

WASHOUGAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 112-06
Board of Directors Linkage Meeting with
Psychologists, Counselors, Social Workers and Guidance Staff

March 16, 2010
6:30 – 7:45 p.m.

1. WELCOME BY BOARD VICE PRESIDENT, RON DINIUS

Welcome and introductions

Present: Ron Dinius, Orlan Gessord, Elaine Pfeifer, Teresa Baldwin, Julie Bristol, Linda Jones, Marsha Spencer, Rhea Bohlin, Michele Mederos, Terri Hutchins (observer)

2. CONVERSATION STARTERS

A. Tell us about the kinds of work you do with students. How do you serve students?

- Work with the highly capable student population. Mostly interact with high school level. Meet with them individually and mostly upperclassmen. Tailors her services to individual students. Example: they may not know what they want to do with their future. She may put together an occupational summary packet. She helps them explore careers. Notifies them of scholarships. Helps students attend things like preview days or engineering days. Has a lot of parent contact.
- Works with all the students. Students may request meetings or are referred by teachers. Works with students individually or with small groups. Also works with them through advisory.
- Works with all students. In each classes two hours per month. Conducts classroom lessons on social skills. Also works with small groups for students who need extra help with that. Works with parents and teachers as well. Works with parents and families to connect with community resources. Sometimes makes home visits if parents are not coming to us.
- Works with all grade levels. Does career units. Do interest and skills assessments with each student. Students get resume direction, look at employment trends, give them an overall sense of their fifth year plan. Meet with ninth and tenth graders in groups and see every junior individually once during the year and seniors twice. Have job fairs, vocational fairs, bring in representatives from colleges, apprenticeships. Also is the representative for the skills center.
- Sees all students in the schools. Offers a guidance curriculum. Does a number of lessons around social skills, bullying, substance abuse prevention with 6th graders and follow up with 7th and 8th graders. At elementary school does an assembly for the whole school around a theme such as responsibility. Meets with parents and students. Meets with teachers as requested. Also does groups. At the middle school she runs a club based on the Rachel's Challenge group. Gives the students a chance to provide leadership. Does mediations at teacher request or if she feels like it could be helpful. Follows up after discipline if she feels that counseling could be helpful. Helps to facilitate the pre-referral process at her school. Provides information for the newsletter to indirectly have with students and families.

B. Within the Counseling and Advisory Group or within your team, what proactive steps have you taken to improve student counseling and guidance services?

- Meet once monthly in their PLC as a K-12 counseling group. Has allowed them to work on their Counseling and Guidance Plan. It is a wonderful group of

professional people who support each other. Following the national school counseling association model. Generally they meet at the high school.

- Actually get to talk and work as a team. Eliminates isolation. Before the PLCs it felt like you were working in isolation. Gives them an opportunity to get together and make sure they are working comprehensively from K-12. Gives you a chance to use data such as the Healthy Youth Survey.
- Gives them a chance to develop new forms and identify areas that they need to improve such as the personal social domain which they identified as a gap. Now zeroing in on students who are failing and they can meet with them weekly. More communication generates more of an awareness and allows them to help more students. Broadens all of them and makes them more comfortable emailing each other and allows them to intervene earlier. Ask the student different questions based on what they have learned from other counselors. More keyed into personal/social aspect.
- Have discussed transition issues. Have been able to meet with students earlier who might have transition issues. Developing new forms. Doing education with staff around those pieces. Updating child abuse reporting, suicide ideation prevention, and release of information. Following that we will be educating students. See that some students will be more successful once they get into some vocational classes.
- What is the picture around bullying?
 - i. At the high school it may be a maturity thing. Counselors respond to it when they see it. Students are aware that they want to hear about it when it is occurring.
 - ii. We have a policy that is absolutely no bullying and that is how the administration feels and the students know that it is dealt with swiftly and quickly when it is seen.
 - iii. Administration is dealing with it. They use the harassment form that is part of the bullying policy. Needs to be something that needs to be presented to kids every year. Is covered in elementary and middle school. Dean works with some of the cases and the counselor works with some at JMS. Anything physical goes straight to the dean rather than the counselor.
 - iv. At the high school, it is swiftly taken care of. If the administration is aware of it, they deal with it.
 - v. At grade school it exists. Heaviest at middle school. They do the most education there and she believes that we need to focus more of our efforts on the bystanders and help them stand up to it. The harassment and bullying form that the district came up with is powerful. Sometimes things happen that is a first time offense. She will do mediation and talk to parents and give the students an opportunity to fix the behavior. If it is more severe or ongoing, she refers to an administrator. Kids feel relieved when they see the form and know that anyone can fill it out. Have to make kids feel okay with “telling” and know that we are going to be taking action. Students may be nervous about “being a snitch.” Sometimes they deal with whole groups rather than singling out an individual to handle behavior.
 - vi. At elementary school, it doesn’t usually start until 5th grade. Help them at that age to know what bullying is, how to respond and how to get help. Works with bystanders and work on empathy and being kind. Seems to be working and taking effect. Kids will use the language going on in the lesson so she believes that they are getting it. The kids are learning and accepting. Typically 5th-9th grade are transition years and that’s where it peaks. Before and after that they are more accepting of each other. The other years they are trying to find identity.

C. As a result of the District focus on PLCs, have you seen any positive changes in student behavior or academics?

D. What other trends are you seeing in student academic and social needs or issues?

- Inequity with the students' technology skills. By the time they get into higher level classes and are expected to do formatting, etc. some students are able to do that and others are not. Implement across the board some kinds of technology standards for all students. Some kids get it and some students don't. By the time they get to high school, it is harder to get them into technology schools. Some of it is tied to a lack or presence of computer in the home. Best fix would be to get it to a younger student. At the upper level, the teachers have four or five computers in the classroom but there is no lab so that makes it hard to teach all students a skill at one time. Teachers do their best with what they have but right now we are a little inconsistent.
- Rise in economic needs. More families have one or both parents out of work. Free and reduced lunch rate is increasing. That increases student stress because their parents are stressed. That has a significant impact on students and their sense of well-being. Economic higher need affect everything.
- Supervision after school is an issue. Kids might walk to school and the students report that older brother or sister watches them. There is a lack of no-cost or low cost activities for their students.
- Have had more mobility this year. Kids come in and go out. Constant influx and out flux. Less coming in at the high school than going out. JMS has had some transitions.
- Some students have gone to CCMS from JMS. Some are more comfortable in a smaller environment.
- At the beginning of the year, some students at Gause who were new from HES, now feel like they've been there forever. There aren't cliques of HES students. Some students who should have been going to HES stayed at Gause and some who should have gone to Gause stayed at HES.
- One trend is that the students don't seem to have solid study skills such as the idea that they need to write an assignment down, do it and turn it in. Doesn't seem like the students come in with that value. They see it at the middle school at well. Some write their assignments down and then never look in their planner. They see the motivation issue all the way to the elementary school. When you talk to them about the weekends and the evenings, they see the weekends as their time and not time for work. That is one of the challenges that they face.
- At the high school, they printed transcripts and had students transfer the credits to an earned credit sheet and that has given freshmen a lot of "aha" moments. The students are surprised that they aren't getting credit when they didn't pass the class and they realize that they need to retake the credit. They do work on that in middle school but it isn't meaningful to them until it is real.
- At middle school they are giving them academic histories and putting those into portfolios so that they can see all of the grades for 6th, 7th and the first trimester of 8th so that the students can share than and plan for the rest of the year and the high school years during their spring student-led conferences. Sometimes they do okay in 6th grade, not as well in 7th grade and not well in 8th grade and they can see this trend.
- Sometimes failure in middle school is not important to the student. Students have a level of awareness that they will go on to the next level even if they fail a class. It is a hard conversation but a fairly frequent one to have with students. She doesn't believe that retaining students is necessarily helping them. If students are

chronically failing multiple classes it becomes a trend and can be a problem in 9th grade.

- One the thing the district is doing is ICE and this may give kids more motivation. Sometimes they see kids at elementary school who are lacking motivation. They work to make the curriculum engaging and make the student excited about it. Work to find their interests and get them excited about it. Have to find something to get kids hooked. They don't have to love everything but if they find that thing that they love, they may see how something that they don't love fits into that. They do their best to find the piece that is engaging and gets kids hooked.
- Some kids "get it" even when they are 9th graders and they start working harder and they recognize it early in the year. Depends on the student's maturing at the time. They are trying to bring along the student awareness. Have to continually bring graduation and credits etc. up to make it meaningful.
- At middle school are having students double up on interventions. This is allowing students to catch up and get the skills they need. They are building schedules around how many intervention classes they need and providing those classes to students. There are some kids who are capable and could do it with effort but they are not motivated. Some students never do any homework. They are a minority. They might be failing classes because they are not getting assignments in.
- Have STAR mentors working with students once a week. Plus they have the Panther Time intervention time. Are now seeing a greater passing rate among freshman. Fifty-seven percent of freshman passed all of their classes last year and this year 63% of the freshmen passed all of their classes. Hopefully Panther time and STAR mentors are working together to accomplish that.
- Believe in the benefits of alternative education. Came from a district where students had a number of alternative options. Sometimes kids can do better in an alternative setting. Sometimes kids want to do things that are just different. Some of our middle school students are getting a very negative feeling toward school because we don't have a middle school options. Doesn't have an opinion about a separate school vs. an in-school model.
- One person felt the separate worked better because kids may look to their peers and not want to be different if it is a school within a school model. Separate site is a better option and the smallness of it may help to eliminate students feeling overwhelmed. Some students can manage that more contained space. The smallness can help some struggling students succeed. They may need extra support. The kids may be very bright but just need to find their niche. They blossom in smaller environments. Smaller environment allows the staff to create a family, caring environment. Harder to make a connection with some students when they have six teachers.

E. How can the Board and school administration further support your work?

- Keep the PLC time.
- Looking at where there is a lack of curriculum or gaps and they may be lacking curriculum or standards. They need to find, for example, a personal safety curriculum. Once they come up a unified make sure that everyone has it.
- Fiber Optics will help because it isn't time effective currently to use some of the things in WESPaC because it is so slow. It will allow them to be more effective with student data.
- Keep working on Career Cruising. Kids need information on this and they need to be able to do this online. Gets kids excited about life beyond high school. The earlier the kids think about the future. By the time they are in 9th grade they are planning about their future and journaling. Parents can read the journal at student-led conferences.

- How well are we meeting the needs of struggling, middle and high performing students.
 - i. At the high school there are more options for high performing students. They and their parents direct that. Their issue is not enough time in their day to take everything they want. Can be conflicts with schedules. Their schedules are tight to schedule everything they want.
 - ii. Meet the middle students' needs the best.
 - iii. The last two or three years we are more on top of students with Fs and meeting with them and sending letters out. When there are skills issues, we are giving them more options. Where we struggle it is with the kids who don't care or don't see the consequences but who can do the work and do not have skills deficits. It is difficult to get the students to plan ahead but developmentally speaking it is hard to get them to see how it impacts them to fail a Language Arts class in middle school.
 - iv. For high students, we have differentiation training for teachers. We have been doing that for five years. The trainer brings in ideas, books etc. to train the teachers. Three 90 minute sessions as well as a half day. Identify students and place them in cluster classrooms. Began testing second and fifth grade students. If they receive a certain score, they are placed in the cluster. Three to six students are in a classroom together and their teachers receive extra training. Differentiated instruction is good for all classrooms because all classrooms have a range. Helps the teachers have the strategies to meet the needs of each student.
 - v. PLC times also help the teachers to meet the needs of each student because they use flex time to differentiate for the students to give them instruction at their level.
 - vi. Have to be very careful with retention. It is not a motivational tool. Might consider it when their skills are lower. Motivating kids with incentives might work better. Broader strategies are needed.
 - vii. The third math credit makes it a little more difficult and tight to get all the classes they need. If they fail classes, they close the door to a lot of options. They have to decide at a younger age if they want to be college ready or vocational ready. Kids narrow their options if they fail and skills centers are trying to stay alive.

F. Other items of interest to you?

- Nothing further.

3. Board's Closing Comments/Thank you!

Dated this 23rd day of March 2010

President

Secretary to the Board