

Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent (PACS)

September 9, 2010

Schools Represented:

Elementary Schools:

Alderwood
Birchwood
Carl Cozier
Columbia
Geneva
Larrabee
Lowell
Parkview
Roosevelt
Wade King

Middle Schools:

Fairhaven
Kulshan
Shuksan

High Schools:

Bellingham
Sehome
Squalicum

District Staff: Superintendent Greg Baker
Director Tanya Rowe, Communications and Community Relations
Note Taker: Nancy Merry, secretary to the Superintendent
Co-Chairs: Gennie Clawson and Sharon Stahl

Co-Chairs Gennie Clawson and Sharon Stahl reviewed the purpose of the Parent Advisory Committee. They emphasized the importance of taking information back to schools to share with others and provide support to families.

The Superintendent's Office will continue to write minutes of each meeting but Sharon Stahl and Gennie Clawson will prepare an executive summary of each meeting, outlining the key components.

Ms. Clawson said they were moving announcements to the end of the meeting. The co-chairs would appreciate advance notice of announcements.

Introductions

Ms. Clawson introduced Superintendent Greg Baker. All those in attendance introduced themselves and the school(s) their child(ren) attend. Clawson asked those in attendance to encourage parent organization leadership to invite others from their school to be a PACS representative in order to widen participation as much as possible.

Superintendent's Update

Dr. Baker commented that his family had a good summer getting reacquainted with the Bellingham community and getting the two older children enrolled at Wade King Elementary School.

He reviewed his Entry Plan, which focuses on getting a lot of different perspectives from many different groups of people. Baker likes to think of the district as one big school with several campuses. He stressed that it is important for every school to offer a quality education.

So far, he has identified several issues he will be facing, including the budget, which offers significant challenges, and the supplemental levy. The state could make additional cuts this legislative year, making it even more difficult for the district. Other issues he identified include reviewing the start and end times for school, especially the 9:30 a.m. elementary school start time. He is very interested in how efficient we can be with bus routes and still maintain good service to families. He has also been reviewing enrollment and staffing in order to balance classroom sizes. With kindergarten starting September 13, additional adjustments may need to be made.

A final decision on the elementary physical education and music program will be made soon. Updated information will be placed on the Website. Dr. Baker values music and the arts and wants to build a model that will meet the needs of students while maintaining the core curriculum.

Dr. Baker is concerned about the number of high school students who drop out before graduation. He plans to look at our high schools to find out why students don't graduate and whether our high schools can be more flexible to better meet the needs of students. He emphasized our schools are good, but Bellingham should strive for great schools.

He is excited to be engaged with the Parent Advisory Committee and is looking forward to communicating with them on a variety of issues over the school year.

Tanya Rowe reviewed School Messenger, a software system that will improve communications with parents and staff by phone, email and text in multiple languages. Converting to this system is a year-long process that started in August. She explained the process parents and staff need to use to receive messages through School Messenger. She encouraged feedback as families begin to use the system, which replaces ENews. It was suggested that the link to School Messenger be more obvious on the district Web site and parents to be trained to help other parents learn how to use School Messenger. Ms. Rowe will look at setting up classes in the computer lab to teach parents.

Topics

A list of possible topics was suggested for future meetings with attendees voting. The results of the voting will be shared at the October meeting.

- Budget
- Special Education
 - Budget
 - Program
- Declining test scores and how are we addressing this
- Race to the Top impact on the district

- Evaluation process used for teachers and principals
- New language arts curriculum (SpringBoard)
- Math Curriculum
- High School Schedules
 - Aligning high school schedules to facilitate taking courses at other campuses
- Middle School Schedules
 - Lack of ability to take electives
- Equity in resources between elementary schools based on size. (PTA resources)
- Budget equity among PTA's
- How the Foundation works and how it can assist
- Grant opportunities and grant writing
- Collaboration with other schools
- How do we facilitate discussions among all schools with parent organizations
- Have meeting times geared more for sharing information as opposed to having speakers
- Home School Parent Partnership Program to get more dollars back in the schools
- Better PR between schools and families
- M.S. athletic schedule/fees update; quality of coaching
- PTA-funded programs; District-funded programs; private-funded programs; Foundation-funded programs
- Overall district facility plans update
- What will supplemental levy funds be used for? Dr. Baker commented because of the uncertainty in the budget we may be unable to be very specific, but would like to use it as much as possible at the classroom level
- Early intervention for special needs kids
- Highly Capable students ; AP courses at high school
- School start times
- Year around schools, pros and cons
- Nutrition and quality of meals
- Transportation issues

Best Practices Topics

- Facilitate sharing between buildings
 - communication

Announcements

- Meg Metzger announced plans for a Geography Club for 4th and 5th grade students.
- Feed Washington is September 29. Encourage students to eat at school on that day. Parents are needed to support the program. Whatcom Sustainable Fund is working with Mark Dalton, district Food Service manager.
- Lynn Tyler King is trying to fill the gap before the start of school

Next Meeting

9:45 a.m. October 7, 2010, District Office Board Room