

Kansas DropINs Youth Panel
Kansas Dropout Prevention Summit
October 20, 2009

Teacher Stereotyping

Becca: When you walk in the first day you already know what the teachers think of you because you can see the look on their face. It seems like when they have this idea of you they already know who they think is going to succeed and who's not. A lot of the kids feel that teachers don't try as hard with them just because the way they dress or maybe the home they come from. They're not going to be as smart or they're not going to want to learn. When the truth is they want to learn just as much as anybody else does it's just a matter of getting them to try harder.

Alex: When we asked the students downstairs, when we brought up the teacher stereotypes they kind of reacted. We could hear them. It's a very clear issue. We also kind of asked them some problems they've had in their own schools. We had some that had been put down by teachers and then we've had where siblings can kind of affect how teachers treat younger students. If you have an older brother or sister who wasn't a good kid it doesn't mean that the next one will be bad as well, um sometimes. You definitely need to give everybody a clean slate is what we're trying to get across.

Class Size

Ree: You can want smaller classes. I've been to big schools and small schools. I find small schools, small classes are a lot better. At times you can't always have that. At times the schools are too big. You have to have big classes, not enough teachers. So if you could just like create programs after school to where you have like maybe if you have two or three history teachers just see if one of them want to stay a day after a week. Just everyday like have a place where you can go after school and be like, "Hey, I didn't get this. Can you explain it?" It might not be the teacher you have but it's still a teacher in that subject and that will help a lot. I mean, a lot of students will reach out to that and if they don't they're not grasping the opportunity. It takes our part and your guys' part to make a difference.

Learning Styles

Becca: We had a question of, "What can teachers do that make it easiest for you to learn?" Like consistent like nine out of ten, every person said hands on. They don't like, I mean we know that we can't have something fun activity to do everyday in class. Some days it's not going to be as fun as others but just lecturing and taking notes everyday makes us not want to be there. It's fun when we have those things that like doing activities. Actually getting to do it instead of just hearing and seeing. Getting to try it for ourselves, I think, is an easy way for a lot of people to learn.

Khalia: I also think that we should be able to leave school sometimes and try something else. Like do something that we actually might use in real day life like on an everyday basis.

Keil: At my school some of the teachers will give out student evaluation forms at the end of the year to see how they can improve the class. See what the students would like as far as changing up methods and helping them learn. I think that this would be a great idea so that students can give their input. So that teachers and students can find a healthy balance of learning styles.

Ree: You get excited about what you're doing. Like American Government that sounds like, I don't even want to learn that but my teacher gets so in to it. He gets excited about what he's teaching so I want to learn. If you don't talk in monotone and just be like, "this is that, that, that." Actually get excited, we're more likely to want to learn it and want to come to class everyday because it's fun! I don't know. I mean, if you're not interested in your own topics how can we be interested in your topics?

Discipline

Courtnie: Like if you get suspended, you get suspended for three days or expelled or something and you just get too far behind. What's the point of trying to do all of that? When you go back you're already behind from them days that you missed. Then you still got to continue with the school work that you already had ahead. It's not like just because you missed them days you school works just going to stop then and there. One thing I noticed that was a solution and helped kids actually want to stay in is there is these places if you get expelled from school. There's places that you can go. It's kind of like an optional school that if you get kicked out you go there for a while. It helps you get all of your credits and everything. I mean you may be kicked out of the main high school because you caused problems there but whenever they get sent to other schools it helps a lot more. Everything is smaller but it's more hands on with the teachers and more one on ones. It just helps you learn a lot more. That helped me a lot from doing all of that.

Becca: There is a kid that goes to our high school and he has to take his little sister to school everyday. He is a kid that wants to learn and sometimes it is hard to get to school on time everyday for him. He had I think five tardies in the morning. He got ISS. The thing is, how can you learn in ISS? Sometimes, I think that's when counselors come in to play. They need to help you work out a schedule that's best for you. Instead of, this kid isn't a bad kid he wants to learn, they send him to ISS. I mean they give you your work but you're missing out on the class time. So I don't think it's a solution, putting a kid in ISS. That's not going to help them learn. That's not going to make him get to school any faster, either. When we take kids out of school because of a bad mistake they made it's like saying, "You made this bad decision. We're not going to give you your education." Once you kick some one out of school it's hard for them to get in to another school. I just think that we just need to be more understanding. I mean kids are going to make bad decisions in their life. That's what we are set up to do. It's trial and error. So, just be more considerate, that's all.

Final Thoughts

Alex: I've asked friends, many who were also downstairs and everybody on this panel, "When did you just kind of stop caring to go to school?" I know that in elementary school kids want to go to school. I wanted to for sure. Then sometime around fifth and sixth grade is when students just kind of, I don't know, they just don't want to go quite as much. Maybe we're putting responsibilities on kids too fast. I don't know a solution to it but somehow making school more and more enjoyable. Maybe make it more and more exciting as you go along instead of getting a little more dull.

Keil: I think the main message that you guys should take out today is that we care about our education. That we are willing to work with you as educators on solving this problem. I think that this is the biggest thing that you guys should take away from this today is that we don't just want to complain and bicker about teachers, about how we're getting trampled upon. We want to work with you and try and solve this problem.

Courtnie: I agree with Becca. You guys set it up and everything and decide how the schools are going to be, the format of it and everything. You guys have to remember we're kids and we're the ones that go there. You guys come there and walk around and see what's going on. We're the ones that sit in the classroom for eight hours a day and have to do the assignments and everything. I mean if you guys are going to put an 'R' in your effort we want to put in just as much effort as you guys to make it a fun place for us and you guys.

Ree: Knowing that we're giving our ideas and our opinions on what we need to do and that you guys actually want to hear them it makes us feel great. It makes us feel like we got a purpose.

Special thanks to:

Ree Nichols, Pittsburg
Keil Eggers Lawrence
Alex Beck, Newton
Courtnie Ochs, Garden City
Khalia Canty, Topeka
Becca Leite, Salina
Michael Lemon, Facilitator