

Superintendent's Parent Advisory Committee

February 6, 2008

Note taker: Nancy Merry

Announcements

Mary LaDonne and Amanda Nunez will distribute an interest survey next week to members of the Parent Advisory Committee. Based on input, they will determine the topics for the remaining meetings. On February 21 there will be a special parent meeting at Kulshan Middle School at 6:30 p.m. Topics include information on assessments and the District budget, including the upcoming levy election. Members are encouraged to get the word out to other families. The District will send information via a press release and e-news.

Les Miserables, a combined production with Sehome, Squalicum and Bellingham high schools, will be performed at Bellingham High School, Feb. 21 through March 2.

Highly Capable Learners' Program (continued)

Susan Peterson, director of Federal and Special Programs, and Peggy Taylor, HCLP facilitator, continued their presentation from the January 9, 2008 meeting. Ms. Peterson distributed answers to questions received from the prior meeting.

The current HCL Program looks at what is occurring in the regular classroom and, considering the needs of the HCL student, determines ways to make it more challenging. Based on the student's HCL educational plan developed with the teacher, student and parent, a program is designed for each student. Ms. Taylor reviewed some of the opportunities available for HCL students, including enrichment opportunities and pullout programs. Taylor also summarized some of the educational units used at elementary, middle and high school levels.

Peterson and Taylor responded to questions, including opportunities for students who don't qualify for the HCL Program and about better communication with parents about how students can access the Program. Testing for the program occurs twice a year.

Superintendent Ken Vedra commented on other educational options for students. For example, Shuksan Middle School has a program called AVID, which started for under-achieving students, but benefits all students as it encourages achieving at higher levels. As Vedra explained, because of No Child Left Behind's impact on funding, all districts focus more on under-achieving students. The District is also working to assist students as they transition between levels, from elementary to middle school, and from middle to high school. The District is also moving to add dual language for all students. Vedra appreciated hearing about the need for better communication between school and home.

Electives

Deputy Superintendent Susan Zoller reviewed electives, which give students choices at middle and high school. The District does not consider electives “frills” but necessary for happy, healthy and responsible citizens able to earn an income.

At middle school, students can select one elective, which alternates daily with the required physical education class. New legislation currently being considered would require 30 minutes of physical education every day. Zoller encouraged parents to share their opinion with legislators on this proposed law. Two years ago, the District changed the middle school schedule from seven to six periods a day. By making the school day common at each middle school all students are guaranteed a viable schedule. The middle schools are looking at how they can add to their current schedule to have daily options for electives. Physical education can be waived under certain criteria. For the 2007–2008 school year, the District approved a total of 31 physical education waivers at the middle school level and 76 at the high school level.

At the high schools, electives vary by school. The World Language Task Force is looking at the offerings of languages at all grade levels.

Zoller responded to questions including that Running Start can be used to fill graduation requirements. Other questions concerned on-line learning.

Policy/Procedure 4320, Distribution of Written Material for Students

Tanya Rowe, director of School Information and Communications, reported that the District is reviewing the policy and procedure on distributing and posting written materials in schools. Rowe distributed a draft and asked for feedback. In particular, she asked that the portion that applies to parent groups be reviewed for clarity. Send any comments to Mary LaDonne or Amanda Nunez by March 5 and they will forward to Rowe or bring comments to the next Superintendent Parent Advisory Meeting. Rowe clarified that this policy and procedure applies to the District; individual PTA's need to have their principal's approval before sending material home or posting.

Back on Track Reading

Nan Thomas gave a presentation on the *Back on Track Reading Program*. The program, which is now used by most elementary schools, is funded by a grant and is dependent on volunteers. *Back on Track Reading* improves fluency and comprehension. It supports the work of the teachers and includes practice pieces for the students. The Program has proven to be a very powerful learning tool. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Nancy Merry at nmerry@bham.wednet.edu. Tanya Rowe will use District media to ask for volunteers. Nan Thomas is willing to share this Program with middle school teachers when they are ready, but it is often difficult getting parent volunteers at middle schools. Suggestion was made to send flyers home at the beginning of the year and at mid-year asking for volunteers.

PTA Best Practices:

Sharon Stahl and Meg Metzger proposed hosting a forum for PTA Boards to share ideas. A tentative date of May 7 was suggested to include new PTA's executive boards as well as out-going boards. Other suggestions included holding the forum in the evening and grouping by level as well as one general group, and to set a planning meeting with the PTA presidents. Attendees indicated their support for holding the forum and agreed to continue planning at the March 5 meeting. Comments or suggestions can be sent to Meg Metzger at megmetz@comcast.net.

Attached is a document prepared by Sharon Stahl and Meg Metzger. They are requesting that you review and be prepared to discuss the following at the next meeting:

1. Does May 7th work for most everyone?
2. Does three tracks (listed at the bottom of the second page) of General, Elementary, and Middle/High school see to fit?
3. What topics should be included in these tracks? See proposed topics on page 2.
4. Who would like to serve as moderators for discussion topics and report back/write up the learnings?

Future Meetings/Topics

February 21, 2008	Finance (Maintenance and Operation and Technology Levy)
Kulshan Middle School	Assessments
6:30 p.m.	
March 5, 2008	Superintendent's Parent Advisory Meeting
Roeder Board Room	Best Practices Forum Planning
9:15 a.m.	International Baccalaureate Program (Ken Vedra)