

Superintendent's Parent Advisory Committee

December 5, 2007

Note taker: Nancy Merry

Food Service Program

Mark Dalton, manager of Food Services, presented information on the District Food Service program. The department is comprised of 78 staff who administer the program and serve breakfast and lunch at 23 different sites. During the 2006–2007 school year, they served 1,029,819 meals, a daily average of 5,851 meals. There are four cooking clusters that prepare the food for all locations. The program spends approximately 56% of the budget on labor, 41% on food costs, and 3% for expenses. Due to money received from SNA (School Nutrition Association), all students who qualify for free or reduced meals receive free breakfasts. Overall, 34% of students in the District qualify for free or reduced meals.

Meals served over a one-week period are required to meet standards set by the National School Lunch Program. The standards limit fat and provide one-third of the RDA of protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C. Meal portions are age appropriate, making schools one of the last places in the United States where you can purchase a meal with the recommended serving size. However, as Dalton explained, even though the District prepares and presents balanced meals, the students have choices in what they select so what they choose is another issue.

Studies show that students who eat school meals are more likely to have and maintain a healthy weight. They are more likely to consume vegetables, milk and milk products, meat and other protein rich foods, and they consume less soda and fruit drinks.

The District serves both 1% low-fat white milk and fat-free chocolate milk. According to Dalton, studies show that if students only have white milk, they won't drink a whole carton. While Dalton agrees that the chocolate milk has more sugar, it also contains the other good qualities of milk, which children need.

In 2005, the District adopted a wellness policy that prohibits serving anything during school hours designated as having minimal nutritional value such as soda, caffeine, candy or fatty snacks. This policy affects vending machines, student stores and fundraising efforts by student groups. The District also encourages healthy food for school parties.

The Food for Flowers program has been expanded to all elementary and middle schools. Approximately 3,000 pounds of food scraps, milk cartons, etc. are composted at Green Earth Technologies daily. This reduces waste removal costs, is environmentally friendly, easy to manage and a great teaching tools. High schools will be added once the process is running smoothly at the other grade levels.

Dalton responded to questions and comments including:

- Why is the milk often partially frozen at Columbia?
 - Dalton will check on the temperature of the refrigerator.
- What are the options for serving soy milk for children who are lactose intolerant?
 - Dalton will check to see if it would qualify for nutrition value.
- Is juice available for lunch?

- Yes, if the child has a slip from the doctor. Milk is required for each student coming through the lunch line.
- What kind of snacks are served at after-school programs?
 - Snacks in small portions are served for the after-school reading program.
- Why don't other schools have fruit bowls like Shuksan?
 - As a Title 1 school, the Food Service Department applied for a grant to provide free fruit to Shuksan students. It is an annual grant and is not always given to the same school each year. Without the grant, it would not be financially possible for the District to provide.
- Could lunches include more protein in the form of black beans, hummus, etc.?
 - Dalton said they do use other sources of protein in a limited way but it doesn't have broad appeal.
- How many veggie meals are served? Are vegan meals available?
 - Every school has veggie options available. Vegan meals are not available.
- Why do schools run out of favorites?
 - Dalton will look into this.
- What can be done to educate students to make healthy choices?
 - The District has health classes at elementary levels and works constantly on helping students make healthy choices but students also learn from magazines and their peers. There is discussion about including nutritional information for food items at the middle and high school levels to help students make healthy choices. Parents also suggested using newsletter inserts or the media to educate parents about how school lunches have changed to be healthier.
- Have there been recommendations about sodium in the school meal program?
 - Not yet, but it is anticipated.
- Could the schools have vending machines with fruit in them?
 - The District tried this but students said the apples were not good. The District could look into it again.
- How does the District deal with children's food allergies?
 - Families should discuss food allergies with the school nurse and food service staff. The District does not post food allergy information but the use of peanut butter has been reduced.

Additional questions can be directed to Mark Dalton at mdalton@bham.wednet.edu or 676-6574. The PowerPoint presentation will be posted on the Food Service website at <http://www.bham.wednet.edu/departments/foodservices/Stats06-07.pdf>.

Items of interest for future meetings

Co-chairs Amanda Nunez and Mary LeDonne thanked those who responded to their survey on topics for future meetings.

Comments included:

- There are more parents representing elementary than high schools, resulting in high school items being on the bottom of the list. LeDonne and Nunez indicated that every effort is made to present topics that have a broad (K-12) spectrum. If items pertain to levels, breakout rooms could be used.
- Best practices may be broken up into grade level or special interest.

- Future meeting may do breakout sessions geared to other topics.
- Other parents are welcome to the meetings.
- All attendees should be given an opportunity to speak.
- Attendees would like to share the results of the topic survey with other parents.
- Could a discussion on bus transportation, including rules for bus drivers be included (at what age do parents no longer have to meet the school bus to get their student?).

Sharing Best Practices (2 minute limit)

- Do other elementary schools have student councils? If so, how do they teach/encourage elementary level students to take leadership positions?
 - Individual buildings choose to have student leadership groups. Before starting, parents should discuss with their principal well ahead of implementing. At some elementary schools, students apply to be in the leadership group and teachers select 5th and, occasionally, 4th graders. It is not by election. The teacher does leadership projects with the group during school day or during lunch. Changes in the south side schools next year will provide an important opportunity for students to take on leadership opportunities. Another suggestion is to recruit high school students to help elementary students. The added benefit for the high school student is that it could be a service learning or a culminating project.
- Need best practices for parents of students transitioning between levels. Ken is working with principals on transition planning. Parents also need to know several years ahead of time what to expect (for example, kindergarten parents need to meet with 5th grade parents).
- Could the group establish minimal standards for all schools—best practices for student government, parent/school communications (including newsletters), memory books, and transition activities between grades and levels. Suggestion was made to do an interschool fair once a year to share ideas and best practices on communication; how to run successful fundraisers such as sock hops, fun runs, carnivals, etc. This would be an opportunity for parent groups to learn and share information about parent-sponsored, as well as district-sponsored, events. By sharing best ideas, all schools would raise more money to benefit all children. Meg Metzler and Sharon Stahl will look into the idea of starting a fair. They will send out an email and those interested in helping should contact them.
- Need to know who to go to in the district for answers to questions.
- At some meetings, have breakout sessions and attendees can choose to attend the ones of interest to them.
- Susan Zoller will discuss SharePoint with Ann Reed, director of Instructional Technology and Libraries, to see if this is a program that could be used by parents to share and discuss common topics.

Comments or Questions from Group

- Likes sharing ideas
- Likes the idea of sharing fund-raising and program ideas
- Would like to know more about how to use grants to get money for their school
- Would like to know how to get more parents involved in schools
- Looking forward to learning more about how the district works

- Would like to know how to get students more involved
- Be clearer with best practices
- Likes the idea of 15 minutes for sharing best practices, then can pursue topic with other person if interested
- Share address, phone number, email address with others. Contact Mary LaDonne if you do not want your email shared with other parents in Parent Advisory.
- At high school level, it is helpful when students talk with other students and when students meet with other parents.
- Best way to be in touch with what is happening at your child's school is to look on school's daily bulletin.
- Need to focus deeply on a few things rather than skim the surface on a lot of issues, avoid information overload.
- Would like to know what other PTA's are paying for and/or sponsoring.
- Email a list of your school's fundraisers to Amanda
- Level schools, or all elementary schools with high percent of ELL students, or feeder schools should meet together for sharing (not district sponsored)
- Create a matrix of which each school does (fun runs, carnivals, etc.) and share
- Share commonalities, especially at the high school level

If you have specific questions you would like answered at the next meeting, please email your question ahead of time to nmerry@bham.wednet.edu.

Next Meetings/Topics

January 9, 2008, 9:15 a.m. at the Boathouse:

Budget Process

Special Needs Students (Special Education, Highly Capable Learners Program)

February 6, 2008, 9:15 a.m. Board Room

Electives in Schools

School Scheduling (Graduation Implementation Requirements Task Force)

Back on Track Reading Program

February 21, 2008, 6:30 p.m. Kulshan Middle School

Assessments

Finance (M & O/Technology Levy)