

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

September 10, 2008

Chair: Mary LeDonne

Note taker: Nancy Merry

Mary LeDonne opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking Rob McElroy for inviting us to hold the meeting at Wade King Elementary School. LeDonne announced that Pam Behee had volunteered to act as co-chair. Members unanimously supported Behee as co-chair and LeDonne thanked her for volunteering her support.

State of Education

Superintendent Kenneth Vedra summarized the goals and expectations for the District.

1. **Budget:** The Board passed the District budget for the fiscal year, which runs from September 1, 2008 through August 31, 2009. Last spring, the community supported a general operating levy and a technology levy, which will allow the District to continue to improve technology.
2. **Enrollment/Staffing:** Our enrollment for 2008 remains at approximately 10,000 FTE. However, because students are not always where we think they will be, staffing adjustments have been made. Principals make final decisions to balance class sizes.
3. **Facilities:** Through community supported bonds, Wade King Elementary School was constructed using green construction. Many features will reduce reliance on nonrenewable natural resources. The seismic retrofit on Columbia Elementary School is complete; the first phase of seismic retrofit for Larrabee is complete with the second phase scheduled for the summer of 2009; the Lowell Elementary School seismic retrofit has started. Dr. Vedra indicated a process to name a principal for Lowell will include parents. The principal, who will be named by November 1, will work with staff and the community as decisions are made to move back into Lowell.

Shuksan Middle School rebuild is underway. Tearing down the old Shuksan and restoring the play fields will take time. The seismic retrofit for Central Services and constructing Aldrich elementary school are all tied to the Shuksan rebuild with no definite timelines established.

The District has been working with the city and county to locate an appropriate elementary school site in Sudden Valley. The seismic retrofit for Whatcom Middle School is in the planning stages. In response to a question, Vedra indicated there are no plans to make any changes to Sehome High School. To do so would require approval of a new bond. Vedra said the District plans to do a facility audit on all District buildings, which would take 12–18 months. With the current economic conditions, there are several factors which would need to be considered before any decisions are made regarding a new bond.

4. **AYP:** Shuksan and Parkview are no longer Title 1 schools and therefore, do not come under AYP sanctions; however, the District is still focused on improving them. Title 1

schools are determined based on the percentage of students receiving free and reduced lunches. Alderwood, Birchwood, Sunnyland and Roosevelt elementary schools are Title 1 schools.

5. **WASL:** The WASL measures students as “proficient” or “advanced” in several categories, including gender, ethnicity, ELL, special needs, etc. None of our middle schools made AYP. Bellingham and Sehome high schools did not make AYP because of low participation.
6. **Committees/Task Forces:** Several committees are continuing their work, including the Graduation Requirement Task Force, Full-Day Kindergarten Task Force and World Language Task Force. If you are interested in being a parent participant in any of these committees and task forces, please let Dr. Vedra know.
7. **Strategic Planning Class:** Dr. Vedra is teaching a class on strategic planning for schools, including a review of mission and vision statements and targeted objectives so schools will be in better alignment with the District strategic plan.
8. **CORE 24:** The State has approved CORE 24 which increases graduation requirements and parallels the District's graduation requirements. Dr. Vedra indicated he would be willing to do a presentation on this at a later date.
9. **No Child Left Behind:** This will be up for reconsideration in the next Congress.
10. **School Finance:** School finance must change if we want better education for our children. There are three proposals before the state on school finance.

If you have questions for Dr. Vedra, Mary LeDonne suggested sending them to her prior to the next meeting.

Washington State PTA Organizations

Bill Williams, executive director of the Washington State PTA, addressed the group on the benefits of belonging to the PTA. Mr. Williams indicated there are currently 150,000 members in the state PTA, in approximately 920 active chapters. There are many benefits to being affiliated with the Washington State PTA, including:

- ³ Insurance, including coverage for liability, and officers and directors. He also recommended parent associations have a bond. Other insurance would be beneficial, but not required. Some of the insurance is included in the membership or is available at a reasonable cost.
- ³ The state PTA acts as the registered agent, which is less complicated than changing agents each year as officers change.
- ³ Other benefits include: training; legal advice; regional conferences; legislative and community relations; lobbyists during legislative session; credit card; and relationships with T-Mobile, Southwest Airlines, Barnes and Nobel. Personal insurance will soon be available for individual members.

Concerns were expressed that the region covering Bellingham has lacked leadership at the state level. Mr. Williams indicated they are aware of this and are working to correct it. Regional representatives are volunteers who are only reimbursed for mileage and meals.

PTA's serve all levels although more focus seems to be at the elementary level. Mr. Williams is working to increase the number of PTA's at the high school level.

Members indicated that an additional benefit of the state organization is as a resource to clarify questions and for legal opinions. Mr. Williams said their web site would soon be redesigned and be easier to navigate.

Independent PTO Organizations

Sharon Stahl, who has been a co-president and involved in the Whatcom Middle School PTA and Columbia Elementary School PTO, discussed the pros and cons of both types of organizations. According to Stahl, the Columbia PTO is a 503c organization with all the necessary insurance policies. It is a small school and dedicated parents provide many opportunities for students. All parents are considered to be members and dues are not assessed, although donations are accepted. From a negative standpoint, she mentioned the lack of training.

There was group discussion about the benefits of belonging to the state PTA, including audit and legal resources, if needed; Reflections; Golden Acorn; legislative, etc. For schools forming new parent organizations, it was also felt that the state organization offered valuable support.

A request was made to include in the minutes which schools are PTA's and which are PTO's. The list is attached. Mary LeDonne will also include this information on the contact list for Parent Advisory members.

Wade King Elementary School Tour

Rob McElroy, principal, welcomed members to the school, which was built with a bond passed in 2006. McElroy took members on a tour of the school.

NEXT MEETING:

October 1, 2008; 9:15 to 11:15 a.m. at the Administration Building, 1306 Dupont Street.

FUTURE MEETING DATES:

November 5, 2008
December 3, 2008
January 7, 2009
February 4, 2009

March 4, 2009
April 1, 2009
May 6, 2009
June 3, 2009