Superintendent's Report

January 20, 2011

LEARNING UPDATE

- **Lab Classroom Project Team –** I am also part of one of our eleven LCP teams throughout the district. Our focus is how do we share what each of the other LCP teams are learning about across the district. The survey data that I shared with each board member at the WSSDA conference was a product of this LCP team. On January 13th, I had the chance to work with this team all day where we did learning walks throughout the district in the morning similar to the Board-Superintendent learning walks we went on last fall. Through this experience, what became abundantly clear to me was just how isolated our teachers really are. It is no wonder our teachers are so good at being in "private" practice as educators based on our growing awareness of the structures (i.e. schedule, facilities, curriculum, etc.). The energy and growth these teachers showed in this one day was simply amazing. They all thought the experience changed their thinking about their practice (and all three of these teachers are wonderful right now). Furthermore, they suggested that other teachers have this same opportunity as well. We are very fortunate to have the hard working, unselfish educators we have working with our students.
- **Learning Conditions Mini-Grant Meeting** – As you may or may not know, I have been working with a team of seven elementary teachers, one elementary classified teacher's assistant and two administrators learning how to raise the cognitive demand of the learning environments within elementary classrooms. This is a fairly diverse group that has worked hard throughout the fall to learn and support each other as learners. The energy has been amazing and I have learned a great deal from them as a practitioner. Even though this effort was only supposed to last until the end of January, the entire team asked if they could meet together throughout the spring and continue their work. I am in the process of writing another mini-grant to fund this extended effort.
- **Switch** – As a leadership team, we are beginning a book study using a book entitled *Switch* by authors Chip and Dan Heath. The book is about how to initiate change when change is hard. It provides many examples of what appears to be monumental change occurring by thinking differently about how to internally motivate those involved in the change. The exciting points of this book is that much of the ideas discussed align very well with how we do business here in La Center. Our learning model and the ideas behind it also meet with the authors' framework with great fidelity. I am looking forward to our ongoing discussions as a leadership team, which we will start next week. I have already heard administrators talking about the concepts of the book (the rider, the elephant and the path) not only in their professional work, but also referencing changes within their personal lives as well. It should be interesting work.

BOARD UPDATE

- **State Budget Update** – We continue to sort through the various legislative bills that are popping up in Olympia. At this juncture many of the bills are focused on addressing the current deficit facing the state. I believe that their goal is to have much of their additional cuts determined by the first week in February so my hope is the 2010/11 financial picture will be much clearer in the next few weeks. I continue to believe the impact to our district this current fiscal year is still in the range of $100K to $200K. Currently we only know about approximately $100K, but some of the ideas being floated around the legislature may push it up to the $150K mark. We have plans in place to meet this challenge and as you know we have begun taking action to address this impact on our current budget. I will keep you up-to-date as more information becomes available.
- **Testifying before the House Education Committee** – I have been asked to present to the Education Committee for the House of Representatives in Olympia next Tuesday afternoon regarding the new state graduation requirements and our efforts here in La Center to meet them. The committee chair specifically asked for examples like La Center to be shared with the committee so they can get a sense of what is possible. It will be interesting to learn what they are thinking and to observe their reaction to our model. I will be back in time for the board meeting so I can share with you what I learned from the experience. More on this later.
- **Calendar Committee** – If you remember last spring, we proposed an idea to extend the school day into the teacher time every day after school to carve out a consistent block of collaboration time each week on Wednesday morning for a student late arrival. Hockinson, Kalama, Woodland and Ridgefield (HS only) school districts have similar weekly schedules. If you also remember, I have consistently stated that we will not even broach this concept in any serious way with stakeholders unless staff supported the concept first. In other words, without broad ownership of the idea by staff the idea would be DOA in my office. The energy had begun to build with certain portions of our staff (mainly elementary) last May so I supported moving it out to the entire staff even though I knew the timing was really late in the year. In the end, the momentum fell flat by staff so we reverted back to our current schedule for this year and put off the conversation until this year. If it gained momentum again then it was worth bringing it up. From this start a broad based team of teachers and administrators have formed and met to discuss the idea again this fall. I am pleased to inform you that it is once again building energy, but now has a much broader K-12 foundation. The central premise of this idea is to reduce the number of early release days currently scheduled, extend the school day every day for students (it is looking like a five minutes earlier start with a five minute later dismissal), and combine the time each day to create a consistent block of teacher owned collaboration time every week. The student-teacher contact time will remain stable and in some cases improve with this idea. It will also help erode a part of the system that keeps teachers isolated from one another. Since this current idea remains a work in process at this juncture, I simply wanted to let you know that we are continuing to work on this concept. I will let you know more as it progresses. FYI.

Please give me a call if you have any questions. Talk with you later.

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