

BELLINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
School Administration

May 1, 2008

**MEMORANDUM**

*Information*

**TO:** Dr. Ken Vedra, Superintendent

**FROM:** Doug Kyles, Executive Director of School Administration

**SUBJECT:** Middle School Standards-Based Report Card Committee

**Purpose:**

The Middle School Standards-Based Report Card Committee was established last year to begin the process of creating a reporting system at all four middle schools based upon measurement of student progress toward state and national standards. The committee met several times during the second semester of last year and has continued its work during the 2007-2008 school year.

**Process:**

As reported to the board in June of 2007, during its initial year the committee reviewed recent research relative to effective middle school reporting practices, determined the pros and cons associated with changing the grading system in our school district, developed a preliminary draft of a standards-based report card, and established a task list to continue work during the current school year. The Committee re-established its bi-weekly meeting schedule in October with membership expanded to include three teachers and an administrator from each of the middle schools along with parents of current sixth graders. Teachers included representatives from Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, Science, Special Education, and Physical Education. In order to provide efficient delegation of committee tasks, several sub-committees were created. They include: Staff Training, Parent Information and Training, Technology Enhancements, Assessment Identification/Development, Grading of Special School Populations.

**Recommendations/Next Steps:**

The committee will continue meeting through May of the current school year and will resume its work in the fall. At this time, we have adopted the following recommendations:

- A multi-year timeline for implementation of the new standards-based report card will begin with sixth graders entering middle school in 2009-2010. As this cohort of students progress through middle school, they will be assessed using the new report card. This will provide opportunities for staff professional development, parent education, and development of necessary assessments to use in formulating marks on the report card. Additionally, necessary enhancements to Zangle will be identified and the processes of establishing a more “standards-friendly” gradebook and an electronic report card generating an electronic gradebook will be confined to one grade level at a time. While this timeline extends to the 2011-2012 school year, it is an aggressive schedule when compared to other districts that have transitioned to a standards-based reporting system at the secondary level.

- Traditional grades will not be used on the new report card. Marks will be based upon the progress of individual students against state standards using the same continuum as used in communicating with parents and students on WASL assessments. (1-4).
- Progress and process criteria will be separately reported for each student. A section of the report card will be entitled Attributes of A Successful Learner. This section will be marked by teachers to indicate student attainment of characteristics required for student success in secondary school and beyond. This separation of the two criteria will provide parents with specifics regarding academic progress of their child separately from traditionally included marks for behavior, attitude, and homework completion in the grade.
- Parent information sessions, question and answer opportunities, and newsletter communications will be scheduled in the fall at each of the middle schools and elementary schools. The target audience will be parents of fifth graders whose children will be impacted when they enter sixth grade. Members of the current report card committee will be integral in the development and presentation of this information.
- Continuous professional development has begun and will continue at each of the middle schools to provide the necessary training for all staff. The specific emphasis will include sixth grade teachers. The primary focus this year has been a development of the sense of urgency to change present grading practices to align more closely with “best practice.” The middle school principals and report card committee members have been strategic in sharing information at staff meetings and early release meetings throughout the year. Additionally, all four middle schools will collaborate in a presentation on May 19th by Ken O’Connor, a nationally recognized consultant, researcher, and expert on quality grading practices.
- Members of the report card committee along with sixth grade teachers will meet by discipline to identify existing classroom-based assessments in conjunction with the new report card. Additional summative assessments will be developed in those areas of need. These meetings will occur either this year during the school day or in summer meetings to allow participants adequate time to finalize their products. These sessions will continue in the 2008-2009 school year, as needed.
- A recommendation has been forwarded to GUARD requesting the establishment of MAP assessments in Reading and Math for all sixth graders effective in the 2009-2010 school year. Professional development for impacted teachers will be provided next year in order to prepare them for implementation the following year.

The progress toward our goal of establishing a quality reporting system in our middle schools and the enthusiasm of each of the members of the Standards-Based Report Card Committee has been exemplary. The level of engagement and focus on their respective roles on the committee has led to unprecedented collaboration among committee members, middle school teachers from all four schools, and the collective middle school administrators. I have enjoyed facilitating this positive initiative in our district and hope to bring our vision to reality in our district.

Attachments to this memo include: A list of the Attributes of a Successful Learner, a copy of the timeline for implementation, and a draft copy of the report card.