Superintendent's Report

April 20th, 2012

LEARNING UPDATE

- **WASA Leaders Conference** – On April 17th I had the opportunity to attend the annual WASA Leaders Conference at SeaTac. This is a meeting of leaders within my professional organization (Washington Association of School Administrators) tasked with setting the goals for the upcoming year. I was representing our region at this meeting this year as a WASA Board Member. I have probably attended this annual meeting close to ten different years and have always found it to be a wonderful experience to listen to leaders from across the state. This meeting helps me get a sense of what school leaders are thinking as you have probably heard me say, "Thoughts to words, words to actions, actions to habits and habits to legacy". Getting a sense of what is going on outside of the district is critically important to staying ahead of issues and this meeting is a great opportunity to learn.

  Stable funding has consistently been a theme of these meetings and it was again this year. What struck me as new this year was the consistency of the concerns around TPEP (Teacher Principal Evaluation Pilots) by these leaders. For me, TPEP as an opportunity to enhance our collective conversation about the types of learning environments we are working to create within our schools (for both students and staff). Those in attendance didn't necessarily disagree with this perspective, but their tendency to perseverate on the challenges and unknowns of the law changes rather than the opportunities for growth was a key takeaway for me. Their concerns centered on dealing with questions regarding which instructional framework to choose, implementing the changes well enough so that they could "get rid" of bad teachers without legal issues, wondering how their community would see their district if they didn't use the tool to find the "bad teachers" and so on. Compliance mindset was the norm and the Learning mindset (despite encouragement) was much less common.

  For our team here in La Center, I have full confidence we will seize this conversation starter to help broaden the awareness of the types of learning environments we are trying to create. I also believe the changes in the evaluation law will invite those who might see themselves more as "private practitioners" to "get involved in the process" rather than isolating themselves. As you will read in the next item, my confidence in our staff is well founded and I fully expect this trend to continue as we work through the new evaluation law.

- **Teacher-Principal Evaluation Pilot (TPEP)** – On Thursday (4/19) approximately 20 educators and administrators from across the district met at the high school to discuss the changes to the state law regarding teacher and principal evaluations. I had the chance to hear this team discuss and sort through the various documents associated with TPEP. I would like to encourage each Board member to visit the district website and look at this information yourself. You can find this information by going to the district website and click on the STAFF link at the top menu bar. Then scroll down to "TPEP Documents" at the bottom of the page and review this information for yourself. If you are interested, I would be happy to walk the Board through the same process staff went through so you can see for yourself what staff will be reviewing and learning relative to TPEP.

The general feedback from these district leaders was that we have been moving in this direction for many years now and even though there may be some new evaluation wording, many facets of these new evaluation tools are aligned with our work to date. Even though I was not surprised by their response, it was nice to know that they too saw the state's new framework and evaluation tools as validating our work that we've accomplished over the past six or seven years.

- **Leadership Clark County –** Today (4/20), I had the chance to be part of a panel of superintendents from our region (with John Deeder from Evergreen and Mike Nerland from Camas) as part of a program known as Leadership Clark County (LCC). This is an annual program where people from across Clark County who are identified as up and coming leaders in our broader community work together for an entire year to enhance their thinking and skill sets. Our own Brett Blechschmidt is a graduate of LCC and now serves as a Board member for this organization. He preceded the panel conversation I was part of with a lesson on school finances and educational data analysis. I caught the end of his presentation and he did a fine job. This meeting was a great opportunity to describe for county leaders what our schools were about and to help them become aware of the La Center way. When I spoke about our focus on learning environments and efforts to create a learning organization aimed at developing confident, self-reliant lifelong learners, these future leaders reacted in a very positive way. The expectations you as a Board have been laying out for the district really resonated with this group of community leaders. Even though they were mainly from other parts of the county, I was very pleased that what we are working on struck a cord with them. To me, this would be yet another piece of evidence that the direction the Board has set for us is right on target.

- **Site Tour at the Washington State School for the Blind –** On Thursday (4/19), David Cooke, Laurie Kansanback and myself had the chance to spend a couple of hours touring the Washington State School for the Blind in Vancouver. It was a wonderful experience to learn how they have had to adapt almost everything they get to better serve their students' unique needs. As a result of this need to adapt, they have developed quite a culture of change acceptance. We were all impressed by their ingenuity and tenacity to serve their students. Additionally, their efforts to create strong partnerships with other entities and a culture of learning aimed at improving their own practice was very inspiring. We all learned a lot! When the tour was finished, we were filled with ideas on how we could possibly partner with their students and staff to help us be better at our practice. Please don't be surprised if you will hear something about a future partnership and/or events with the School For The Blind and La Center.

BOARD UPDATE

- **State Budget Update** – As you probably know, the legislature has finally passed their budget and the impacts on education funding were minimal. With that said, there were several bills passed in the very late hours of the morning of the final day that could have significant long-term costs or impacts. The one that worries me the most is Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5940, which is aimed at reforming school employee health benefit purchasing. There are many new reporting requirements with this law and it may take a while to sort out the full impacts. I am sure we will find the value within this bill, but anytime Olympia imposes new "reporting requirements" the nuggets get harder to find. FYI.

- **Middle School Student Lockers** – We have been talking about the need for additional lockers in the middle school for a couple of years now. However, pulling the trigger to spend these resources has been a difficult decision to make. With the number of students in our middle school I am at a point that it has turned into a must do. Therefore, I will be working with David Cooke and Rob Williamson to determine the quantity and costs of adding additional lockers for students in the 6th grade hallway. I just wanted you to be aware of this investment.

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

Mark