

**Parent Advisory Committee to the Superintendent
November 20, 2013**

Parents: Parents attended representing 17 schools - 12 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 2 high schools.

Executive Team/District Staff:

Superintendent Greg Baker
Deputy Superintendent Mike Copland
Assistant Superintendent Steve Clarke
Assistant Superintendent Ron Cowan
Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations Tanya Rowe
Director of Teaching and Learning Trina Hall
Director of Teaching and Learning Charisse Berner
Whatcom Middle School Principal Jeff Coulter

Note Taker:

Sheri O'Day, Executive Secretary to the Department of Teaching and Learning

Welcome:

Joanna Nesbit and Trish Walton welcomed the group and asked attendees to introduce themselves.

Superintendent's Update and Pressing Questions:

Dr. Baker passed out note cards so that anyone who has questions as the meeting is in progress can write them down and he will address them.

Dr. Baker thanked those in the room who helped with the passing of the bond two weeks ago. He then introduced Ron Cowan to talk about next steps with regards to facilities.

- The first step will be to sell bonds. The first portion of bonds will be sold in December 2013, and proceeds from the sale of those bonds will be used for projects over the next 36 months.
- The first round of projects will be improvements at Lowell (by fall 2015) and Parkview (by fall 2016); the re-build at Happy Valley (with a projected opening in fall of 2016); safety and energy efficiency projects at various schools; planning for Options and Sehome high schools; and installing fields at the high schools (Bellingham and Squalicum).
- The remaining projects - construction of Sehome and Options High Schools (which will include the installation of athletic fields at Sehome), the transportation facility, conservation site improvements, and the district office - will be completed in the second phase of the bond projects, to be finished no later than 2019. The central kitchen, to provide healthier foods at all schools, will be on the same timeline as Sehome High School.
- There will be opportunities for community involvement.
- Tanya will be developing a communication plan.

The question was raised whether Options High School and the district office will remain at their current locations. They will be at their same locations. The Warehouse will likely be moved near the Maintenance office.

Another question was posed regarding where the district office staff will go during the rebuild. That has not yet been determined.

Dr. Baker next asked Jeff Coulter, Whatcom Middle School Principal, to update the group regarding an upcoming presentation by Darren Laur. Mr. Laur is a former police officer from Canada who will be presenting on internet/social media safety at all four middle schools on Jan. 28 and 29. He will also be at Whatcom Middle School on the evening of Jan. 29 for a parent presentation. The presentation is two hours in length. Information will go out to middle school parents letting them know about the evening opportunity, and there will be no charge to families. Mr. Coulter attended one of Mr. Laur's presentations at Meridian High School, as did two of the parents in attendance. All were impressed with Mr. Laur's ability to hold the attention of the students for the entire two hours. Mr. Laur also has a presentation that is intended for high school age students (and parents), but at this time none of the high schools has booked his services.

Questions from Parents:

Will families receive communication about north attendance area changes in connection with Birchwood reopening this fall? Yes. The final phase of north attendance area changes adopted in 2006 will be implemented for the fall and will involve some families at Alderwood, Birchwood, Cordata, Northern Heights and Sunnyland. All families at these schools will receive letters in February confirming their address and attendance area for fall 2014. These attendance areas strive to get students closer to attending their neighborhood schools. Birchwood will open by late August. Construction photos can be viewed at <http://bellingshamschools.org/birchwood>.

How do teachers learn to implement differentiated instruction? Some current examples ... Elementary teachers from throughout the school system are meeting four times this year to learn together about how to differentiate literacy instruction. The focus has been around benchmark literacy and making sure we have effective instructional practices in the classroom. Our Highly Capable Program Teachers on Special Assignment are working with elementary teachers. Secondary teachers are learning Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) or differentiating strategies. SIOP strategies help all students.

Update on instructional committees? Highly Capable Program and Math Committees will be notifying committee members soon and begin meeting.

With the math Common Core standards being implemented this year in sixth grade, how will this impact students who are ready to take algebra as seventh graders? The Math and Highly Capable Program review committees will be working together on next steps for students regarding math curriculum and moving students forward.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS)

Charisse Berner, Director for the Department of Teaching and Learning, presented a [3-minute video](#) provided by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), which explains the Common Core State Standards. Charisse then asked the group to take a few minutes to discuss with their neighbors what they know about CCSS, and what they would like to learn. Comments gathered included:

- 4th grade math and language arts seem to be below what used to be taught in 4th grade. Are the CCSS in math “higher or lower” than previous standards? (Answer: higher).
- It appears that more emphasis is put on non-fiction as opposed to fiction.
- Have heard from teachers that CCSSs were developed from high school down, and elementary teachers are worried that some expectations are not developmentally appropriate.
- Is there a plan to engage parents? (Answer: Charisse indicated that in her previous school district, she talked with PTA groups, at open house nights, etc.)
- With regards to the OSPI video and the “landings” for each step/assessment, will there be opportunities for pre-testing?
- How are the CCSS reflected in the 4, 3, 2, 1 grading strands?
- When will the MSP be phased out?

Further information from Charisse included:

- ELA (English Language Arts) and Math are the two areas within CCSS.
- The next generation science standards are not common core state standards.
- The CCSS were developed by the National Governor’s Association and Council of Chief State School Officers.
- We live in a mobile society, and this will create standards for all students. Expectations will be the same for students across most states.
- There is some concern that the CCSS are not developmentally appropriate in all cases.
- The standards are much more clear as you look from the beginning to the end.
- Teachers and parents can expect a drop in results at the beginning, as the CCSS are benchmarked to high national and international standards.
- Next year (2014-15) is the first year of assessing students against the new standards.
- Springboard (middle and high school language arts curriculum) was created with common core in mind, but may need to be supplemented.
- Charisse talked about English Language Arts shifts and the balance of literary and informational texts. Students are reading 50% informational text by 4th grade; 55% by 8th grade; 70% by 12th grade (percentage of the entire school day).
- Washington state is a governing state for the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium.
- Charisse reviewed a chart of assessments for 2014-15 and beyond, as well as a list of resources.
- Charisse addressed some questions from the members of the committee.

Standards-Based Grading Update for Elementary and Middle Schools

Trina Hall, Director for the Department of Teaching and Learning, shared an update with regards to standards-based grading. Trina asked Joanna Nesbit to share information that she learned while writing an article regarding standards-based grading – which included interviewing Ken O’Connor. Joanna stated she gained a deeper understanding of standards-based versus letter grades. At the beginning, she wondered if a “4” equates to an “A”. She learned that letter grades are imprecise. For example, one student might bring home a “B” because she turned in all of her work, but she may not understand the content – while another student might know the information but not complete the homework and receive a “D”. Ultimately, we want to know what the students know, and an “A” may not measure what a student really knows. Joanna’s article can be found [here](#).

Trina showed an example of Report Card Guide Learning Standards (grade 5). The report card guide documents reflect the priority standards in parent-friendly language versus the actual CCSS language.

A parent commented that they recently received a middle school quarterly report, and asked if the next report will look any different. Trina indicated that students will receive a formal report card at the end of the semester. They will then receive a quarterly report in the spring, followed by an end-of-year report card at the end of the school year. She also indicated that the quarterly reports lists assignments and assessments, similar to what is seen in Family Access.

Trina asked what information parents have received from the various schools with regards to family engagement:

- Wade King held student-led conferences last week.
- Shuksan Middle School – 6th grade teachers send out “team” newsletters each week, and each teacher adds bullet points. Skyward is always updated by the first Tuesday of each month.
- 6th and 7th grades – weekly emails are sent home by teachers.
- One parent wondered if she has been dropped off of an email list, as she has not received any emails.

Trina indicated that there will be a district-wide cross-school collaboration today, where teachers will share where they are with regards to implementation, what’s working for them, and to share ideas.

One parent shared a concern that all assignments are graded from 1 to 4, but there are some assignments where students are not able to receive a 4. One teacher at Whatcom makes a note regarding the maximum number of points is possible in the Skyward gradebook (3 out of 3, 3 out of 4). Trina will take this back to the steering team.

Dr. Baker thanked Charisse and Trina for their presentations.

Comments prior to adjourning:

- Susan Everett would encourage anyone who knows high school parents from Meridian and Nooksack to get feedback from those parents regarding the Darren Laur presentation.
- A question was asked whether Gennie Clawson’s position has been filled on the Foundation. Dr. Baker indicated that it sounds like Gennie has decided to stay on in her position.
- The next meeting is January 15, 2014.

Dr. Baker thanked everyone for attending, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.