

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

December 3, 2008

Schools Represented:

Elementary Schools:

Columbia
Happy Valley
Northern Heights
Roosevelt

Middle Schools:

Fairhaven
Kulshan
Shuksan
Whatcom

High Schools:

Bellingham

District Staff: Ken Vedra, Superintendent; Tanya Rowe, Director of Communications and Community Relations; Kenn Robinson, Director, Student Services

Note Taker: Nancy Merry

Co-Chairs: Pam Behee

Task Force Update/Superintendent's Announcements

Superintendent Ken Vedra reviewed some of the Task Forces being formed, including one to review the Highly Capable Learners Program (HCL). Dr. Vedra would like to expand the HCL program to include extended learning opportunities and enrichment opportunities for all students. He feels all students are gifted in some way and the District needs to provide opportunities for these students. How to fund such programs is a factor to be considered.

Other task forces being planned include improving communications with non-English speaking families; full-day kindergarten; and the birth to three program.

Parent involvement is encouraged on many task forces. Parents can check the list of task forces on the District website at www.bham.wednet.edu/staff/committee.htm.

School Emergencies

Dr. Vedra reviewed the circumstances that prompted the lockdown at Squalicum High School and Northern Heights Elementary School on December 2. Both Central Services and the schools debriefed after the incident, which was prompted by the sighting of an individual with a rifle, which was actually a BB gun.

Vedra explained the two types of lockdown. One occurs when there is an imminent threat and students and staff take cover; in the other type, normal activities continue but no one is allowed to enter or leave the building. With input from law enforcement officials, the administrator on site makes the decision as to which type of lockdown to impose.

Tanya Rowe, director of Communications and Community Relations, explained that Central Services can communicate with schools by emergency radios and cell phones. Radios can also be used to communicate with fire and police officials.

The District uses the Pier System, a content management system also used by fire and police departments. It is also used to send communication by e-news to families. Ms. Rowe explained that when there is a delay in communicating it is to verify information and make certain it is accurate. She did indicate she tries to get information out within 20 minutes. The District also has the ability to call families with an "automated" message. However, this is very expensive and would be used only in certain circumstances. Rowe also reported she is investigating the pros and cons of sending text messages to families.

According to Dr. Vedra, the District plans to do a table-top exercise on a non-life threatening incident with the police and fire departments. Earlier in the week, Vedra and other administrators had a very positive meeting with law enforcement and fire officials to discuss ways to improve communications and work effectively together.

International Baccalaureate

Dr. Vedra recently returned from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, where he attended an International Baccalaureate Board of Directors meeting. He also announced that Wade King Elementary School has been approved to IB candidate status.

Student Discipline

Kenn Robinson, director of Student Services, reviewed Procedure 3200, *Student Rights and Responsibilities*. By law, the District is required to have a policy and procedure detailing how the use of illegal substances is handled. Robinson reviewed the sanctions, which vary by grade level, becoming more severe as the student gets older. The policy and procedure are being revised with input from administrators, parents and students. It was suggested that these sanctions be reviewed in detail at the middle and high school orientations.

Policy and Procedure 3700, *High School Co-Curricular Activities Program*, cover students involved in co-curricular and/or extra-curricular activities. This policy and procedure is being revised. Deputy Superintendent Sherrie Brown is working with activities directors to ensure the high schools are consistent in applying sanctions.

Parents discussed whether suspending or expelling a student was really a punishment and agreed such discipline had to be a joint effort with the family. Other options to discipline, such as community work, were considered but such options are limited. For some students, there are alternative learning placements, such as Home Port Learning Center. Robinson is also investigating on-line schooling that a student could do at home but would be monitored by school staff.

There was discussion concerning permissions needed for students to have over-the-counter medicine at schools. There are policies and procedures dealing with medicine at school and self-administration of medicine at school; however, parents indicated that they would like the ability to send cough drops or over-the-counter pain or cold medicine with students for short-term use without having to obtain a doctor's permission first. Mr. Robinson said he would check into this as a possibility.

The parents would like to discuss other issues dealing with student behavior, including language, dress code, behavior at student dances, cell phone use, and student information posted on websites such as *My Space.com*. They suggested having an evening meeting with police to learn proactive ways to prevent drug, alcohol and tobacco use, update families on risk factors, and to learn how police are dealing with student parties. The meeting could include a panel discussion.

Supervision Schedule

When families have concerns or problems, they are encouraged to contact the person closest to the situation first, then the school principal, followed by the Central Services administrator who supervises the school. The supervision schedule can be found on the District website at <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/district/supervisionlist.htm>

Group Sharing

Members may sign up for group sharing time for each meeting. Group sharing will be limited to three schools per meeting and will be an opportunity to share a best practice or to bring up a concern. Members signed up for the following schools:

January 7:	1. Fairhaven 2. Happy Valley 3.	April 1:	1. Sehome 2. 3.
February 4:	1. Bellingham 2. 3.	May 6:	1. 2. 3.
March 4:	1. Silver Beach 2. Alderwood 3.	June 3:	1. Roosevelt 2. 3.

Members are asked to share information from these meetings with their principal and parent organizations.

Future Meetings:

Meetings are from 9:15 to 11:15 a.m. at the Administration Building, 1306 Dupont Street as follows:

January 7, 2009
February 4, 2009
March 4, 2009
April 1, 2009
May 6, 2009
June 3, 2009