Superintendent's Report

March 18th, 2011

LEARNING UPDATE

- **WASA Small Schools Conference Presentations –** On Monday and Tuesday (March 14th and 15th) I had the chance to attend the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) Small Schools Conference in Wenatchee. Small schools in the state of Washington are defined as those serving 2,000 or less FTE student populations. I have been attending this conference for many years and find the sessions to be both timely and very targeted for the challenges we face in our size of district. As I had shared previously with you, I was asked to present two different sessions at the conference about our work in La Center. The first session was on our efforts to meet the proposed new state graduation requirements (a.k.a. CORE-24). I used the presentation that we created for the WSSDA conference last year. The second presentation was around my dissertation work on Policy Governance and how the policies of the board can influence an entire organization through the process of creating a board-superintendent learning team. I believe both presentations were well received. I believe the concepts presented and our pathway model resonated with conference participants.

BOARD UPDATE

- **State Budget Update** – Yesterday (March 17th) the state released its financial forecast for projected revenues for the 2011-2013 biennial budget. The news is not good as they continue to project less revenue (approximately $700 million). This brings their projected budget deficit to more than $5 billion dollars. In short, I believe we will be able to meet the challenges the state throws at us with minimal impact to students unless LEA (Levy Equalization) is significantly impacted. This is a huge part of our budget (in excess of $550K). All other cuts will be spread across the board, such as pay cuts or a reduced school year. Furthermore, the "word on the street" in Olympia is that the legislature may not come out with their budget until June, which puts us in a real predicament since we will have to issue teacher contracts by May 15th. I will keep you informed (as usual) on this as the picture develops further. FYI.
- **Special Education Funding Shortfall for 2011/12 School Year** – I serve on our Special Education Cooperative Advisory Board at the ESD. Over the past several months we have been working to sort through a significant budget reduction headed our way for next year. We are preparing to cut around $1.5 million dollars from the cooperative budget. At our most recent meeting, it was determined that about half of this loss in revenue from the state should come from reductions in expenditures and the other half come from an increase in fees to co-op member districts. This increase in fees will result in about a $50K increase in expenses to our district. As we move deeper into the budget development process, we will have many areas that will need to be adjusted up and down along the way. Our goals will remain consistent however, and that is to provide services to students in order to meet the board's Ends goals and at the same time stay within your

expectations articulated in the Executive Limitations. Many of my colleagues are wrestling with the same challenges/opportunities as we are, but I just have to say that the policy framework you have provided me to work within as your superintendent allows me to move forward and make decisions in a much more efficient manner because of your articulation within your policies. I just wanted to take this opportunity to not only provide you information about the pending changes in special education funding, but to also express my appreciation for your clear delineations of what you need me to accomplish in my work. Thank you for giving me such great direction!

- **District Core Competencies and Power Standards** – Several weeks ago I mentioned at the student linkage meeting debrief that we were working on creating core competencies and power standards for all grade bands and subject areas. We continue to progress with this idea and I have shared with all staff a draft of the core competencies. They are below:

Core Competencies

1. Students will develop thinking abilities (Cognitive Demand):

A. Higher thinking (analyze, evaluate, classify, predict, decide, estimate, generalize, solve, compare, simplify, design, cause/effect, etc.).
B. Communications (present, persuade, collaborate, publish, recommend, demonstrate, describe, debate, explain, describe, elaborate, etc.).
C. Goal setting/attainment (brainstorm, envision, research, plan, organize, persist, etc.).
D. Use a quality process (plan, draft, analyze, and revise) when producing products.

2. Students will become an effective navigator (consumer and producer) of information within the collective body of knowledge (Flow of Information):

A. Be able to use a five-step problem-solving process (identify variables, locate facts, evaluate information, create solutions/opinions and test concepts).
B. Be able to conduct, produce and present research (locate and organize information, write, support, present thinking in a varieties of mediums).
C. Be able to utilize charts, graphs, tables, manipulatives, equipment, models and other resources within the problem-solving process.
D. Possess technical skills to:
   - Read/write with skill and present with confidence: instructions, charts, thank you letters, letter of requests, letter of responses, proposals, lab reports, research reports, technical documents, summaries, graphs, etc.
   - Utilize technology: word processing, database, Internet, AV production, etc.

These core competencies in conjunction with course content standards (known as "Power Standards") will focus all of our learning environments in a way that we have not ever been able to do before. I believe this move will be the next leap forward in meeting the board's Ends policies. In short, this effort will make more visible the types of skills and abilities students need not only for success in the information age, but also to become self-directed independent learners. To help test these core competencies in designing lessons, both of my LCMG groups (a.k.a. Old Dog Teams) will help me learn how to best design lessons using these core competencies. Our belief is that by designing lessons from a foundation of the core competencies using the course specific Power Standards will assist

us in creating quadrant 1 learning environments to a greater degree. It should be very exciting to see how this effort develops.

- **Bi-annual District Financial Audit** – As you know, we are in process with our regularly scheduled bi-annual audit. So far so good as the auditor works to review our fiscal records for the past two years. No news in the past has been good news and so far the auditor seems happy. It is our understanding that their preliminary work should be done shortly and we will be having an exit interview within the next few weeks. Board members will be invited to the exit interview and Laurie will let you know when that meeting will be. FYI.
- **WSU's Rural Education Center** – The REC is an organization connected with Washington State University that supports small school districts in our state. Currently, the REC has 75 member districts from all across the state of which La Center is a member. I have served on the executive board of this organization over the years and have served as the REC executive board president back in 2000 through 2002. I have again been elected to serve as president of the REC executive board for the 2011/12 school year. I guess they didn't learn the last time I served in this position;-) Anyway, this point of service is very timely given the economic issues we are facing in the state as well as pressure from some legislators for districts to consolidate. I am looking forward to serving in this capacity, as I believe it is another opportunity (just like the work for the State Board of Education on graduation requirements and the associated policy changes) for La Center to in the middle of the conversation.

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

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