Superintendent's Report

May 20th, 2010

LEARNING UPDATE

- **Self-reflection** – As I sat down to write this part of my report, I thought to myself what specifically would be of interest to the board given all of the recent opportunities to learn? Our work on creating student-centered learning environments for students has been exciting. Our conversations and creative thinking about how we could reorganize our programs to better support students has been nothing less than inspiring. The unselfish thinking and drive to create stronger learning teams has blown me away. The evidence for this is ample, but I would like to offer the following examples for you to gain an awareness of what is occurring.

  The first example is the conversation about changing our thinking around how we structure ourselves to better support our students. The fourth and fifth grade teaching staff are considering sharing students (around content areas) rather than trying to be a "one stop shop". For elementary teachers, this conversation could be very intimidating because they have to not only show other teachers their strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, but they have to share their perspectives on the practice of other teachers. This is a significant shift in thinking that I believe is a direct reflection of their work as part of their Lab Classroom Project team.

  The second example I would share is that Dave has thirty-seven educators signed up for a non-paid online book study on formative assessment. As a background for this, there are two major types of assessments (formative and summative). Summative assessments are used by teachers at the conclusion of a unit or a course to measure if students successfully accomplished the expected learning. These types of assessments are more about achievement than learning. Formative assessments by contrast are used during the process of learning. They are used to inform both teachers and students how the learning is progressing and whether or not changes in instruction need to occur. This may not sound important, but I believe it is a key shift in thinking by staff around the idea of changing instruction to meet the students rather than the old "I taught it and they either got it or didn't" mindset. Meeting the students where they are at and employing tools to measure and adjust course in instruction are powerful concepts that traditional instruction is usually fearful of. Not our teachers… or at least 37 of them!

  Finally, I would offer the example that last year we had a bit under thirty teachers involved in the Lab Classroom Project (LCP). This year, we believe we could have well over fifty and maybe even close to sixty teachers involved in this work. We are thinking that two sessions of the summer institute on LCP may be necessary (last year we only had one). No one is forcing teachers to participate and most of the staff only received $150 as compensation. The team leaders in each of the five LCP teams received an additional $500 stipend for the extra work and responsibility they had. However, one of the team leaders requested not to collect her $500 stipend and instead asked to have it used to provide more time (substitutes) so their team could continue working on their problem of practice, which was around helping students create stronger learning teams. Without question the LCP's clear examples of internal motivation by staff and we believe creates supports for students to release their own internal energy to learn.

BOARD UPDATE

- **Budget Update –** Brett continues to work on the budget, but all signs point to a place where I don't believe we will have to draw into our reserves very much for next year. We will just have to see when the final dust settles on this work. On our current budget, as you know last year we thought we might have to draw into reserves about $200K. As I have reported over this year the actual number will be much less. For some time I have shared with you that it could be around a $100K draw into reserves, but now we think if all goes well we could be closer to a break-even scenario. We are keeping our fingers crossed and will keep you informed as we approach the end of the budget year.
- **Race to the Top (RTTT) –** As of Tuesday at 6:00 PM, the state's effort to arm twist districts into signing on to RTTT has yielded 251 districts (out of 295). Even though the official deadline was Monday (5/17), the state has informed us "non-conformists" that they will accept applications all this week. A list of the non-signing districts was sent out to each ESD with additional encouragement to "arm twist". So far, my position remains that it is not worth our effort to go after these funds and I feel it is disingenuous to sign on only just to get along. With that said, if as the week progresses it begins to look like we are the only district not signing on I would hate for the La Center School District to be a scapegoat for the state not receiving the grant funds (even though the application is a long shot). I will watch this issue and let you know how it turns out. For now I will hold our ground☺
- **Community Service Award Recipient** – This year our district has nominated Melissa Flatt to receive from the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA) an award for her community service to education. Melissa has been deeply involved in supporting a variety of programs and services across the district. She has been deeply involved in PTO and has served as president for two years. She has worked diligently on both recent levy and bond committees on behalf of our students. Melissa has chaired numerous committees and efforts over the years including PTO calendar, Fall Carnival, Bingo Night, Book Fairs and Kindergarten Field Day. Additionally, she organized a Drug Awareness Night for MS and HS parents and students. Without question, Melissa is deserving of this award on behalf of our students, staff, board and community. She will receive this award on Friday, May 21st at the ESD. If you see her, please thank her for her service as it is deeply appreciated.
- **Food Service Advisory –** To keep you in the loop on this work with the food service advisory group, below you will find a copy of an email that Brett sent out to the full advisory in advance of their upcoming advisory meeting. I am pleased with their work and the new energy this advisory is showing. I am providing this information so you can stay aware that we continue to work on improving our food service program on behalf of our students. FYI.

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

Mark

COPY OF BRETT'S EMAIL TO THE FOOD SERVICE ADVISORY GROUP

Food Service Advisory Members,

As promised, here is some information to help us hit the ground running at our June 2nd meeting of the Food Service Advisory Group.

Attached please find a [copy] of a document that Superintendent Mansell developed to focus our discussion around our Overarching Goals. We will be using the "Essential Questions" to guide our conversations going forward. Although there are many directions those questions and the "Areas for Exploration" could take our conversation, Dr. Mansell has requested we focus our time and energies on the breakfast program for the short term. This idea is centered on the desire to use the smaller scale of the breakfast program to better study the impacts of initiatives born out of our discussions. Also, the implementation cycle should be much shorter and easier given the smaller scope of the program. Again, this will allow us to gather meaningful data on which ideas work well and which ones will require more refinement and/or additional resources before being implemented within the larger, more complex lunch program.

With that introduction, I'd like to propose a sequence of events that I think will deliver outcomes that fit within our overarching goals and are consistent with previously discussed ideas. Since our Overarching Goal #6 suggests a more stringent nutritional standard than the USDA, it seems to me (and others that I've been able to informally discuss this with) that is a good place to start with our breakfast work. I'm aware of some alternative standards that have been well vetted at multiple levels and are based on medical evidence (not economic or political agendas). I know Josh and Karen are familiar with these standards, so I'd like to ask they be prepared to summarize these standards in hopes that our group can adopt them for our breakfast pilot program.

The second step would then be to review our current breakfast menu options/recipes for compliance with these new increased nutritional standards. I would request that Karen and Shirley take the lead on this program, given their familiarity with these concepts. Where existing menus/recipes do not meet the new standards, I'm hopeful that alterations to the recipes/ingredients can be found to bring that choice into compliance. If there are less than 10-12 menu options that are currently compliant or can be altered to bring them into compliance, I am hopeful new choices can be explored and confirmed as compliant.

Once we have these 10-12 compliant menu choices, I believe Shirley will have enough to generate the September menu by simply rotating these items within the month. Obviously, once we get over this initial hump of getting a compliant September breakfast menu out, our future work will include continuing to expand our library of compliant recipes to be used in future months' menus to increase variety and replace the choices that prove least popular in our first month or so.

That is fair amount of work to accomplish in a short amount of time, but to the extent that we have time on June 2nd, we would also like to at least begin the conversation about the ala carte choices available in the breakfast lines.

Although those are the biggest, most time-sensitive steps for us to address in our meeting, as always I'd like to encourage you to all bring any ideas that you think will advance our goals. Please remember that in order to increase our chances to successfully implement meaningful change in the breakfast program, our focus should remain on that program, at least for the short term.

Thanks and I look forward to seeing you on the 2nd in the district office conference room at 4:00.

Brett

Food Service Advisory Overarching Goals Established in 2008

1) To provide the most nutritious meal options possible for all children at the most reasonable cost.
2) To educate parents and students
    - On the nutritional content of the meals we serve.
    - On the benefits and concerns of the nutritional components.
    - On the choices we make when selecting a meal and how to make healthy choices.
    - On the risks associated with being over or under weight.
    - To develop good eating habits.
    - Tie meals into the health curriculum in the classroom.
    - To provide healthy choices at all meals
3) Visually indicate to the students what the healthier choices are and how to build a balanced meal.
4) Provide simple indicators in the lower grades and add the nutritional details, as the students get older.
5) Limit less healthy choices and treats to no more than twice a week.
6) Improve the nutritional content of the meal items based on a measurable standard beyond the USDA standards currently in use.

Essential Questions

1) Looking at the revenue and expenditures of our food service program, what have been the impacts of any changes to the program in terms of sales and costs?
2) What actions have been taken by the food service program to educate parents and/or students about nutrition, choices of food, good eating habits, etc. over the past year?
3) What actions have been taken to provide more healthy meal choices?
4) How have less healthy choices and treats been limited to reach goal #4 stated above?
5) Besides the current state and federal standards for nutrition, what other models for nutrition are being used by schools either locally, in-state or across the nation?

Areas of Exploration

1) If any above goals have not yet been met, what barriers or challenges are being encountered to achieving them and what strategies are being considered to do so?
2) Now that it appears as though our breakfast program numbers are strong, what would it take to move toward a cooked from scratch model for breakfast instead of using predominately prepackaged food (i.e. cold cereal, cherry turnovers, etc.)?
3) At the high school, what are the items being offered ala-cart both in the morning and at lunch, and how do these products align with the overarching goals listed above?
4) How have students been engaged in conversations about food service program over the past year and what specifically are they telling us?

5) How are adult stakeholders (e.g. advisory committee members or other volunteers) being engaged in conversations or work around making our food service program even better?
6) How are we (either as an advisory and/or as a food service program) intentionally collecting data to determine program effectiveness, needs or impacts from any changes being made?