

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

April 1, 2009

Schools Represented:

Elementary Schools:

Carl Cozier
Columbia
Happy Valley
Lowell
Northern Heights
Roosevelt
Silver Beach
Wade King

Middle Schools:

Fairhaven
Kulshan
Shuksan

High Schools:

Squalicum

Co Chairs: Mary LeDonne and Pam Behee

District Staff: Dr. Kenneth D. Vedra, Superintendent
Sherrie Brown, Deputy Superintendent
Tanya Rowe, Director of Communications and Community Relations
Brett Greenwood, Manager of Business and Finance

Note Taker: Nancy Merry, secretary to the Superintendent

Announcements:

- Mary LeDonne congratulated Sabine Sloley, District Volunteer of the Year. She also recognized members Sandy Thomas, Bellingham High School Volunteer of the Year; and Kate Foster, Happy Valley Volunteer of the Year. Mary LeDonne received the Central Services Volunteer of the Year award.
- LeDonne thanked Ginny Clawson for addressing the March 26, 2009 School Board meeting in support of all district children.
- Ms. LeDonne thanked the District for the transparency of the budget process. She expressed hope that the public would recognize the many opportunities to participate in the process. She suggested members of the PAC be more proactive in suggesting people get involved by directing them to the district Web site listing task forces and committees. (www.bham.wednet.edu/staff/committee.htm)
- Kate Haskell asked about the facilities audit and capacity study and how families and community members could be involved. Dr. Vedra said the process for including families and community members would be the same as for other task forces, with representatives from all groups. The purpose is to review all district facilities and their capacity, and consider if the learning spaces meet the needs of students. Vedra hopes to present a recommendation to the Board by November 2009.

Finance/Budget Update

Brett Greenwood, Business and Finance manager, and Superintendent Ken Vedra gave an update on the budget proposals from the House, Senate and Governor. The amount of reductions for Bellingham School District varies from \$1.2 million in the Governor's budget to almost \$6 million in the Senate's budget. It is anticipated that a combined budget will be available April 7. The most significant cuts were for I-728 funds that are used to staff lower class sizes, for professional development, summer school and extended learning opportunities. Federal stimulus funds may help reduce some of the cuts proposed by the House and Senate. Dr. Vedra reviewed the process the District used in formulating a budget savings plan. The plan protects instructional learning for students as much as possible. Greenwood indicated there are still many unknowns in the budget, including revenue from levies, negotiations with two unions, and rising utility costs.

Dr. Vedra indicated the District is working with the Opportunity Council to develop a birth to three program through their providers. We are also writing a grant for a preschool program. Vedra plans to discuss options for athletics and recreation programs with the City and Parks and Recreation Department and Boys and Girls Club. If they are unable to help, the district will put together a task force. The high school "C" team athletic coordinators will present their recommendations for maintaining this program.

Members expressed concern that the budget cuts mean a reduction in professional development for teachers. Dr. Vedra indicated that the district is trying to obtain some federal funds to continue providing professional development.

Mary LeDonne indicated the importance of sharing this information with parents and parent organizations and to keep checking the district Web site for updated information.

Graduation Requirements

Sherrie Brown, deputy superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, reviewed graduation requirements and task force work to align middle and high school schedules. There are four general requirements a student must meet to graduate. They include 1) course requirements; 2) Culminating Project; 3) High School WASL; and 4) High School and Beyond Plan. The Ready Guide is sent home to families of 6 through 11 graders to explain the requirements. According to Brown, our graduation requirements are among the most rigorous in the state.

Information for the Culminating Project is on the district Web site. The components comprising this requirement are the same for all schools but the schools may differ in implementation. Ms. Brown explained that the Culminating Project should be a learning stretch for each student. Volunteers are needed to work with students and serve on panels to evaluate the presentations.

There was discussion on ways to involve volunteers in school activities and a suggestion was made to use volunteers to design a volunteer program, including peer tutoring for the district.

Brown explained how task forces are implemented and how community members may serve on task forces. The District obtains information from the public in a variety of ways, including surveys, focus groups and task forces.

Middle School/High School Scheduling

One of the recommendations of the Graduation Implementation Task Force is to align the middle and high school schedules. Aligning schedules would allow students opportunity for inter-school collaboration and extend learning opportunities. In May, Brown will reconvene the task force for additional discussion. Any alignment of schedules will not occur until the 2010–11 school year. Brown emphasized they want to be creative in their thinking in order to best meet the needs of students. There are many considerations including transportation for students and balancing the number of students at each school, based on capacity.

School Reports

Silver Beach Elementary School

Shane Grams reported that their jog-a-thon is one of their best fund raisers. They send out envelopes and the children collect sponsors or accept donations. They schedule the jog-a-thon over two days in May with music and popsicle treats. They sponsor an art contest before the jog-a-thon with the winner's art printed on tee shirts. Children who collect a certain amount of money receive a shirt. Last year the jog-a-thon collected \$13,000. They also do a cookie dough fund raiser at the beginning of the school year, but it does not raise as much money. Because Silver Beach plans to purchase new playground equipment with the funds raised, Grams asked for suggestions on planning a new playground. It was suggested that if families know there is only one fundraiser, they will donate more.

Happy Valley, Roosevelt, Larrabee and Lowell have all raised funds for new playground equipment and offered the following suggestions:

- Buy one piece of equipment at a time
- Apply for grant money
- Do a fundraiser specifically for the playground equipment
- Include the district in your plans
- Have an idea of the cost of the equipment
- Do inexpensive things like painting the blacktop to add color
- Don't promise completion by a certain day
- The Parks and Recreation is a great resource

Group Sharing

Attendees were asked to share what they planned to take back to their school. Items included:

- List of current task forces and how to access them—<http://www.bham.wednet.edu/staff/committee>
- Work on rumor control and share accurate information
- Aligning middle and high school schedules
- Getting accurate communication to families
- Sharing budget information
- Working to get more parents on Parent Connect and the district Web site
- Work with families who are frustrated that they can't find information on the Web site
- Remind people that communication is a two way street—people need to get involved
- Encourage PTA to use Culminating Project students to help with school activities for their project
- Pier system e-news is a great way for families to get information. Could information about e-news be put in first day packets?
- Communications Office has cards to hand out to sign up for e-news

School Reports

Members may sign up for sharing time at each meeting. This is an opportunity to share a best practice or to bring up a concern.

May 6: Sehome

Alderwood

June 3: Roosevelt

Suggested Agenda for Next Meeting

- Bellingham Public School Foundation
- Update on budget
- World Language

Future Meetings:

May 6, 2009, 9:15 a.m. at Central Services, 1306 Dupont, Conference Room 212

June 3, 2009, 9:15 a.m. at Central Services, 1306 Dupont, Board Room