

## Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

March 3, 2011

### Schools Represented:

#### Elementary Schools

Birchwood  
Columbia  
Geneva  
Happy Valley  
Lowell  
Northern Heights  
Roosevelt  
Silver Beach  
Wade King

#### Middle Schools

Fairhaven  
Kulshan  
Shuksan  
Whatcom

#### High Schools

Sehome  
Squalicum

Co-Chairs: Gennie Clawson and Sharon Stahl

District Staff: Greg Baker, Superintendent

Tanya Rowe, Director, Communications and Community Relations

Kenn Robinson, Director, Categorical Programs and Support Services

Note Taker: Nancy Merry, secretary to the Superintendent

### Welcome

Co-Chair Sharon Stahl opened the meeting and made the following announcements:

- Due to Spring Break, the next meeting is March 31.
- Gennie Clawson's term as Co-Chair will end at the end of the school year. Please start thinking about who would replace Gennie as co-chair.
- There will be a videographer at today's meeting filming an upcoming video with Dr. Baker.

### PTO Best Practices Exchange

Rachel Williams reported that a PTO Best Practices Exchange is scheduled for 6:30 to 9 p.m., May 16 at the Bellingham High School Commons. The goal is to share and exchange ideas to improve PTA/PTO practices. Faith Stewart will facilitate. Rachel hopes this could become a regular activity, perhaps twice a year. She will contact PTA/PTO leaders and members of the Parent Advisory Committee to encourage participation and attendance.

### Supply Task Force Update

Kenn Robinson, Director of Categorical Programs and Support Services, gave an update on the work of the Supply Task Force. The Task Force has met and reviewed the school-requested supplies. Items were divided into three groups: curriculum (colored pencils for science, calculator), classroom/building (ream of white paper), and student items (backpack, pencil box). Mr. Robinson asked schools to review their lists and identify to which group the items belong and whether the items are "required" or "optional" and return the lists by March 8. Robinson will

review the lists and decide the next step. Options include having the District cover some items, eliminating non-essential items, coordinating purchases through bulk buying, etc. His goal is to design one standard list for each grade level.

### *Entry Plan Update Survey Data and Next Steps to Solutions*

Superintendent Greg Baker reviewed survey data and shared his thoughts on some decisions he has made and will be making.

#### Kindergarten

Last week, he announced that beginning with the 2011–2012 school year, all elementary schools will have daily full-day kindergarten. This move has already started on Feb. 28 with the Title 1 schools due the availability of one-time federal funds that can be used only at Title 1 schools. He acknowledged some families have expressed concern that it is not in all schools, but he explained funds are not available to do it at all schools now.

#### Whatcom Middle School

It has also been announced that Whatcom Middle School will open to students for the 2011–12 school year, a full year ahead of time.

#### Budget

Dr. Baker and Board President Ann Whitmyer were in Olympia Sunday and Monday meeting with legislators. There are indications are that we are coming out of the recession, but we are not out of the woods, yet. The largest cuts from the state have to do with class size and the loss of I-728 funds. Baker said this is the equivalent of the District losing about 30 teachers. With the passage of the supplemental levy, the impact on the District will be lessened. The District will still experience increases in class sizes, mostly at the secondary level, which has been overstaffed, but much less than if the supplemental levy had not passed.

#### Start/End Times

On Monday, Dr. Baker will announce a Springboard Proposal regarding improving school start and end times. This issue has impacted elementary families and staff the most this year. Baker has met with students, staff and families throughout this school year to brainstorm ways to:

- increase learning time for elementary students who currently attend school 6 hours per day while middle and high school students attend 6.5 hours per day;
- provide an earlier elementary school start time;
- explore a later high school start time; and
- resolve transportation issues.

After hearing from families and receiving over 1,300 survey results from students in grades 8 through 11, he is prepared to propose a change in start and end times. Baker explained his reasoning and reviewed pros and cons in the following proposed schedule:

- High School: 7:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. with flexible scheduling encouraged.
- Elementary Schools: 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Middle Schools: 9:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

There are several complexities with this schedule. He has met with Whatcom Transportation Authority officials about a partnership. They plan to continue conversations and feel, at some point, a solution will be reached. In the meantime, the District must work with three bus runs, maintaining 45 minutes between runs. It was suggested that a grant might be available to help support funding a transportation partnership with WTA, the City of Bellingham and the District.

Another complexity with this schedule has to do with the elementary schools. Currently, there are not funds to have a 6.5 hour elementary school day, as proposed. Baker is suggesting a weekly early release for elementary only. This would allow a set time for clubs, play dates, medical appointments, lessons, etc. It would also allow teachers planning time, both individually and in teams. Because children are not present, the District would save money by not requiring classroom substitutes. Schools will still have some flexibility to add other enrichment time, counselors, etc. Middle schools would be encouraged to work with parent organizations and community partnerships to add a variety of before school enrichment programs.

This proposed schedule will be made public beginning Monday with feedback requested. Baker will reflect on the feedback as he meets with staff, families and community over the next week.

Questions raised from the committee included the importance of adding a world language at all elementary schools.

#### Secondary Curriculum Options

More options need to be provided for secondary students. Northwest Career and Technical Academy in Mount Vernon, Washington provides career technical education in a variety of careers. Students can attend their home school part of the day and attend the Skill Center part of the day. Details still need to be finalized, but Baker is working with them to provide opportunities to juniors and seniors beginning in the fall of 2011. He feels it is a different type of engagement that will keep students connected and help students understand the importance of the courses they are taking and how they will relate in the “real” world.

Another option is student access to online learning programs. Baker indicated the District is considering partnering with the Spokane School District and the Spokane Virtual Learning program. We have already partnered with them for our online summer school program. By using their program, the District can have some online courses available for students for the 2011–2012 school year until we can develop our own program. This is a discussion that Dr. Baker would like to explore more deeply with the committee at a later date.

#### Next Meeting

9:45 a.m. March 31, 2011, District Office Board Room

Dr. Baker asked for each person to give a quick question, comment or reflection from the meeting.

- Thank you for the preschool and early childhood linkage with the School Board.
- Thanks for opening Whatcom Middle School early.
- Foreign language needs to be added at elementary schools. Greg asked that families hold him to his commitment to add foreign language.
- Appreciate the work into rethinking the schedule. Hope it doesn't get watered down.
- World language is the most important piece.
- Concerned about how to add enrichment to this schedule.
- Like the schedule. Excited about Whatcom and your vision.
- Excited to hear how you are listening to everyone.
- Weekly early release works great – have lived in a district that had this.
- Online learning is great for kids that don't quite fit in. The Skills option is great.
- Thank you. You have engaged this group in a way no one else has.
- Thank you.
- Thank you for making things happen quickly.
- Skill Center is great idea. There is also a second facility in Anacortes focusing on marine studies.
- Skill center sounds great. Like the different options that are available.
- Thank you for opening Whatcom early.
- Like the idea of fewer substitutes for teachers. Thank you for sharing the “big” picture.
- Skill Center and online learning are great options for students.
- The transparency brings us along with you and helps us to communicate with other parents on all the issues and problems.
- Online learning and the Skill Center will be great to get going. Need to push the curriculum expectations up in elementary school by adding world language. Online programs could be extended to middle schools. Keep working on the WTA connection.
- P.E. extra time is great.
- Thank you for your style and transparency. This was a huge effort.
- Appreciate less substitutes.
- Am excited about the options seven periods brings and online learning.
- Thank you for all your work in looking at start and end times. Thank you for engaging families.
- Appreciate your transparency, nice to know what your thinking is and not just having it presented to us.
- Time frame that you push things through is amazing. You study, but then take action.
- Love the Skill Center idea.
- Love the all-day kindergarten to bring them up to speed.
- Thank you for the process, transparency and fast decision.