

**Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)**

*November 4, 2010*

**Schools Represented:**

Elementary Schools:

Alderwood  
Birchwood  
Carl Cozier  
Columbia  
Geneva  
Happy Valley  
Larrabee  
Lowell  
Northern Heights  
Parkview  
Roosevelt  
Silver Beach  
Sunnyland  
Wade King

Middle Schools:

Fairhaven  
Kulshan  
Shuksan  
Whatcom

High Schools:

Bellingham  
Sehome  
Squalicum

**Co-Chairs:** Gennie Clawson and Sharon Stahl

**District Staff:** Superintendent Greg Baker  
Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan, Business and Operations  
Executive Director Doug Kyles, School Administration  
Principal Jeannie Hayden, Kulshan Middle School  
Principal Dave Adams, Birchwood Elementary School

**Note Taker:** Nancy Merry, secretary to the Superintendent

**Welcome**

After introductions from all members, Dr. Greg Baker expressed appreciation to the community for their support of the supplemental levy. As of Wednesday night, the levy was passing 59% to 41%. The passage of the supplemental levy is good news in the midst of these uncertain times. Dr. Baker emphasized the goal that every school must deliver a high quality education for all students.

These funds, \$2.5 million for each of two years, will first try and protect the district from making further cuts and possibly allow enhancing some educational programs. Some of the issues Dr. Baker wants to consider include changing the elementary schedule, maintaining class size averages, transportation, addressing the high school drop-out rate by providing flexible schedules, aligning arts and health and fitness programs, and early childhood education. The district will soon be working on the budget for the 2011–12 school year.

Dr. Baker and Mr. Cowan responded to question about buses. The purchase of buses must come from the transportation fund. Cowan reported the district has saved nearly 40 hours of bus driver time by reducing the number of routes.

At Tuesdays election, bond issues across the state did not do well so the district will need to consider many factors before deciding when to run a bond election. Dr. Baker acknowledged Sehome High School has been discussed previously as ready for an upgrade.

School boundaries will not be redrawn for the 2011–12 school year. Other strategies will be put in place to deal with any schools that experience large class sizes.

If the district does not develop a two bus run scenario for the 2011–12 school year, one parent asked for a three bus run that minimizes the wait for elementary afternoon buses.

### **Follow up on October Issues**

Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan responded to several issues from the October meeting:

#### **Trigger**

Mr. Cowan explained that class sizes are estimated in the spring for staffing purposes. The actual class sizes are often different from the projections. When class sizes are larger, teachers can “trigger,” which means asking for supplies and equipment, additional paraeducators or extra pay. Triggers are done twice a year, in October and February. Trigger money is given out “first come, first serve.” The amount of money available has decreased over time.

#### **Class Size**

Mr. Cowan reviewed class sizes over time and by grade level. In spite of budget reductions enacted over the last two years, the district has not increased class size averages. The same ratio is used at every school to determine the number of staff.

#### **Transportation**

Soon, the bus routes, pickup and drop off times will be available on the district website. Mr. Cowan also indicated he has scheduled a meeting with WTA to explore the possibility of working cooperatively. He will report back when he has more information.

### **Master Scheduling**

Doug Kyles, executive director of School Administration, introduced Jeannie Hayden, Kulshan Middle School principal, and Dave Adams, Birchwood Elementary School principal, to share how they build a school schedule.

Jeannie Hayden begins with the school starting and ending times, analyzing the needs of the students, what they should be learning, what has changed, and what they need to learn to be successful in high school. Middle schools use teams of teachers consisting of a language arts, social studies, math and a science teacher. They share the same students and collaborate during a common planning time. They also schedule extended learning classes on specific topics. Issues which make scheduling difficult include part-time staff, classes that have to be split around the lunch hour, teacher workload and class transition time. All middle schools have seven periods in each school day.

Dave Adams reviewed some of the issues he faces in designing a schedule for Birchwood Elementary School. Over 70% of Birchwood students qualify for free or reduced lunches. The

school also experiences a high mobility of students. Of their total enrollment of 300 students, about half leave during the school year and another 150 arrive. Many of their students experience social or emotional problems. Because of the high mobility of students, Adams can't develop a class schedule until the first day of school. He designs his schedule based on enrollment and staffing, and includes meeting times into the master schedule. He feels the hardest scheduling issue is ensuring all assistants are scheduled for the right place and making sure the before and after school times, as well as recess, are covered by paraeducators.

As a Title 1 school, Birchwood has access to additional resources, which Adams is focusing on professional learning communities. As an example, students who are struggling receive extra support to bring them up to standard and students who are excelling are offered enrichment.

Hayden, Adams and Kyles responded to questions. Middle schools have experimented with different number of periods in the school day. Administrators have been reviewing data to determine the best length of a class period. In longer blocks, teachers need to teach differently in order to maintain student's attention level.

Questions focused on accelerated math and how to help these students continue to excel in middle and high school. Ms. Hayden acknowledged accelerated math is an issue that principals are continuing to work through. At Kulshan Middle School, they have enough students for an accelerated math class so they can continue to challenge these students within the Kulshan community. If there are not enough students for a full class, the students would probably be sent to a high school for accelerated math. Ms. Hayden indicated concern for students who skip 6<sup>th</sup> grade math because they miss key concepts, which means the 7<sup>th</sup> grade math teacher must spend class time teaching these concepts instead of 7<sup>th</sup> grade math.

Doug Kyles indicated the three comprehensive high school principals are discussing how to develop a common high school schedule in order for students to take courses at other high schools. Such a schedule would take into account travel time, athletics and clubs. One suggestion is a zero period before school or classes at the end of the school day. He acknowledged this would create problems with athletics and bus transportation but there is a need to be more flexible at the high school level to minimize dropout rates and to keep students engaged.

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is currently at Shuksan and Kulshan middle schools and at Squalicum High School. The program is designed to help students in the middle prepare for and succeed in colleges and universities. Students in the program commit to improvement and preparation for college. AVID offers a rigorous program of instruction in academic "survival skills" and college level entry skills. Dr. Baker would like to expand this program to other schools, but cost is a factor.

### **School Budgets**

There was general discussion about how school budgets are prepared. Each school budget has three components. One part is based on the number of students enrolled at the school. Each principal also has a principal's budget and a professional development budget.

Related to school budgets, a question was asked about the school supplies each student is asked to purchase at the beginning of the school year. Each school supply list is different and it was felt

it should be more equitable. Dr. Baker would like to change the way this is handled. Columbia Parent Association has a “school store” that buys school supplies in bulk. Families can buy from the “store” at a reduced rate, saving families money and ensuring equity in the products.

**Announcements**

Silver Beach Elementary School has a math enrichment program in the morning for grades 3, 4, and 5. Enrichment must cross grade levels and not be isolated to elementary or middle schools. There was discussion about how to engage parents across the district in enrichment programs and how to share parent volunteers.

Dr. Baker reinforced that the district needs to define what we are going to hold consistent across the district and what is variable. Schools shouldn't be all different or all the same but we need to make sure every student is fully engaged and able to be successful.

**Future Discussion Suggestion**

Equity among schools

**Next Meeting**

9:45 a.m. December 2, 2010, District Office Board Room