Superintendent's Report

January 22nd, 2010

LEARNING UPDATE

- **Washington State Leadership Academy (WSLA)** – Last Thursday (January 14th), our district leadership team participated in the third of six day long training sessions as a member of WSLA. There are six other districts involved in this work (Camas, Washougal, Hockinson, Ridgefield, Woodland and White Salmon) and the meetings are held at the ESD. To say the least, I was very pleased with our team and their enthusiasm for the work we are doing in creating high quality, 21st century learning environments. Of particular interest was our work related to Lesson Studies and the Lab Classroom Project. This WSLA session allowed our team to mix with the other district teams, which provided us a great opportunity to both learn from them as well as to share what we are working on. Without question it was clear to all of us that our work to create high cognitive demand, high flow of information student-centered learning environments is on the leading edge within our region. Kudos to our team for all their hard work.
- **Small Schools Conference –** Each year the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) puts on a statewide conference for smalls schools (2,500 FTE and smaller) in Yakima. Because of our work as a district to align with CORE-24 and because of my service as co-chair of the State Board of Education's CORE-24 Implementation Task Force, I have been asked to present a breakout session on the subject. This will provide great opportunities to not only share the work done at the state level, but also the work we have done here in La Center. I am looking forward to the feedback we get from board members, superintendents and other district personnel from across the state with this important topic. It should provide a great learning opportunity for us.

BOARD UPDATE

- **Washout at the Football Field –** A couple of weeks ago Rob Williamson became aware that we had a washout developing on the bank of the southeast corner of the football field adjacent to the city maintenance shop. It appears as though a drain line that takes the water away from the football field is to blame. The line is perforated and has drain rock around it. As water does, it takes the path of least resistance and therefore as it approached the bank it went down hill instead of into the drain line, thus eroding the side of the hill. We have contracted with Colf Construction to repair the damage and correct the drainage problem. Additionally, there are trees at the end of the football field that are causing maintenance issues on the field itself and potentially are a safety issue. These trees need to be removed. New trees will be put in their place once everything is cleaned up and repaired. FYI.
- **Technology Protocol –** Now that we have added an additional technology support person (Skot Barker), we have been working to create and implement a new technology support protocol so staff can get their technology repairs made quicker. Our predicament is similar to trying to fly a plane and upgrade it at the same time. Clearly this is a big challenge and our tech support team is working hard to get everything done, but progress can be slow sometimes. I just want you to know that this work is a top priority.

- **Fiscal System Conversion –** As you probably remember, last summer we converted from PowerSchool to Skyward. Skyward is the student records software used by most of the districts in the state and is part of a suite of software packages provided by the Washington State Information Processing Center (WSIPC). Our fiscal records are all through WSIPC supported by the ESD. This year was our turn to upgrade our fiscal software to a new system. Brett, Nancy and Julie have been working very hard throughout the year to make this conversion. It is amazing to me that they have done all this work with positive energy and continuous smiles even though we have 0.6 FTE less help this year in the district office and Nancy has had to learn payroll. This is a real credit to them as well as Laurie's support and leadership as our defacto office manager. As of the end of this month the old system will no longer be operational and the new system will be up and running.
- **Levy Update –** The levy committee continues to pour their hearts and souls into the campaign. Phone banking will be next Monday and Tuesday (1/25 & 1/26). The committee decided to just call the registered voters who have children in school. Even limiting the calling to this section of the voter list will require contact with over 600 homes.
- **Budget Update –** Our budget numbers continue to remain on solid ground as our staff continues their effort to be thrifty. My only concern is that we have seen a slight enrollment drop in January that is not typical for us. We will have to see what February brings in terms of enrollment because we sometimes get new students at the start of the new semester. Looking forward to next year, as you know the state is again facing a steep decline in revenues. I have spoken to each of our building staffs about what next year could bring relative to state funding. I have expressed there are still too many "balls in the air" to give specifics, but staff reductions are again a possibility. Last year we avoided a reduction in force (RIF), but we may not be that fortunate this year. I stated to them that worrying has never created any solutions and that I had no doubt that facing this challenge together will provide the greatest opportunity for minimizing the impacts on our students. Clearly the result from our levy is a huge piece in the budget puzzle, but the state's decision on what it can afford is the next piece. Around the middle of February the legislature should receive a new budget revenue forecast that will help shed more light on what they must cut in our funding. For now, we simply must continue to focus our energy on supporting our students, which is exactly what our staff is doing.
- **Legislative Update –** I serve our ESD region by being part of a statewide legislative committee that is part of WASA. When the legislature is in session, we have weekly teleconferences to get updates on what is happening in Olympia. The bill that I am currently tracking with the greatest interest is known as House Bill 2776. This bill is the funding formula side of making last year's education funding reform bill (ESHB 2261) a reality. It changes the way funding is calculated away from a convoluted formula towards a more understandable model. This new model is called the prototypical school model where the state actually spells out class sizes for each grade, administrators at each grade band as well as support staffing levels. It is an interesting model and HB 2776 is the legislators' first attempt at making this transition.

On a personal note, I have been selected to run for statewide president of WASA. These elections are very competitive, but it is still an honor to have been selected to run for this important office. FYI.

I think that is all for now. Please give me a call if you have any questions. Talk with you later.

Mark