



Washoe County  
School District

# Incline Schools Focus Groups Notes

**Group:** Elementary school teachers

**Date:** 3.23.2011

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Summary Comments / Notes:

**1. Are you satisfied with the level of education students are receiving?**

Social interaction and behavioral development of many students could be improved if so much time wasn't directed toward academics.

Merging the schools has created some chaos where there wasn't any before.

**Consensus:** The teachers agreed that the level of education was satisfactory/good, but could definitely be improved.

**Consensus:** They said that there was too much emphasis on the academic (ie. standardized testing) and not enough attention paid to developing the "whole child."

**2. Do you believe you/your children are actively engaged and enjoy the learning process at school?**

Yes! In my class, but within the whole population, no. Evidenced by behavioral problems.

Yes, but there is room for improvement. There is a natural "ebb and flow" of engagement with individual students at different times.

Constant assessments turn kids off and they have difficulty being fully engaged. Too many assessments take away the fun of learning.

**Consensus:** For the most part, children are actively engaged. Could improve.

It depends on the circumstances at the time. So many variables; from what's happening in the home situation to more individual things.

**Consensus:** Too many mandated, structured academic activities.

**3. If you could change one thing in Incline school to improve student learning, what would that be?**

**Consensus:** Smaller class sizes, and if the class is already small, keep it that way. If kindergarten isn't small allowing for individual instruction time, students are already at a disadvantage entering first grade.

**Consensus:** Improved parent involvement, especially in the Latino community. More and better parent involvement could improve some student behavioral issues.

**Consensus:** Not such a rigidly structured academic day. More flexibility.

**4. How important is it to have a challenging learning environment? What does this mean to you?**

**Consensus:** Extremely important!

Challenging means that the students are motivated to push themselves.

We must provide the stimulation/motivation and then the support for students to strive to reach their potential.

Needs to be fun and creative. Teachers need the resources to support each individual.

Challenging must mean more than “just give them something hard.”

**5. Respondents to the recent survey identified instruction in science as critically important. What are your thoughts on that?**

We need to increase the amount of time that we devote to it. We only have four 45-minute time slots per week for Science and sometimes, even then, Science isn't taught. Sometimes, it's Social Studies or that time is taken up by assemblies.

There could be cross-teaching of Science among classes. Could be school-wide, but even now, teams don't have enough time to coordinate lessons.

**Consensus:** Science instruction is tremendously important!

**Consensus:** Science seems like an afterthought; comes after Reading and Math.

**6. Respondents to the recent survey identified instruction in innovation/technology as critically important. What are your thoughts on that?**

The word “critically” is too strong. It's important, but not critically important.

It's important to familiarize students with technology as part of the process of creating a “whole” person.

Technology is a tool which grows in value as the student gets older. Foundations must come first.

**Consensus:** Technology is important only if it supports and promotes academic progress.

**7. How important is it to have a vertically aligned curriculum among the three Incline schools?**

(There was some initial confusion about the meaning of vertical alignment.)

State standards should already drive meeting academic requirements in elementary school.

One teacher commented that she didn't know there was a plan for vertical alignment beyond the state standards.

We need to see examples of successful vertical alignment among schools.

**Consensus:** Yes, vertical alignment very important as students need to be prepared for the next level.

**Consensus:** Recommend that each school get their internal alignment together first before working toward alignment among the levels.

**Consensus:** There doesn't seem to be an adequate plan for vertical alignment among the three Incline Schools.

**8. As you know, the Incline Great Schools committee is focused on making Incline Schools great. Do you have any closing thoughts on this?**

We are special in that we developed a K-5 Spanish program. This program supports students all through their academic years. It's good for the whole community, bringing the two main ethnic groups together.

Would like to see the Latino population here celebrated more. (Question: Did Incline Great Schools committee reach out to the Latino population enough in getting them to participate in the survey and focus groups?)

Our community needs to align resources to create great schools. Too many individual entities are competing for funds. We've lost a lot of corporate and foundational support due to the recession.

We don't use our community resources like we could (e.g. The Lake, community centers, pools, etc.)

I'd rather see money spent on programs instead of expensive assemblies.

Schools aren't celebrated like they use to be. The community doesn't care like it used to because the general character of the Incline Village population has changed.

Schools could reach out to the community more, too.

Incline Schools need more community liaisons. Teachers don't have time to do it.

WCSD administrators could do more.

Incline ES teachers would like more leadership and support. Would like to be led, not pushed.

Incline Great Schools committee should recognize teacher strengths. Better communication within schools, across schools, with parents. And we need more feedback.