

## Superintendent's Parent Advisory Committee

*April 2, 2008*

Co-Chair: Mary LeDonne

Note taker: Nancy Merry

Superintendent Ken Vedra reported on the National School Board Association (NSBA) Annual Conference he attended in Orlando, Florida with two Board members. He attended a two-day law seminar as well as many interesting sessions and heard several very prominent speakers.

### **K-12 Articulation**

Superintendent Ken Vedra discussed K–12 articulation and how it impacts graduation. The District is working to make sure what students learn at the lower grades flows into what they learn at middle and high school. The District has to not only look at grade level Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), but also the system as a whole. Teachers need to know what students are taught in the previous grade so they can built on, and enhance, those skills.

Vedra also discussed the WASL test and emphasized it represents a student's learning at that moment—a snapshot of skills. The District uses a variety of assessments to evaluate a student's skills over time in order to identify whether students have mastered the subject and are ready to move ahead. However, the question exists that if assessments measure grade level expectations, how do we know each student's capacity for learning?

In order to make sure more students graduate, Vedra believes learning a content area by itself is not enough. It is a combination of learned skills, the integrated set of skills, that will help students be successful. With this in mind, the District is developing a K-12 curriculum model that aligns our standards, grade by grade.

In addition, the District must make sure that professional development uses the correct strategies to deliver instruction that will result in each student moving forward. We must also evaluate the level of staff ability to make sure they have the skills to assess each student.

Mathematics curriculum is being evaluated at the state level. The state has reviewed mathematics curriculums from other states as well as international resources. After a panel and teachers review this data, curriculum materials necessary to deliver these standards will be determined. The state will also be developing scaled score exams, starting with mathematics. The United States Department of Education is also reviewing mathematics standards. At the District level groups of middle and high school teachers are working together to review our mathematics curriculum. The District will also be providing more training for elementary teachers in science and math.

A discussion on professional development and coaching followed. The district has been involved heavily through the Gates grant with coaching. This started with the elementary schools, then middle and now high schools. Professional development must be a positive experience, dealing with instructional content material. Vedra said the District is focusing on professional development both between, and within, levels. All schools teach the same curriculum, but they do not have to teach it in the same way. The best teachers are parents, teachers and principals, working together to create the best results.

Vedra said part of the responsibility of the Graduation Implementation Task Force is to review the transition between fifth and sixth grade and eighth and ninth grade, in order to make the transitions better. The Task Force also looking at the courses offered at middle school for high school credit.

In addition, beginning in September 2009, the District will be responsible for the education of birth-to-three special needs children and will be developing a program for these students.

*Comments/questions from the attendees:*

Concern over the number of students who will not graduate. Superintendent Vedra indicated we must assist each student, individually. However, this is a bigger discussion and work for the District to determine the best way to ensure all students graduate.

Does professional development need to be more district-based and less school-based? Perhaps parents would be more supportive of Learning Improvement Days if they knew how these days were used.

Several felt the District should concentrate on lower performing students, to provide opportunities for all students, not just the college-bound. Perhaps develop a better technical program. Other countries focus appropriate training for those not college bound and value technical work. Vedra is working with the refineries, Alcoa, Whatcom Community College and Bellingham Technical College to develop better career and technical skills programs. It was also felt that students who don't go to college still need solid basic skills and a drive to be successful.

Parental involvement is important to a student's success.

Vedra indicated that all curriculum content will be reviewed over the next five years. Once complete, it will be reviewed cyclically every five years. The first course content area curriculum is complete and ready for his review before being presented to the Board.

Excited about changes and the spiraling curriculum.

Good that we are looking at transitions between levels.

Kate Haskell reported on a program she has been putting together for elementary youth on early release days. The program uses Western Washington University students and

focuses on art and science enrichment. The first one was held at Alderwood for grades 3 through 5 but Haskell is planning to apply for a grant to expand the program to other schools and grades. At the next meeting Haskell will present more information.

Excited about what is coming down the road...the spiraling curriculum.

Glad about the work on transitions. Feels the coaching at Carl Cozier Elementary School has been very effective. Parent Connect is very effective at keeping families involved.

Students who speak a foreign language have difficulty learning.

### **PTA Best Practices Forum Planning**

Sharon Stahl reported on the Best Practices Faire to be held at Bellingham High School Commons Wednesday, May 7 from 6:30 to 9 p.m. A sign up sheet was passed around for those who could commit to attend, host a booth, and/or take notes. This is a great opportunity for schools to share their strengths and learn other schools' best ideas. Stahl reviewed the general topics but indicated if there would be opportunity to break away for those interested in other topics. Stahl will be sending out a flyer to schools about the Faire, and also asked members of the Parent Advisory Committee to encourage members of their parent organizations to attend.

### **Job Description for Parent Advisory Members**

Mary LeDonne handed out survey responses by members of the Parent Advisory Committee in which members described what they felt their responsibilities were. After discussing, the group identified several they felt were most accurate. LeDonne will meet with a few members of the Committee and draft a job description and bring back to the next meeting. In general, it was felt the Committee serves as an advisory, not a decision-making, body that:

- encourages ideas and suggestions
- makes recommendations
- provides opportunities for more parent involvement on committees and task forces.

### **Future Meetings**

**May 7, 2008**                      Sharing Best Practices Faire  
**Bellingham High School**  
**6:30–9:00 p.m.**

**May 14, 2008**                      Superintendent's Parent Advisory Meeting  
(*changed from May 7*)              Debrief from Best Practices Faire  
**Roeder Board Room**              Selecting New Chairs  
**9:15 a.m.**                              Review Job Description of Committee  
    Discuss/Determine Goals of Committee  
    Creating Districtwide Community Educational Options