

## **School Board Community Linkage Meeting: Connecting with Parent Organization Leaders October 6, 2011**

The School Board welcomed parent organization leaders. One leader was invited to represent each school. Parents sat at tables by level (elementary, middle and high school) with one Board member and one Executive Team member. The purpose of the meeting was for the School Board to listen and learn from parent leaders about the current role of parent organizations and their hopes for the future. Superintendent Greg Baker expressed his appreciation for our parent organizations and their ability to work as “One Schoolhouse” to support all of our schools. The Board explored the following questions with parents in small group discussions.

- What is working well for your parent organization in partnership with your school?
- What concerns do you have regarding your parent organization in partnership with your school?
- How do you view the current role of parent organizations and their relationship to our schools and district, and what’s your vision for the future?
- How does your vision align with the School Board’s commitment and belief statements? What suggestions do you have to improve the belief statements to better reflect our district’s fundamental values and character?

### **What is working well for your parent organization in partnership with your school?**

#### **Elementary Schools**

- Many volunteers and support from PTSA—very active and willing to contribute to providing great enrichment for kids (trips, books, carnival)
- Great feeling and tone. A positive vibe even with Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). A cohesive PTSA, great teachers who are collaborative and want to do whatever they can to help
- Great fundraisers, supported Mountain School, Conservation Site, good community involvement, literacy night. Many English Language Learner (ELL) families, yet getting them connected is tough
- Great principal, hitting stride and keeping it simple, solid fundraising—teacher grants, enrichment, Mountain School, kids night out, connection to Western Washington University
- Rotate morning and afternoon/evening meetings in order to get a whole new group of parents and principals at every meeting
- Include certificated staff at every PTA meeting
- International Baccalaureate (IB)—important to work with school staff and principal
- Have vice presidents for each component—Finance, IB, legislative, programs. This keeps many people involved in many activities
- Bought Smart Boards last two years. Gives each teacher a \$200 stipend to use at their own choice
- \$400 per teacher, can buy anything, iPads, field trips, school supplies—magazine subscriptions, student snacks, scholarships, Mountain School
- Principal helps PTA board know what is needed
- Depends on PTA money for other items, playground equipment, soccer nets, drainage on field
- Energy and commitment

- General concern for kids
- Strong finances
- Committed parents/staff
- Visible presence around schools; lots of volunteers
- Strong/cohesive community
- Building membership base
- Watch D.O.G.s–300 dads 27 volunteers committed to be in school Nov.-Dec.
- Time, energy, motivation
- Bright, amazing Board, tons of energy
- Promoting after-school enrichment
- Big fundraiser in fall–“one and done”
- Email for every family
- Kids who move on are still ours–“One Schoolhouse”
- Parents/teachers working together

#### Middle Schools

- Enthusiastic principal interested in establishing parent partnerships
- High level of attendance and willingness to volunteer/engage in support of the school community
- Glorious new building, familiar staff/cohesive staff
- Principal is open-minded, energetic, communicative
- Culture and climate, open/accessible, parent involvement, PTA space designated

#### High Schools

- School administrators are extremely supportive of PTA (come to meetings, invitation to staff meetings, feel like part of team, great communication)
- Superintendent visited and connected with PTA at each school

### **What concerns do you have regarding your parent organization in partnership with your school?**

#### Elementary Schools

- Challenges to get new school up and running
- Working to build strong relationship with staff
- Budget
  - Lots of requests for things that school district should pay for–emergency supplies
  - Feel the “do more with less”
  - Olympia–“no more cuts!”–need to establish legislative PTA chair
- Teachers
  - They look tired already–how do we support?
- Less volunteers
- Everything new: Board, principal and lots of transition the past few years–building our identity
- How much do we do? Volunteer burnout

- Class size
- How to get enrichment opportunities at my school
- Staff dependency increasing on PTA for funding—libraries, school supplies
- Work well with teachers, need parents to understand and participate. The same 15 people carrying the load
- How to get others to participate
- How to inspire communication, idea—PTA ParentConnect not “Room Mom”
- Continue to add more to their plate; inequity falls on them (non-Title school), need reading specialist during day paid by district. Soccer field is neglected and now in disrepair
- Parents relied upon heavily (playground); need support for English Language Learners (ELL) to translate and draw parents into school; need enrichment programs at Title schools; is top end being forgotten? Need to care for kids in between special education and Highly Capable Learners’ Program
- Need for enrichment at Title school, especially in reading, need to include ELL, transient housing increases need. Struggling students get help, but top kids get neglected
- Same concerns, miss Sasquatch reading challenge
- Why middle school extended day
- Did not like the extension choices children made—no parental input
- Concerns about missing content in core classes because of reduced time for extended learning

### Middle Schools

- Lack of enrichment activities at one school
- Reconnecting after two years apart/communication
- Interest in seeing greater access to everyone
- Perception/belief that parents are not needed (staff, student, admin)/ discomfort/my role as an volunteer moving from level to level
- Middle school schedule
- Response to Intervention (RTI) extended learning—soliciting financial assistance as part of the RIT model of interaction
- Basic Ed vs. PTA
- Start time—lost instruction time at a time of high engagement
- Athletics, activities, clubs—what can we support? (Four schools? Separately?)
- Aligning activities, clubs (i.e. Chess) = vertical alignment
- Inequities associated with enrichment
- Budget
- 5<sup>th</sup> Grade cuts—PTA sponsoring/ filling void
- Defining what we value within a community

### High Schools

- Some schools PTA meetings not well attended and recruiting leaders is hard
- How do we do fundraising for students who don't have resources (money for planners, etc.)
- More parents work by the time kids in high school and perception that parents aren't as needed—trying to get message across that they are

- Struggle to develop their own PTA email list; would like to get more parents signed up for SchoolMessenger and for PTA to be able to use that list
- Communication challenging—emails aren't available

**How do you view the current role of parent organizations and their relationship to our schools and district, and what's your vision for the future?**

Elementary Schools

- Be supportive of the professionals—teachers/principal/kids
- We are the consumer advocate, so okay to demand
- Advocate for children
- Safe, healthy environment
- Budget improves
- Strings
- Arts in classroom
- Better understand One Schoolhouse and how our committees fit in
- Kind to each other and be very good in the basics (reading, writing, math)
- 90% PTA membership
- Grow the school as our community school, not a building
- Learn from other PTAs—tap into the strengths and to do that we need to get together more often
- Tell us what we need to do so all you have to do is teach
- Reach out to families who might not know how to get involved
- Better communication and key communities
- Master list, email—uses Facebook instead of website
- PTA websites not good connection hard for a parent to maintain
- Idea – better networking with other PTA—trying through connections through Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
- Some schools don't have the connections—money and people who can provide enrichment opportunities
- Many are driven by parents with an interest and lower socio-economic families cannot afford
- Focus money on assemblies so all children can participate
- See PTA role as a bonus and not to cover the basics (such as emergency supplies)
- Worry about ability to provide for programs, would rather be in classrooms than counting out fliers, great with providing the extra (e.g. reptile man, but why so many basics?)
- Small school PTSA fills in many gaps to keep them up to speed with other schools
- District helps PTSA with bigger picture (e.g. math program), work together to help facilitate science center rates—economy of scale
- Bring them together again as was done previously so efforts are combined
- Umbrellafest, Enrichment Fair—all in one place for all schools to access
- Figure out how to coordinate WWU involvement in schools

Middle Schools

- Having to cover basic education costs—arts, music, RTI, core academics
- Absorb the cuts to funding

- When economy gets better, does it roll back
- Concerns about academic programs, watchdog role
- Idea—a support role vs. essential/ watchdog/ providing enrichment
- Addressing the issue of equity
- Define the experiences we want for every student

### High Schools

- Appreciate parts about One Schoolhouse, including school supplies being funded
- Need to find a good balance—heard about having graduations at one location and wants parents to be included in the discussion
- Parent organizations being hit more with needs because of shrinking state funds—feels overwhelming, hard to make judgments/prioritize
- Communication incredible from district
- Met earlier today as parent leaders from all high schools—really appreciate ability to share and learn—want to continue to work together so we don't have to reinvent
- Compete on athletic field and shouldn't compete in other ways but work as a team
- Same people trying to raise money from the same people—need to draw community in more—retirees and others who might not know how tough finances/resources are for schools
- This would also increase our ability to draw volunteers. Invite/include more community in school events
- Takes personal outreach
- A growing Foundation
- All high school orchestra concert an example of collective fundraising
- Centralize volunteer efforts and some fundraising. Tally what is occurring now and find a better way to do it—frantic to have every kid trying to sell candy, cookie dough, etc.
- Hard to get diversity on PTA—freshman parents at open house all visit with PTA and helps boost relationships, involvement
- All parents don't have regular computer/internet access—need to keep them in mind for communications/outreach
- Translators at PTA meetings to take advantage of including everyone
- Options doesn't have a PTA; want to work with Options parent representative from last Parent Advisory Council meeting

### **How does your vision align with the [School Board's commitment and belief statements](#)? What suggestions do you have to improve the belief statements to better reflect our district's fundamental values and character?**

#### Elementary Schools

- [GP-1 \(2b\)](#), Every individual can learn—Not needed
- [GP-1 \(2c\)](#), Public education is essential to participatory citizenship in a democracy—Did not like public
- [GP-1 \(2d\)](#), Learning is a lifelong process—Not needed
- [GP-1 \(2f\)](#), A shared set of basic values and ethical standards is essential to our community—Change community to democracy?
- [GP-1 \(2g\)](#), Diversity is celebrated and supported in our community—Debate about diversity

- Need “have fun” and live

### High Schools

- Worries that with tight budgets focus is on essential learning and some families at disadvantage for well-being and enrichment
- Brushfire—program to fund prom, violin repairs, track shoes, snacks for after-school tutoring—supports students in need for activities
- Provides additional Saul Haas funds because these run out every year—more need than resources
- Making sure every student has the ability to have the best possible high school experience  
Extra-curriculars, different supports and activities to keep students engaged in learning
- Glad to see vocational education come back; shop went away
- Likes the NW Career Center opportunities. Need to express importance of technical education as an option to all kids
- Diversity—Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MEChA) takes a lot effort so everyone knows they belong
- 40-minute block anchor class has freshmen through seniors—encourages diverse groups of students to learn from one another; assigned same teacher throughout whole high school career (admin has classes, too); and staff check in and form strong relationships with students—connects everyone to help improve graduation rate—time for homework help, tutoring
- All three high school schedules were different—like that they are becoming more alike

School Board President Ann Whitmyer concluded the meeting by thanking the attendees and their parent organizations for the many ways they support our schools. She asked our parent organizations to provide additional feedback to the Communications and Community Relations Department regarding administration policy and procedures [4350](#) and [4350P](#): *Parent Group Support for Enrichment Programs*.