Primary Board Report (with a touch of math)

Movers and Shakers

La Center Elementary is clearly a learning community of movers and shakers. A concrete example of this is our students' utilization of our new "Speed Zone" track. As of October 12, students have officially logged over 770 miles of walking, jogging, and running laps. These miles only include those miles punched on our Mileage Club cards and turned in to our playground aides. Many students hold onto their punched cards and like to see their progress (handful of fully punched cards) prior to turning them in. There are cards which have not officially been recorded. Our playground aides are keeping track of those turned in and are recording them on posters in our cafeteria so that all students can see the hard work of individuals and grade levels. We also announce totals by grade level each week during our morning announcements. Some days there are so many students doing laps that it can be difficult to keep up with the lap punches using our five hole punches. Watch out middle school and high school track.

A Learning Community Works Together

This has been a week of our first parent/teacher conferences of the school year. These are great opportunities for parents and teachers to get a chance to better understand students and their efforts, as well as work together to improve our abilities to better support each student. I have heard positive reports regarding conference attendance as well as good conversations being had about our students. I look forward to learning our overall attendance.

A key needed component to our math success consistently discussed by our Math Leadership Team during our math adoption process was, and is, community support. As we know, our success depends on our whole learning community. Any piece missing weakens our efforts. With our strong start in classrooms comes opportunity to focus more attention on community support. At our November 3 staff meeting, our staff will be working in breakout sessions on potential community support efforts which they feel a passion toward. We will be working on such support ideas as parent support groups, math support internet links, parent support nights, math games, all-school math game nights throughout the year, and Math Man/Woman.

We plan to gather a focus group of parents and community members soon after our community support meeting. Our goal is for participants to gain an understanding of what we are thinking support might look like and help us to improve ideas and efforts. Who would know better about what is needed for support than those we are trying to support?

A new part of our math program is the availability of math textbooks online to better support students and families. Sharon Bussler has been working hard to make links and access to these textbooks and other resources easily accessible for families from home via the internet. Math links and needed information should be up and available on our math links page soon.

Capacity, Collaboration, Contemplation

At the last School Board meeting, I shared three areas we are focusing many of our staff efforts this year, especially in math. In the spirit of our staff work in the areas of

Capacity, Collaboration, and Contemplation, I thought I would share some of our recent efforts in each area. As you read the following, you may notice that mentioned efforts can often fall under more than one area:

Capacity

We need to develop our staff capacity to effectively support our students in their math learning. As mentioned in the past, Colleen Johnson and Colleen Wing (the Colleens) have been and will continue working hard to help lead our efforts. In order to develop more support capacity, we will be working with our Math Leadership Team to extend their leadership further past our main meetings and communication regarding work in those meetings. Math Leadership Team members will work toward doing such things as leading workshops, leading events and efforts, and further supporting their grade levels.

An example of a Math Leadership Team member leading the support of their grade level is that of Karen Alanko working with middle school math staff (Andrea Austad and Mike Holland) to set up a meeting with fifth grade teachers and middle school math teachers on October 27. This meeting will start vertical dialogue between elementary and middle school so that we can better understand how we can effectively prepare our students for a successful middle school career.

Our Math Club staff has worked with our kindergarten and first grade teachers to increase our capacity to assess precursor math understandings through the use of our new math common assessment. Math Club staff taught classes while homeroom teachers assessed each student individually. This is much more effective than having three outside staff assess students and tell teachers about their students. Teachers with first hand knowledge of each student's needs, coupled with their overall understanding of class patterns, are better able to apply interventions and effective strategies.

Collaboration

It makes sense that more brains working together to support one another and solve problems should be more effective than one alone. This is a main reason why we have changed how we do staff meetings this year. The majority of time is utilized working together on learning, understanding our needs, and creating solutions. The same basic reasoning is behind our book studies, lab classrooms, and classroom experiments.

As you know, we are participating in the lab classroom project. Our focus is on giving effective feedback. We have had one book study on the subject and have planned out the year. Our first collaboration time and lesson observation will be on October 27. More great lessons are to follow as well as another book study with practical applications and follow up from our first book.

Contemplation

We have limited resources of such things as people, money, space, and time. With this, we need to be thoughtful in all we do. This includes processing prior to acting, evaluating while experiencing, and evaluating after efforts have been made. I mentioned the Colleens (Colleen Johnson and Colleen Wing) earlier. The three of us meet weekly to process, reflect on, and plan math efforts. This time has been critical to our efforts. I believe that the work in these meetings can best be described by the word synergy. The sum of our efforts is greater than our three individual efforts put together.