

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

November 16, 2011

Schools Represented: All elementary, middle and high schools were represented.

Co-Chairs: Sharon Stahl and Rachel Williams

District Staff: Superintendent Greg Baker
Director of Communications & Community Relations Tanya Rowe
Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan
Human Resources Director Nora Klewiada
Department of Teaching and Learning Team

Note Taker: Janet Kennedy, secretary to the Director of Communications & Community Relations

Welcome

Co-Chairs Sharon Stahl and Rachel Williams extended a welcome to all and committee members introduced themselves.

Debrief of Learnings from Differentiation Discussion

Principal on Special Assignment (POSA) Andy Mark distributed information on the Socratic seminar model and invited PAC to observe staff from the Department of Teaching and Learning participating in a discussion on differentiation of instruction based on feedback from the PAC Committee on Oct.19. Tom Venable facilitated the discussion with the goal of identifying key points that will help the Teaching and Learning team to focus its efforts.

Key points and questions from the discussion:

- Need to ensure that Powerful Teaching and Learning (PTL) strategies are occurring in the classroom and that teachers have the ability/flexibility to differentiate instruction.
- Teacher personality—are all teachers suited to differentiation of instruction?
- Need to determine how teachers will be trained and gain the tools to be successful.
- Are teachers using assessments to ascertain if student needs differentiated instruction? Concluded that all teachers aren't. Principals need a checklist of what to look for in the classroom.
- Need to utilize teacher expertise like we did with the coaching model in the past.
- How does a teacher individualize instruction (tiers)?
- Discussed reality versus the state of differentiated instruction—need a common curriculum.
- Should we be using research and a common delivery model in a different way? Need to follow-up with staff and provide professional development.
- How do we provide consistency of curriculum? Need a common instructional framework and to connect the dots with curriculum, assessment and professional development.
- How do we train teachers to excel and move staff through a higher level of teaching? Belief in training and professional development.

Comments, questions and observations from PAC members:

- Is the gap in the classroom too large? Student can't visualize the "big picture."
- Teachers need to delegate some tasks to parent volunteers, such as copying, in order to free up the teacher for teaching.
- Teachers are overwhelmed because of large class sizes.
- Does differentiation of learning vary from school to school (do smaller schools qualify for extra support)?

- How do we identify the schools that are successful, then capitalize and move forward with other schools?
- Need to tap into WWU resources.
- No real gifted program.
- Need to identify the measures of success and progress.
- How do teachers challenge students at different ability levels? Combination classes do a good job of differentiating instruction.

Tom thanked the committee for providing feedback to the Teaching and Learning team and observing the exercise.

Levy – February 2012

Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan presented a PowerPoint on levy basic facts. Both the district's maintenance and operations levy—which funds nearly 25 percent of day-to-day operations—and the technology levy are expiring in 2012. The replacement levies will be on the Feb. 14, 2012 ballot. Please watch the district website at www.bellinghamschools.org after Dec. 8 for Levy Facts that you can share as a key communicator.

Parents can become involved on a volunteer citizens levy task force that operates outside the district.

Literacy Program at Elementary Level

Elementary literacy Teachers on Special Assignment (TOSAs), Pam Pottle and Dawn Christiana spearheaded an effort to distribute the district's newly adopted K-5 literacy materials. Parents and volunteers from around the district helped to catalog, label and distribute approximately 128,000 books out of Birchwood's gymnasium. There are approximately 500 books in each set. Based on the size of the school, each elementary received at least one set and up to three sets for the largest elementary schools. The adoption took into consideration differentiated instruction, benchmarks to literacy, equity of resources, whole class and small group readers, tools for teachers, assessments, teacher guides, and quality of the texts. Approximately 70 percent of the books are non-fiction with differentiated content, such as math and social studies.

Dawn and Pam filmed the material preparation process and showed a DVD. In appreciation and thanks to all the volunteers who helped with the effort, Dawn and Pam gave a copy of the DVD to PAC members to share with their PTAs.

Announcements

- Rachel Williams reminded committee members about Schoolhouse Talks on Tuesday, November 29 at 6:30 p.m. at BHS. This will be an opportunity for PTO/PTA and community members to get together and dialogue issues.
- Roosevelt is having Chess Night on Thursday, November 17.
- The Whatcom PTSA is sponsoring a babysitting class through Children's Hospital starting on Tuesday, November 22. The class is opened to all middle school students. The fee is \$40. If you have a student who would like to participate, please email Sharon Stahl.

Next Meeting

9:30 a.m. on January 18, 2012 District Office Board Room.