

WASHOUGAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 112-06
Board of Directors Linkage Meeting with Booster/PAC Leaders
October 20, 2009
6:30 – 7:45 p.m.

1. WELCOME BY BOARD PRESIDENT, BLAINE PETERSON

Welcome

- A. Introduction of Board Members
- B. Introduction of Participants
- B. Purpose of Linkage Meetings
- C. History of Linkage Meetings

2. CONVERSATION STARTERS

- A. What is the most memorable thing so far about your experiences working as a parent leader in Washougal schools?
 - Scholastic book fairs. Amazed at how much our little schools can earn toward books. It takes a lot of volunteer hours.
 - The bond. Good and bad. Community has a long history of trying to get bonds passed. Wasn't just economic times. Also not enough strategizing, community involvement. Learned a lot from it. Nothing like community and that makes good bonds with people and you can get more done that way if you all work together. Takes more people working together. A good experience. A lot of hard work. It was a beginning but it wasn't enough. Appreciates the work the board and Teresa did. Didn't realize how much work it would be. Wasn't a failure on the part of the board or Teresa but it was strategy.
 - At Gause: One of her favorite ideas that came up was the sport-a-thon. Was a moment of being involved in the volunteering where she really appreciated the people around her. Huge success story. Kids enjoy it, parents come and watch it.
 - Best part is the people that you meet. You meet parents from all different schools.
 - Science fair. Died off and no one had come forward to take it on. Liked the fact that it migrated from school to school and it became a community event. Fun to go to the other schools. Might be something to bring back.
- B. What suggestions do you have for increasing parent involvement in our schools?
 - Can attract volunteers. That is huge but have trouble attracting someone who wants to be in charge of something. That seems to be scary enough or too much time and commitment that people don't want to put themselves out there. How do you get more people to be in charge of something? We have people who will help but it is hard to find coordinators.
 - Problem at middle school is that their parents helped out so much that they aren't as involved when they get to middle school. It is always the same handful of people.
 - One of the scariest things was believing that she could do it. Other people stepped up and let her know that it wouldn't take all of her time.
 - Encouraged people to commit at the first meeting. A little worried that they would want to do something differently or have new ideas if you are new to Washougal. Worried that they might be walking on someone's toes.
 - Trying to look at, for big events like a sport-a-thon, having co-chairs to have a shared responsibility to take up some of the weight. You don't

assume as much responsibility if it is shared. Also allows you to have a good succession plan. Wouldn't be as daunting to someone stepping in if you have someone helping.

- Just getting adults through the doors at the high school things can be hard.
- Is there an email list that we can send things directly to the parents? Website, daily bulletins, PAC pages. Also have Facebook and Twitter which we could put up through those resources.

C. How effective are school and district communications with parents/community members?

- Think the parents communicate fine but the parents don't listen because they are busy and stressed working, getting their kids where they need to be, taking care of home so the newsletters go unread, they don't go online for information, they don't read the emails etc.
- Some sort of orientation for parents so that they would understand things about the school (example: notes or no note when you aren't riding the bus in middle school). Can't assume things when you are a parent and that is the first child experiencing that. Maybe it is an extra page on the newsletter for new incoming 6th grade parents. Even if you are involved at a new school there are a lot of things you don't know.
- Middle school: family access is emphasized at the middle school level.
- Communication gap for the transition to middle school.
- Maybe the dos and don'ts could be included in the 6th grade parent intro night or a special page on the website for new 6th grade parents.
- Each teacher has different qualifications or requirements. They send you their expectations at the high school level. Wish they did that in middle school as well. That was another communication gap.
- Different teachers upgrade their grade books at different times.
- Has been a laxity with some teachers who don't want to change or are set in their ways who don't update online information. Had heard through the grapevine that teachers didn't assign homework because the kids don't do it anyway, which is appalling.
- Try to have all the teachers on the same page. Experiences between JMS and the High School, JMS is much less consistent than the high school with those things.
- At CCMS, teachers have all given out syllabi and some teachers update Skyward almost daily.

D. In your role as a link between schools and neighborhoods, what are people talking about right now relative to our schools or district?

- Enormous class sizes. It is a painful, painful subject. Can't ignore it. It is impacting our kids. When people comment on class size, do they have solutions?
- Preparedness of students makes class sizes even more
- How do you get middle school kids convinced that middle school counts?
 - Have school-wide expectations of preparedness.
 - Convince the adults first.
 - Hold adults (teachers and staff) to standards before you hold the students to a standard.
 - Raising expectations.
- The community has so much to offer. There is a missing link at the middle school. Have fabulous kids.
- Kids in the middle are being let down. Integrated I kids in 8th grade are independent learners. Kids in the middle, the average kids, are being let down.

- Need to encourage average kids.
- Classroom size impacts the students in the middle. Kids who are misbehaving are getting attention and the other kids are waiting.
- Discipline issue is not effective at the junior high.
- Difference in communication at Cape: Grade book is kept up weekly. Teachers email about “what we did this week.” “Here’s a progress report.” So much conversation initiated. With the technology everyone needs to take a step up and communicate more.
- Parent involvement diminishes in 6th grade.
- Is the communication at Canyon due to the fact that the elementary is under the same roof?
- Her son (current senior) went to JMS and he had some teachers who were communicating. It isn’t all of the teachers. Also depends on the student. Lots of teachers there that she loved.
- Biggest thing with all of the teachers is the communication.
- Teresa gave example of moving to a new school and how the atmosphere improves.
- JMS has a reputation that precedes itself.
- It isn’t the facility completely that makes it and it isn’t irreversible. Doesn’t want the teachers to have a philosophy that things will be better when we have a new school.
- Most of our school district doesn’t know who the Board members are. Not as visible as most of the community would like them to be. The community needs to know more about who the people of the district are. More of them at functions where they introduce themselves, open houses, knowing that it starts at the top.
- Way the teachers cuts were handled did not enhance community spirit. It made for confrontation. Doesn’t think that situation was in good spirit and that is part of the breakdown in the community spirit as a whole.
- Could definitely see the increase in attendance at school board meetings when there was a hot topic. Good point that you have the people sitting here who are so involved already. Have some way to be more visible.
- Attract people by having it be worth there while.
- Okay to have board members introduced when they are at events. People who don’t know who they are, if they were introduced at events, it would make them more human.
- Make sure that linkage meetings continue. Consider doing an elementary parent linkage meeting. Let parents know that they have a hand in making a decision.
- Bad taste in people’s mouths when they hear that some people were selected for something like to work on the bond issue. That’s not a random selection and there is bias and that puts a bad taste in people’s mouths. Can’t make people feel like they are outsiders coming into a party that is already started.
- When people are selected for jobs, it is because they know how to do it and also they are willing to do it. People need to step up and say that they want to do it.
- Teresa shared information about the budget task force and processes for selecting people.
- Getting people involved is a historic problem. Certain contingent of people who are involved and the doers. Boosters need to be organized. Six parents from Gause were invited and two are here.
- People are back to work in this economy.
- There are consultants who can help with this problem.

- Sometimes people are not involved unless it is a hot topic. People not showing up can be a pat on the back that they agree with you.
- Need to be well-publicized opportunities and there also need to be people who step up.
- Communication: had to remind Mr. Larson, if we're not an educator or on the board, we speak a language that the parent doesn't speak. Contract language comes in and things like "in district" are confusing.

E. What are our strengths as a school district?

- Recognize the effort that the high school is making toward communication and the communication at CCMS.
- Dr. Carlson's morale at JMS. Would be nice to have stability there. He is a plus there.
- Links to Facebook and Twitter.
- Phone call system.
- District Web Page is well-maintained.
- A number of things going the right direction for communication and then take some initiative. There is a time when we are missing people until we get everyone up to speed. At Gause they have been given the option of getting a paper newsletter.
- Multiple touches, multiple medias.
- Great job in involving the community and giving opportunities. Open to hearing opinions.
- Suggestion to have guest speakers at PAC meetings as a way to draw more people in. Transportation, special education, superintendent, highly capable, etc.

F. What suggestions do you have for improvements?

- Used to be a greater sense of appreciation for volunteers. There are times when she has to walk on eggshells around a secretary because she is stressed or busy. It comes from having the spirit of appreciation at each school. Recognizing someone at a school board meeting is not her idea of appreciation. Have to make it feel inclusive and make it an environment in which people want to come. Let's not dwell on what it is but what are we going to do to fix it.
- Volunteers are totally appreciated at Gause and a lack of appreciation is not the case there.

G. Other items of interest to the participants? Questions/Answer time.

Blaine thanked participants for coming and for the open discussion. He stressed that it isn't just here that they can do that. Their contact information is on the website and published in the Post Record. Teresa let all of them know that she would be doing an informational levy meeting at each site and asked them to contact their principal to schedule a time. This will be a levy informational meeting.

3. CLOSING ACTIVITIES

- Next Steps
- Board's Closing Comments/Thank you!

Dated this 27th day of October 2009

President

Secretary to the Board