

VOICES from page 1A

You guys are leaders on this campus who have been given permission to do that. If there's someone you were thinking of when those comments were shared, you have every right to talk to them and say, 'We needed to hear what you had to say,' and then bring that back to leadership," she said.

With that, the time was turned over to the students.

ACADEMICS

The datapoint of the discussion started with the statement "The school is meeting my academic needs."

According to Lane ESD, 44 percent of elementary students said "sometimes," while 56 percent said "always." For middle and high school students, 71 percent said "sometimes" and 21 percent said "always."

The second statement read "I have access to intervention and enrichment services."

Of that, 44 percent of elementary students said "never," 17 percent said "almost never," 28 percent said "sometimes" and 11 percent said "always." Of the middle and

high students, 14 percent said "almost never," 48 percent said "sometimes" and 20 percent said "always."

"I don't think there's middle schoolers here, so we don't need to talk about that unless you guys want to," JJ said. "With the second point, the elementary students said 'never,' which I agreed with, I think, because elementary kids don't get as many opportunities. But middle school and high school is 48 percent 'sometimes,' which I don't think is very good, really."

JJ then read the question posed by the data: "Based on your school experience, what might be causing people to answer this way and how can we improve instruction, enrichment and intervention?"

The students had some questions about what words like "enrichment and intervention" actually meant, before Opal gave her thought.

"Number one, I'm not sure that this data is completely correct," she said. "Because one thing, this is a survey, and some people definitely don't answer honestly on these survey questions. I know that for a fact."

Her second point had to do

with enrichment.

"Lots of times, our school has been known, and is trying to get better but it's not there yet. It just doesn't have the opportunities and options for the kids that really want to do well and succeed and go on to like, a really good college or do something much bigger than going to LCC or something," she said.

Micayla turned the conversation to how teachers communicate lessons to the students.

"I think teachers kind of put stuff up on a board and they're like, 'That's how you do it, do that, here you go,'" she said. "They need to go into depth with what we need to do and kind of like teach it to us, not just put it up on a board and be like, 'There you go, that's what you do.'"

JJ asked, "So you think teachers should have more one-on-one?"

"I think they should be better teachers," Micayla responded.

JJ turned to Phillip for his comments, to which he said, "I'm going to make sure it's not too much for you, because it's going to be a fat minute."

He addressed the academic needs question.

"We have some teachers in this school, and I'm not going to name names, that simply don't grade their stuff. And it really hurts us as people that want to do sports or stuff after school. I want to be able to go home and not have our parents yell at us because, 'Why do you have an F?' What do you mean I have an F? 'Well it's because you didn't turn in this, that and that.' I did turn that in, though. 'Well it says here that you didn't.' And you come to find out, your teacher isn't doing their job. Or they lose your work. And it's like, 'I did this, but I'll happily do it again.' And it just makes it to where you always go in there with a negative vibe."

JJ asked, "So you think organization is a big part of that too?"

Micayla quickly answered yes, followed by Phillip.

"Teachers harp on us for organization, but they don't follow through. They're kind of being hypocrites on that," he said.

Opal, whose father, Lou, teaches at the school, gave a more nuanced view.

"The teachers that we have are gonna make mistakes," she said. "We make mistakes and we lose our stuff, or we forget to turn it in. But I think it gets to a point where if you lose a ton of kids' assignments over and over, that's not right."

The other students agreed, at which point Opal pointed to student responsibility to help solve the problem.

"One thing my parents always taught me was to advocate for yourself," she said. "If you have a problem with the assignment, you need to go to the teacher and tell them and explain to them in a reasonable way. Not like, 'This is a horrible assignment, why did you assign this, this is stupid.' You have to do it in a really reasonable way. But like, I think the teachers should be explaining to us that we need to advocate for ourselves and

if like, if they do something wrong or if we have trouble with our assignment, that we should come to them and check up on it, instead of struggling through by ourselves."

JJ asked, "Do you think the assignments are too hard, too easy?"

Opal felt that a lot of the teachers in the school were on the same page when it came to the difficulty of assignments.

"I feel like there are a few teachers that are trying to push the students in their own individual ways, to do their work and the like, and are trying to step up the academic level and help the students want to succeed, succeed," she said.

However, there were some teachers that could use a little help.

"I feel like there are other teachers that are not doing that in a good, productive way. Or not trying to do that. And so I think all teachers need to get on the same page and say, 'Hey, there are some classes that we need to make advanced classes,' and every teacher should be able to teach an advanced class. Like, have the ability to let the students who want to succeed, succeed, and keep working. I feel like at Mapleton, for so many years, the students who have struggled have rightfully gotten a lot of attention, but the students that have wanted to succeed have not gotten the same amount of attention."

JJ nodded his head, saying, "That's a really good point."

Stewart, who described himself as a quiet person, was asked by JJ if he had anything to say.

"I still don't have anything to say," he said to laughter at the table. "Actually, I guess one thing I have to agree with is on Phillip's end, because some of the teachers don't really grade any of the work. They don't look at it and there's a teacher that has lost work and you have to redo it over and over again. It just messes with your head and it's not giving you an opportunity at all to do any sports or after school activities."

"That's a good point," JJ said.

"I said something, are you happy?" added Stewart as the others laughed.

DOING THEIR PART

"I feel like it's harder for the students to succeed in classes if the teachers aren't doing their part," Micayla said. "You're here to learn how to do something, what to do. We're here eight hours a day, every day. If our teachers aren't doing their part, how are we supposed to learn what we need to do or how we're supposed to do something without them?"

"So you're just saying it's harder for students to succeed when teachers are being lazy, or when they're not trying?" JJ asked.

Micayla thought about it for a second.

"Some teachers are like, 'You're not at school, it's okay, you don't have to do that.' You were sick, when you weren't really sick. They kind of just

tap you on the hand. 'Oh yeah, you're okay,'" she said.

JJ pointed out, "Sometimes that's required, though."

"Well, tapping your student on the hand and saying 'It's okay,' but you're holding other students to a higher standard," Micayla said. "That shouldn't happen."

"I think sometimes different students have different needs," Opal added. "But teachers should be careful and know what those needs are and make sure they're helping the students' needs. And if a student comes to them and is like, 'This is not okay, why are you doing this,' they should have a reason and be able to explain that to us. In a way that doesn't put the other students' privacy in danger."

Phillip brought the discussion back absenteeism and graduation rates, which the students had discussed earlier in the meeting.

"I'm going to tie these together," he said. "Some of those times when students don't graduate on time is kind of because of the lack of teachers caring. Also, being chronically absent, if my stuff isn't going to be graded anyway, why should I be here?"

"Why should I put in the effort?" Micayla echoed.

"Exactly," Phillip said. "Why should I put in the effort, why should I be here? Why should I even try? That's why Mapleton for the longest time has been that school that no one goes anywhere."

Opal shared her views on the matter.

"My dad is a teacher," she said. "Teaching is really, really hard. I think that being a good teacher takes a lot of effort. Doing the hard, hard work that teachers have to do to help students is a really hard task, and I think some teachers might not want to do that work while the others do. And I don't know how you fix that. There's a lot of teachers that are really working hard to help students succeed."

All of the students nodded their heads in agreement, acknowledging that there are good teachers at Mapleton.

"And they're really putting in the work to help students go where they're supposed to go," Opal said. "And then I feel like there are other teachers that are here to teach kind of, but not put in the work that's needed, I feel like."

"And that ties back to what you were saying before, with some teachers putting in the work for academic success, and some aren't," JJ said.

At that point, JJ asked why there were such big differences in views on enrichment services between elementary and high school

"Do you feel like elementary students don't have as quality teachers, or do you feel like we just aren't doing very well on surveys?" he asked.

Phillip thought that it was tied to how each school is traditionally run.

"When you have only one teacher for the entire day, mostly, you can only go over so much," he said. "But when you're in high school and you have seven teachers a day, that one teacher knows just

one subject, and they've studied that in college. So that's what they're going to learn. But an elementary teacher, however, goes through it all. So it makes enrichment a lot harder. But also, when you're an elementary kid, it's kind of like your golden days. You just have fun."

Micayla added, "Also, when I think of kindergartners for a second, they're taking this survey, I don't think they'd really understand."

"Or take it seriously," JJ said.

"Or understand half the words that are on this," Micayla said. "I don't even know what enrichment means, and I'm in 10th grade."

The table laughed.

Stewart added that the elementary students aren't "up to where we're at as to what is happening in life."

"Experiences," JJ said, followed by "Maturity level" from Micayla.

After praising the addition of a new school counselor to the district, Opal brought the discussion back to teachers.

"All the teachers that teach at our school had to at least go through college, and then go to an extra one or two years of school to get a teacher's license. That's not the same as some of the goals of the students at Mapleton, and what they want to do later on in life."

Micayla pointed out that many of the Mapleton teachers are fresh out of college.

"I see the struggle for some of them coming straight into teaching," she said. "We are still a small school, but they are trying to teach and their first years of teaching are probably pretty hard for them."

Phillip brought the whole discussion together, stating that it was the responsibility of everyone in the community, from district staff to parents and leaders, to support the students.

"With some of those teachers, they had a set of goals that they accomplished," he said. "Some of those teachers had somebody that was probably backing them up the way through. Well, it's kind of hard for students to do the same thing when we don't have adults backing them up. When the students don't have the backup up to get to their goals, it kind of feels like the adults are being selfish, in a way."

At that point, the students broke up into different groups again, this time speaking on topics from Friday school lunch, conversations which have been discussed in previous articles in this series.

At the end of the two-hour-long discussion, district staff brought pizza to the students, praising them on the thoughtful discussion. When asked if the students felt comfortable having their names and words printed in these articles, all said yes.

When asked individually if they thought they had their voices heard, Phillip said, "It will actually help — not only us as individuals, but it will show parents and everybody what we see behind the walls of the school."

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