

WASHOUGAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 112-06
Board of Directors Linkage Meeting with Senior Citizens
January 19, 2010
6:30 – 7:45 p.m.

1. WELCOME BY BOARD PRESIDENT, BLAINE PETERSON

Welcome and introductions

2. CONVERSATION STARTERS

What is your impression of Washougal schools?

Patron comments:

Very pleased with Washougal schools; we had four boys who graduated and are doing well.

Feedback from students indicate that the schools have been successful in teaching students, and there have not been reports of problems within the schools.

There's a good feeling in the schools; it feels personalized.

I've talked with young teachers and they are glad to be teaching; I would like to substitute in special education. I would like to be at Gause, which is close to home.

Other people I know have had kids go through the school system, and they are doing well.

I would love to be in a little school. My experience has been in a large school, and you lose that feeling of community when you're in a large school.

My view of the schools is somewhat limited, being based primarily on the feedback of four students in the neighborhood. One has dropped out, one is still in school and seems to be doing well. Two others are graduated and are doing well.

I've always voted for school levies...up until now...alms for the boat?!

The attitude of kids has always been good, and except for one or two, their deportment is good. A few drivers have been inclined to get their cars going as fast as they can. But, overall, I don't have much information about the schools?

Orlan Gessford: Could the District have done anything to help the student who dropped out? Is he 21 yet? Please extend to him, if you have the chance, that he is welcome back to school. He is 17. No, there's not much you could have done. He just got into a group of students that didn't help him out.

Patron: What is the role of the alternative high school?

Board: The alternative school provides the same learning for students; same standards; regular diploma; just a different setting than the regular high school.

Patron: My understanding was that it was originally for dropouts and it wasn't very successful.

Board: The alternative school is very different than the original models. Students do very well and are challenged to meet the same standards as students at WHS.

Patron: When I graduated in 1949, there were 380 graduates in a school of about 1200 students, a small staff, one principal and one secretary and a part-time nurse. Student decorum was exceptional, and all of us ended up being professionals. My remembrance of my school days is that we all graduated from high school, all of us. What's going on nation wide with students today? I've read in the Columbian that there has been a dumbing down of the curriculum, although I don't feel that same lack of effort by the teachers or the parents. I feel that the education level here...the system is sufficient by today's standards.

What suggestions do you have for improving the schools' connection with senior citizens?

Patron: A lot of students need that extra nurturing; it would be great to get senior citizens involved in schools. I know the kids love it, and the teachers do, too. If we could get more people involved.

Board: How could we recruit people for that role?

Patron: When I first started teaching in special education, there was a program for elderly citizens who were low income to come and work with students. We had such a volunteer, and the students loved her as a "grandma" and she would cheer them up, mend a jacket, etc. It made a difference in our classroom. That's a group of citizens who were already there, receiving their lunch, sitting with kids during lunch. These volunteers would read with kids, etc.

Patron: My husband has a friend who is a lunch buddy in one of the schools in Vancouver. Recently, he brought one of his students who said that the older man had given him purpose.

Patron: A lot of people are like me. We're faced with a communication challenge; I have a cell phone...but I never use it...my kids bought it in case of an emergency, and I haven't had an emergency yet! I first used a phone when I was 14.

Patron: My phone number when I was a kid was 202! My dad was mail carrier, and he said zip codes would never fly! Times have changed!

Patron: These flyers are good; everybody gets a water bill; the mayor is very cooperative.

Patron: Do you do criminal checks for all employees? That was just beginning in my district when I retired.

Patron: All employees and volunteers must have criminal checks.

Patron: We don't have a newspaper focused on the community. The publication of notices; in prior days there was more focus on what was going on in the community.

Board: As Board members, we visit schools, and students would love to hear you and talk with you.

How effective are district communications with senior citizens?

It's the same every year. Senior citizens have a hard time telling the difference between levies and bonds. They just don't know.

I noticed that Washougal spends almost a thousand dollars more per student than Camas. Why is that?

Board and superintendent response: We have almost \$2 million in reserve; we have a large percentage of special needs students which add to our costs;

Patron: As a police officer, we had a documentation system and a log for keeping track of work using simple tools. Technology...some of their new technology systems take forever to use and fill out. Computers may be one way to get through to some people. (His friend adds: You could send me an email and I'll print it off for him.)

Patron: The majority of people our age are not technology literate, so you'll have to find some other way of communicating with us.

Patron: In my experience, students often had a hard time learning to read; I found that when somebody sat with the student and encouraged them, they learned to read. I wonder what it would take to get senior citizens involved in that way.

Board: The biggest problem with low-income students is lack of parent involvement.

Patron: Volunteers could make a lifelong difference in the life of a student.

Patron: This reading triggers my memory. I recall reading and coming across the word "colonel" and pronouncing it coe-loe-nell and the teacher corrected me over and over!

Other items of interest to you? Questions/Answer time.

Patron: There was something in the newspaper today regarding Governor Gregoire's proposal for increasing preschools for low income students.

Patron: One of the most important things we teach students is communication. Learning how to talk, listen and ask questions is fundamental. Students in front of a computer don't need to talk to anyone!

Patron: I remember as a student there was always a challenge to achieve, and your recognition came from the teacher and your parents.

Patron: The one thing I loved as a kid was spelling bees. I went to a spelling bee recently, and I told the teacher how much I loved spelling bees. She said that she hated spelling bees because they don't teach the kids anything! I couldn't believe it!

Patron: Why isn't there a better communication system between the city and the schools? I think it's because there are two different "parents" at the state level.

Board: Much of that is because of time. Board members recently were recognized and the assistant superintendent added up all the hours of volunteer time, and it was evident that we are all very busy.

3. Board's Closing Comments/Thank you!

We appreciate your time and your ideas. I want to thank you for being open and sharing.

Patron: I want to give a compliment to the high school---the kids don't hang out on the corner and smoke anymore!

Dated this 26th day of January 2010

President

Secretary to the Board