

Board of Directors  
Linkage Meeting with High School Staff  
April 8, 2008  
5:00 – 6:00 p.m.

What is going well at Washougal High? What are the strength of the various programs and the culture for learning?

- Size of the school; the closeness that you have when you have a smaller school; you know the students, the teachers, and an opportunity for an amazing experience. You are isolated to your own entity: your town, your school.
- Teachers really care about the students; small classes and you get to know students before they get to your class because of the small town atmosphere
- Small town atmosphere: it is hard for kids to hide. Small class sizes; allows you to access the students in a more intimate way. Great impact for students for having those small class sizes
- Higher level classes that can challenge the kids as far as they want to go in high school and prepare them and be helpful in getting them to the next level and the next step. A real plus especially for the size of our school
- Education at a higher level is absolutely available. The challenge is connecting the reluctant with the opportunities that are available.
- Great opportunity for students who are not going to college. Electives in Drama, Art, Music, if they choose not to go to college, they have options.
- Diversity they can enjoy. Students all have opportunities to go out and do other things. Creates a better-adjusted student and adult.
- Having a teacher-librarian with a certificate. Working on a district-wide library PLC.
- Students don't have to be in a class like drama to participate in drama. Kids can explore clubs without having to take the classes.
- Students have the ability to try different things (i.e. go out for a sport and go out for a play).
- Cool things in small learning community. Caring staff, opportunity to have PLCs, kids can go from teacher to teacher and still have the same baseline, having time to be creative, time to go outside (i.e. articulation agreements with Clark College)
- Credit recovery program; Warm and caring school with a strong bond between special education and general education teachers; students have a chance to go out into classes and be successful

How well do you think the high school is preparing students for their next steps beyond high school? We are particularly curious about the overall guidance that student receive and are excited to hear more about the advisory program. What can you tell us about the advisory program and the overall opportunities for guidance and counseling, both formal and informal that students receive?

- Read the student that they filled out and some said they weren't prepared for money management but sometimes things are offered (i.e. money management) in classes that they don't take.
- Education that the kids receive is as good as they want it to be. If they want to achieve at a high level, they can, but if they choose not to, they don't. Staff is caring and will go the extra mile for kids. Lots of variety and options. Do a better job now with the five-year plan than the past. Those things are advantageous for kids.
- For the kids that have a plan, we prepare them pretty well because they are the kids who take advantage of what is available. Those who don't have a plan are floundering a little bit.
- Kids who are doing well academically are pursuing dreams and they say that they were challenged as kids by their parents. They don't say directly that they feel valuable because of their parents but it resonates. They say that they want to do their best. The kids say that the kids who don't do as well don't have dreams. They don't have the same sense of value. We pursue with passion dreams and things we want to be. You can challenge a kid who has a backing at home and if they don't have backing at home they just melt. One part that could be beneficial in advisory would be to expose kids to dreams. Bring back kids who have gone on from here. There is a great sense of nobility in doing an honest day's work and that is reflected in welding, woodshop etc. Keep a value in those classes and an honest day's work. The family part scares him.
- Sometimes it feels hopeless if you get mired in what they students experience at home. A strong adult makes all the difference in the world. They learn to believe in themselves if any adult appreciates them. They will find a sense of themselves within themselves. Kids get to leave behind the problems of home when they are at school. If you can make that a haven for the time they are in school eventually that goes home with them. They eventually develop a positive attitude about themselves and their self-worth. Kids relate to people who people who actually care about them.
- Research shows that that schools and school personnel do make an impact of kids regardless of what is going on home. We do make an impact no matter what. That is one of the focuses of advisory. Caring adult, stays with them for four years, career exploration, post secondary education (technical school, apprenticeship, college). Can't have a counselor for every twenty students but you can have an advisor for every twenty. Advisory has gone through many changes in four years because we've been evaluating, changing and adjusting as good practitioners to see what works. Advisory gets kids connected. Supports the counseling role. Counselors also support the advisors. Freshman: our freshman year is packed with academic classes. They aren't finding their passion their freshman. Great if we could connect them with the things they love first and make them want to be there and then move on to the requirements. We need to push the students because it is up. We can't control what happens in the home but we have power and influence to impact what happens after high school.
- Another school's students could all say what they were doing after school. It was divided into academies and all lessons were geared toward things they were

interested in. If we can make lessons and spend time in our PLCs creating lessons that are more relevant to the students (especially boys). Went to a training at the Dejurean (sp?) Institute. If we can give them experiences to see what they want to do after school that is good. Another high school had mentors who came in once a month and worked with the students. They got adult mentors who were in contact with them on a monthly basis. Did activities with them that were meaningful.

- Concerns from time to time with teachers on being in situations that require a counselor. Sometimes there are possibilities that you are approaching and answering questions that you aren't trained to do. Can refer students to the counselor. Can feel invasive to listen in with students and parents. Feels like state involvement in family but am not saying that with a negative intent.
- One of the strongest connections that the district has with the parents is advisory. Thinks meeting with the parents is very valuable. Thinks of herself as feet on the ground for the parents. She is support staff rather than a teacher and this means she has some more time to deal with calls. Anything she does that is considered extra is because she has more time. Valuable contact with the parents. Sees herself as a representative of the high school
- Teachers all feel comfortable in different venues. One of the comments that always comes up is that there are teachers who don't feel perfectly comfortable in the advisory situation. They may not feel totally confident but every advisor brings strength. Training is always an issue because there are time issues. Difficult to find the training in there sometimes. We know it is valuable.
- In addition to the curriculum, some advisors need training in working with parents. Some people may need help with sitting down with parents and engaging in those conversations. Advisory has been the stepchild in terms of who can handle it every year. Hasn't been consistent. Hasn't been one person who is so understanding and invested and that makes for a lot of patchwork.
- The scheduling of advisory dates and times has not been consistent and that is confusing for students and staff.
- Advisory has some value but there is a challenge if you are a physical education teacher and you are sitting on the bleachers.

What can we get those students who are falling through the cracks to connect with someone?

- We have resources but you can give kids the opportunity but at some point they have to take advantage
- Greatest strength is small town, small community, teachers who are a family. Bigger schools cannot compete with that. If you guard and protect that you can't compete with it. Can't go to Safeway without having a conversation about a student
- With the parent access, parents know what's going on and can ask the teachers about it.
- Also have a large population in our district that doesn't have computers. Had four students who didn't show up. Intervention piece of the PLC model is missing still. Don't have a clear picture of what to do with those students.

- How can we find them when they are missing from school and they are in their classes teaching?
- Had nothing but success in 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> grade advisories and she called and asked what's going on when someone has been absent. Also makes a referral to the counselor.

If you could change one thing about the high school, what would you change?

- Reduce number of disruptions to educational process. Too many changes in schedule and disruptions, shortened classes etc.
- When we have a half-day schedule, typically only see half of the classes. An AP class has missed 8 classes, which is almost two weeks.
- Foreign language: In order to move on to second year book, you have to get to a certain point in the book it is hard when you are missing so many days. Can create book shortages if you need the first yearbooks to start second year.
- Doesn't matter what time of day or day of week, if she is there and someone is there the kid will come in. It is the safest place they have and it is the only place for some of them because they have structure. Has seen how disruptive the many schedules are for kids. The students and their parents depend on it. Parents have come to depend on the phone calls. If we have trouble keeping track of it and we are right there, how much more difficult must it be for families.
- Increase access to computers. We work in a bottleneck. Library has 30 computers and is the one lab that can be consistently scheduled and it is not enough. Some assignments make the assumption that students have access to a computer at home and we are expecting that they have that and the students may not.
- Increase hours that the school is open for access for more students. Have to kick kids out at four when she goes home at 4:00.
- Question kept him awake. What he says is his observance. Best thing that this district has is the closeness of staff. If staff is close they care about each other and they care about the kids. When we lost Cricket Hoffer, lost a key part of that family. Last year there was a union meeting and a lot of people lost their positions or positions were moved and they didn't have the courage to put their names to it and he said that they had to put their names into it. Mr. Ross came to a staff meeting and tried to explain the reason for the changes. I don't have the reasons that the board and superintendent have to make the changes they do. Mr. Stanton said the numbers don't add up. Mrs. Baldwin came in and explained it. The staff gets ripped apart by those issues. Communication got shut off. When that happened a rift was created. Trust and integrity have to be reestablished. Staff has been coming to board meetings not just because of Mr. Hajek but because of the other things too. Kids ask him what is a good life. The best answer he can give them is stand for justice and love. If you do those things, you have lived a great life. Told students about some one who lived in the occupation of Nazi Germany and didn't stand up for anyone so when he or she came for him so then there was no one to stand up for him. We are creating a bureaucracy when we let some one else make a decision on whether that was just. Mr. Byron said

- that he didn't follow the chain of command. As a school board you said you would look into this and the staff didn't hear from you and then you made a decision two weeks later. This is only my observation. Thought of Jimmy Stewart in Mr. Smith goes to Washington and Steve McQueen in \_\_\_\_ (?). Mr. Stavney came and that has been great because he has been shooting straight. Has addressed an attendance issues and he hopes he would like him to continue to address that. He hopes his feelings are askew.
- Were told that the principal ship would be opened up in January and then it wasn't. Concerned that there is a double standard with teachers and administration. He's doing a great job but don't want to continue to wonder if we'll be getting some one new.
  - Strong consistent administration that communicates and has a clear vision. Involves staff in the vision. Have been in a state of flux. Gerry is a great guy he was very disappointed when he discovered that we'd be putting off our search a year. Always have Gerry as an alternative. Couldn't understand why we would limit ourselves. Feel the need for consistency.
  - Haven't had continuity with administration and kids have figured out that there is no consequence for missing a class but then the students don't show up. We're opening the crack when we don't deal with attendance and our attendance policy had no teeth. Used to be that kids would rack up detention hours and they would try to serve all their hours the last two weeks of school.
  - Agree with Ryan about honesty and integrity. Was a coach for 8 years with girl's basketball program and chose to resign when the new coach came on because he didn't think he would be backed up. People are choosing not to coach.
  - Teachers choose to serve. If they don't feel like they are appreciated or respected by their community or their district, it doesn't benefit kids because teachers are still human beings.

Closed at 6:10. Blaine thanked teachers for their input and great comments.