Superintendent's Report

February 23rd, 2012

LEARNING UPDATE

- **WASA Smalls Schools Conference** – On March 5th, David Cooke and I will be providing a break out session at the Small Schools Conference in Yakima about our learning model and what we describe as learning confidence. This will be a great opportunity for David and I to make connections with other school leaders across the state and test some of our strategies for sharing the model with others. I really appreciate all the work of our administrators and staff who are working to develop and implement new ideas and strategies. David in particular has been at the forefront of this work and his real world experiences of working to create strong learning teams in his building and across the district has been extremely valuable to our overall success.
- **Is our Culture one of Compliance or Learning?** – Attached you will find a new document that helps make the connection between our learning model (as expressed by the variables of learning confidence) with what I believe is the difference between the common culture of education (i.e. the fix-it mindset) and what we are striving for (i.e. developing confident, self-reliant lifelong learners).

  We are thinking about it this way, if we spend our energy forcing compliance (external motivation), what happens when the external energy is removed? By contrast, if the motivation is internally motivating caused by a self-determination of high value, then the energy is self-generating. In other words regarding learning, an externally motivated learner will become "dependent" on someone else for motivation, whereas an internally motivated learner is self-reliant (which is the expectation stated in the Ends policies).

  We are learning to collect evidence, design lessons, create learning teams and build organizational structures aimed at strengthening the culture of learning across the district. This is despite the external pressures of state and federal mandates thrust upon all schools to force compliance. The leadership of the Board to focus on their learning is a key driver in this work. You all set the tempo for our learning culture, so thank you for this leadership.
- **Old Dog Four** – If you recall, I have been part of a team of learners over the past year and a half known as the "Old Dog" team. I am the "old dog" and the teachers involved are teaching me new tricks. Each of these efforts have lasted about a semester, so we have migrated through OD1, OD2, OD3 and now we are starting OD4. The following is what we will be working on between now and the end of the school year:
  1. **Intentional Lesson Design** - "I want more practice at designing lessons that maximize the learning conditions in order to generate stronger Learner Confidence."
  2. **Evidence Collection and Usage** - "I want to learn how to collect better evidence so as to know if my lesson designs are effecting the type of student actions desired."
  3. **Moving from Dependency to Self-reliance** - "I want to develop a clear awareness that the culture within the team I lead (i.e. my classroom) has a culture of Learning over Compliance."

  I am very excited about this latest effort that currently will include eight elementary teachers. We may be adding more as we get off the ground, but with administrators added in, we will have more than 15% of our staff working on this effort. The learning that has resulted from the OD teams has moved out across the district and I fully expect the learning from OD4 to continue in a similar way.

BOARD UPDATE

- **State Budget Update** – The state is inching closer to a finalized budget that is shaping up to include minimal cuts to our funding. Due to a slight increase in state revenues, lower case loads (therefore less required state spending) and budgetary smoke and mirrors (a.k.a. kicking the can down the road), I now believe the amount of cuts will be minimal. With that said, we have been in a cycle over the past four years where our staff have not had any cost of living adjustments on either the certificated or classified side of our team. I know we have not received any state funding to do this, but I do believe we are in the solid position that we are due to their collective sacrifices. I am not lobbying for a raise for them, but rather I am reminding the Board of the time our staff has been caught in this cycle. At some juncture, this situation will need to be rectified in some way. FYI.
- **Teacher Principal Evaluation Pilots (TPEP)** – The current law requires all districts to implement a new four-tier evaluation system for both teachers and principals by the start of the 2013 school year. A handful of districts around the state are participating in what is known as TPEP to explore the various evaluation models being blessed by the state. I am serving as the chair of a state-wide committee for WASA (Washington Association of School Administrators) to follow the work of these pilot districts and learn from their efforts. In our district, we felt that using our own model for learning was better (even though the district Leadership Team has studied the other models) and we continue on our own to move forward with creating a new evaluation system of our own to meet the current state law. With that said, there is a bill moving through the legislature that appears to have a solid head of steam that would require all districts to use only an approved system for evaluation. My opinion is that this will not knock us off course and we will adjust their system to meet our need around our learning model. I am sharing this with you because if you hear about TPEP and new legislation to drive districts into only approved models, I would encourage you to simply nod and smile (and not worry) because we will make it work for us and at the same time meet the letter of the law.
- **Federal Audit Results –** As you know, we once again passed with flying colors our most recent federal audit. I would like to thank John Parsons for coming in and being part of the exit conference. Additionally, thanks John for his consistent and thoughtful questioning of the auditor as to the need for so many audits given our history of excellent results. I do believe that John's previous efforts lowered our costs this year because the auditor's office had an intern do some of the nuts and bolts work of the audit, which significantly lowered our hourly billing rate.

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

Mark