementation.
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