

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

June 3, 2009

Schools Represented:

Elementary

Columbia

Geneva

Happy Valley

Lowell

Northern Heights

Roosevelt

Sunnyland

Middle

Fairhaven

Shuksan

High

Bellingham

Squalicum

Co Chairs: Mary LeDonne and Pam Behee

District Staff: Dr. Kenneth D. Vedra, Superintendent

Sherrie Brown, Deputy Superintendent

Doug Kyles, Executive Director, School Administration

Note Taker: Nancy Merry, secretary to the Superintendent

School Board Update

Mary LeDonne reported on the May 14 and 28, 2009, School Board meetings. The Board approved several agreements and approved a call for bids to tear down the old Shuksan to make room for athletic fields. The Board also suspended Policy and Procedure 2421, *Progress and Promotion*, as it no longer reflects current practices. In the next year, replacement policies and procedures will be written. The Board approved Policy/Procedure 3246, *Use of Restraints*, and heard a report from Doug Kyles on middle and high school athletics. Dr. Kenneth Vedra requested a task force be appointed to do a capacity and utilization study. The Board will take action on this request at a later meeting. According to Dr. Vedra, if approved by the Board, the task force will begin meeting in the fall. He also clarified how the information gathered for this study will be different from that used for impact fees.

Task Force Update

Graduation Requirements Implementation Task Force

Sherrie Brown, deputy superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, reported on the Graduation Requirements Implementation Task Force. Ms. Brown reviewed the changes that the task force recommended and were approved by the Board. The changes will be effective for the class of 2012 and includes moving technology connections to the middle school level; and increases requirements for English, mathematics and world language. The state's adoption of CORE 24 will add additional requirements. The district currently requires one year of fine arts; CORE 24 will add one additional year of fine arts. There is no federal requirements for physical education; however, Washington state does require P.E. but it can be waived under certain circumstances. The Graduation Implementation Task Force monitors these requirements to make sure they are being fulfilled. Next year, the task force will review the district's graduation requirements and modify them to comply with CORE 24 requirements.

According to Brown, Bellingham School District has the most stringent graduation standards in the state.

Sherrie Brown reviewed the district curriculum. Every six years, the district reviews one of the major content areas. Jim Facciano, director of Curriculum, is reviewing all K–12 curriculum with special focus on high school English, social studies and world language. Next year, he will expand his committee’s work to ensure that the K-12 curriculum is properly aligned.

According to Brown, middle school mathematics curriculum is being reviewed to see how some students can be accelerated in math at the middle school level and receive high school credit. Over the last two years, the district has worked with elementary teachers to make sure they have the skills to teach Balanced Math and to ensure that all teachers are teaching the same math.

Parents suggested the district share information with families on how they can help their children with math at home. They also suggested including information on the district Web site on how students can test for higher level math at the middle school level.

Virtual Learning Task Force: Next year, this new task force will examine different options for virtual learning.

Technology Task Force: Sherrie Brown and Jim Facciano will co-facilitate this task force next year to review how technology is used in learning.

Middle/High School Scheduling Task Force: Ms. Brown will facilitate work on middle and high school scheduling to allow sharing of resources and opportunities between schools.

Special Education Task Force: An inquiry was made about whether there would be opportunity to have parents serve on a task force to review how stimulus funds could be used to support Response to Intervention (RTI). Ms. Brown suggested those interested should contact her at 676-6512 or Sue Thomas, director of Special Education, at 676-6458.

Budget Update

According to Superintendent Kenneth Vedra, CORE 24 is part of the state finance plan. In addition, 46 states and Washington D.C. have agreed to move forward to establish national standards for PreK–12. This will take the form of national assessments, longitudinal growth models, and pre-course testing to assess how students’ learning grows through the year. The point was made that many countries only test college-bound students while the United States tests the general population. According to Dr. Vedra, 78% of our students take two years of world language. By the graduating class of 2012, 100% of district students must take two years of a world language. Dr. Vedra indicated funding for staff to fulfill the requirements for world language and math is currently a problem. The district would like to start world language at the elementary school level and is considering immersion programs as a possibility.

Culminating Projects

It was suggested that the district Web site include the contact information for the individual at each high school who is in charge of Culminating Projects. Doug Kyles will be in charge of Culminating Projects for the 2009–10 school year.

Pay to Play Athletics Program

As part of the budget reduction plan, Doug Kyles, executive director of School Administration, has been working with middle and high schools on funding for athletic programs. He has worked with the athletic directors, coaches and principals to formulate a plan that will provide students with a viable, affordable athletic experience with a balance between genders. Intramural sports for sixth graders in basketball and volleyball are also included. As a cost-savings measure, the district will no longer compete with Ferndale School District. Additional funds will be saved by using coaches for officials where appropriate and reducing stipends. Middle school fees will range from \$100 to \$35 and will be graduated based on parent income and the number of sports the students participate in each year. There was discussion about transporting students home after sports and Kyles indicated he would be working to develop a plan. It was also pointed out because families are paying for sports, the district needs to insure it is a quality program. At the high school level, Kyles indicated most students participate in only one sports, unlike at middle school. Fees for high school sports will range from \$140 to \$35, graduated based on income and the number of sports the student participates in each year. Kyles is working on fundraising issues and community donations to help offset costs for students needing scholarships. Kyles emphasized that no student would be denied the opportunity to participate due to cost.

School Reports

Squalicum High School (Kathy Dooley, Michael Jay)

Michael Jay and Kathy Dooley reported on Squalicum High School PTA activities, and acknowledged that PTA's at elementary schools are very different from high schools as parent involvement changes at the high school level. Jay and Dooley feel it is important to keep open communications with the principal and meet with him at least every other week to collaborate and discuss issues at the school. Booster clubs for sports fall under the umbrella of the PTA and they work closely with the athletic director. All fundraisers are run through the PTA budget. The PTA has a short general membership meeting monthly, followed by an interesting and fun program with prizes. Their Board of Directors meet prior to the general meeting. The PTA awards two types of grants—enrichment and mini—and encourage teachers to join the PTA.

Their major fundraiser, for which they have a corporate sponsor, is the Storm Golf Classic, Dinner and Auction. Held in May, it typically raises \$24,000 to \$30,000. Other funds are received through concessions.

Mr. Jay and Ms. Dooley spoke of the importance of communicating with members via entertaining e-mail, but acknowledged it is difficult to obtain email addresses. Phone calls and surveys are also used. If you would like additional information, contact them at mjay1@me.com or skdooley@juno.com

A goal for next year is to establish an outreach program with their feeder elementary schools and larger housing developments within their school boundary and to improve their Web site.