Superintendent's Report

September 22nd, 2013

I would like to begin my report this month by doing something a bit different than normal. As I begin my ninth year as your superintendent, I thought it would be interesting to look back at some of my past superintendent's reports and look at some of the topics I have shared with you at this time of the year. Doing this exercise may give some context to some of the topics I will share with you as part of my formal part of my formal report that is to follow.

September 26th, 2006

- **School Boundary Petition Update** – I spoke with John Simpson (interim Ridgefield superintendent) on Wednesday, September 13th to see what action the Ridgefield Board decided to take. What I found out was their Board decided to take no action. Therefore, I submitted a letter to Twyla Barnes (ESD 112 Superintendent) that we request she convene the Regional Boundary Review Board to hear and decide on our petition request. The timeline is the ESD has ten days to initiate this process and then the Review Board has sixty days to organize and schedule a meeting. Therefore, this meeting should be held sometime before Thanksgiving. My understanding is the whole process could be heard and action taken one way or another during a single meeting (which is typically the case). Twyla will be scheduling a meeting between John and myself to go over the process again, so I will hopefully be able to confirm all this information by next week. In the mean time, I am beginning to line up individuals who might be able to testify on our behalf at this meeting. I have asked Mayor Irish to be available to testify and I would like to get Commissioner Morris if possible. As Board chair, Melissa should also be ready to testify as a spokesperson for the Board. I may also see if I could get some of the residents in this boundary area to attend and be ready to speak in support of our petition. I believe a key strategy for Ridgefield will be to bring in some vocal residents opposed to the change and try to apply pressure to the Review Board. If you have any other thoughts on who might be good to bring in on our behalf, please let me know.
- **BIA Letter on its DEIS** – I wrote a letter to the Bureau of Indian Affairs during the comment period for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement regarding the Cowlitz Casino project. The letter simply stated that this project was not currently in the boundaries of the La Center School District and we believed that if the project was approved that the tribe would work with the district to address the impacts, which are currently unknown at this time. I also stated that our district was in the process of petitioning for a boundary adjustment with the Ridgefield School District and if approved, the proposed tribal properties would then be within our district boundaries. If this occurred, the **Error! Contact not defined.** would then have serious concerns about the loss of assessed property values due to non-taxable tribal lands and we expected this loss would be mitigated in an appropriate fashion once the impact was fully known.
- **New School Property** – I have been working with our architects and the engineers/scientists to finish the process of evaluating the property on Bolen Road. So far, everything is progressing well. I hope to have a formal report back from the architects by next week. We will probably have for you at the October workshop a final report for Board approval. This will allow us to move forward with the property purchase closing process.

- **Urban Growth Boundaries** - I have been participating in several meetings and hearings regarding UGB issues and processes. I had the chance to testify on behalf of our district and community in front of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) on September 20th regarding local issues and concerns. One of my concerns I shared with the BOCC was that information previously provided to the county on our anticipated growth was not fully included in their draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) document. I have since resubmitted this information and personally briefed the BOCC on these impacts.

August 20th, 2007

- **Boundary Petition Appeal** – Ridgefield has submitted their brief to the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) and our attorney is currently reviewing it. We have a chance to rebut their brief, which is due to the ALJ on or before September 7th. Then, we have to prepare for the oral argument stage of the process, which will be on September 20th in Seattle. To date, their position and our position has not wavered, so in the end it will simply come down to what the ALJ will decide about the process used by the Regional Committee. As with all appeals, it is tough to overturn a decision so we need to be realistic with this effort. One way or another, this effort shows to our community that we are doing everything possible to keep our taxes low as we work to meet our growing facility needs.
- **La Center Education Association Negotiations** – I am continuing to work with our teachers to come up with a new agreement. We continue to work on planning time and we are just down to the point of trying to get it all into language. I will have a more complete update for you at the board meeting on this work and seek your guidance on how to wrap this work up.
- **La Center Bus Driver's Room Remodel** – We have been working hard to finish this space for the drivers. My hope is that we will have it done enough for them to use it when they start back next week.

September 22nd, 2008

- **Installation of Portables** – The work to move both of the portables from the high school to the elementary school this summer has been completed… well almost! We have faced a number of hurdles in working through the bureaucracies of our La Center building department. Rob Williamson (our maintenance supervisor) has done a great job of developing good relations with our local building inspector, which has made the process go much smoother than would have otherwise. Then on top of that, we have faced more bureaucracy in the state electrical inspectors office when they decided to change the rules on us compared to all the other portable moves we have completed in the past. But once again, Rob to the rescue to do his magic and work through the system. Finally, just when you think we are in the home stretch, we get to face the bureaucracy of the fire marshals office; you guessed it, Rob came through once again! Even though we are going to open school on a temporary electrical permit with one of our portables and a punch list of final tasks to complete, I am pleased to inform you that we will open school using all four of the classrooms in these two additional portables now located on the K-8 campus.
- **Water Damage in our Elementary Music Room** – Many of our classrooms are cleaned and then closed up for the summer. The music room was just such a room and we had a water pipe begin to leak under the sink and cause some significant damage. We are working to sort through this matter and get it repaired. I will be notifying our insurance carrier of this damage

and then we can make the determination whether or not to file a claim. One way or another, it looks like we may not have this learning space available at the start of school.

- **New Bleachers** – Steve Frucci, Rob Williamson and some of our summer helpers have been working hard to assemble the new bleachers. We are also in the process of working through more building permits and sign-offs to get this ready for our first home game. If you have not been by to see them, it is definitely worth a look from the road or even a walk by if you have the chance.
- **4th Street and Highland Street Project** – The construction crews are working very hard to get this project to an acceptable point for the first day of school. We have been told that they should have the first layer of asphalt down by the time school opens next week. However, the anticipated completion date is still sometime in October. The city has been really great to work with on this effort. They have done everything they said they would and then some.

September 22nd, 2009

- **Presentation to the State Board of Education on our Graduation Requirements** – Yesterday I presented to the State Board of Education our Pathways to the Future model and our new graduation requirements. We are the first district in the state to change our requirements to meet these new expectations. Attached is a copy of the article from the Columbian. Since the Associated Press wrote this, the article can also be found in other papers across the state including the Seattle Times. FYI.
- **Portable Bleachers** – Thanks to funding garnered by the La Center Education Foundation (approx. $40,000), we are now the proud owners of a new set of portable bleachers. I am told these portable bleachers have a 300-seat capacity and are very mobile. The lower section hydraulically folds up on the upper section so it can be pulled around with a truck. Our hope is to use them at fields on both campuses and possibly allow them to be used for other community events.

September 24th, 2010

- **Presentation on La Center's Pathway Model for graduation requirements to regional educators at the ESD** – Last week I gave a presentation on our work to change our graduation requirements. I saw this presentation as a great way to share what we are working on as well as fine-tuning for our WSSDA presentation in November. There were thirty-two people in attendance and the feedback I received about our work was positive.
- **Ending Fund Balance** – Due to the hard work and frugalness of our staff, it appears as though we will not have to draw into our fund reserve to balance our 2009/10 general fund budget. It actually appears as though we may end up bolstering our fund balance when the dust finally settles. More on this later. FYI.
- **State Budget Reductions** – Governor Gregoire announced on September 16th that she was ordering across the board budget reductions in an attempt to fill a projected $520 million dollar shortfall in this year's budget. These cuts could be anywhere from 6% to 10%. For education, the biggest parts of our budget that these cuts could impact would be levy equalization and K-4 enhancement money. The state is set to receive approximately $200 million additional dollars from the federal government to offset the loss of funding for teaching positions (titled the EduJobs bill), but given that they are facing such a huge hole in the general fund budget, my sense is that the state will figure out a way to use EduJobs money to backfill the state funding hole. This situation is very much in flux as all this is just about the problems they are in for this fiscal year. To make things worse, they are projecting in excess of $3 billion (yes with a "b") dollar hole in the 2011-13 budget. It is a good thing we have consistently been able to get ahead

of the curve on this fiscal situation. I will keep you informed as things continue to progress. FYI.

September 22nd, 2011

- **Making AYP in Math Across the District** – It is very exciting to see that our students made Adequate Year Progress (AYP) at all levels in Mathematics this year. This is something everyone has worked very hard at. Kudos to our students, staff, parents and volunteers for all their hard work.
- **Declining State Revenue Forecast** – The State's regularly scheduled revenue forecast recently came out and we are once again facing a projected shortfall. This time they are saying they will be short $1.4 billion dollars over the biennium. Since they just passed their budget less than four months ago, this is obviously very concerning news. As a result of this sharp decline in projected revenues, Governor Gregoire has directed all state agencies to prepare for up to a 10% cut in their budgets. Please know that schools are not part of this directive. However, she has stated publicly that "[even a 10% cut to state agencies] is not enough to cover the current projected shortfall" (Spokesman-Review, September 22, 2011). She is planning on calling a special session following the State's November revenue forecast to address the issue prior to the regular legislative session that begins in January. In the same Spokesman-Review article, Gregoire was quoted as saying "everything is on the table". She went on to say that "the State can't make many more cuts to the Department of Corrections without closing prisons or eliminating community supervision for most released inmates. [The State] may have to cut early learning programs and even basic education 'is not sacrosanct'." The length of the school year is part of basic education, and with the uproar around the 1.9% teacher salary reductions I doubt the legislature will go there again (at least I am hoping so). In short, I am really concerned about levy equalization, which is $600K in our annual budget as it is not under the umbrella of basic education. It would be hard to imagine a solution that saved levy equalization, yet shortened the school year. Loosing levy equalization is equivalent to the cost of eight certificated teachers. Clearly we have many changes ahead of us, but as we have done in the past, we will do our best to get ahead of this in the process of minimizing the impacts on our students.

September 21st, 2012

- **Old Dog V** – Again this year I will be working with a team of teachers (12 this fall) to enhance our collective learning. This year will be focusing on learning about the Danielson Instructional Framework (our chosen TPEP framework) by looking at it through the lens of our district's learning model. In particular, we will be focusing on collecting evidence using technology (i.e. iPads) and designing lessons using iPads. It should be a very interesting group of professionals to learn with again this year and I am really looking forward to it.
- **IPad Deployment** – The rollout of our new iPads across the district has gone exceedingly well. I got to use them myself with my Navigation students and right out of the box (or more accurately said… iCarts) they worked flawlessly. Beth Marshall (our high school library tech) has worked very hard to make available an online registration system for check out and check in of the iCarts by staff. This idea has been shared across the district so everyone will be using the same system. A huge thanks to Beth for her selfless work to get this reservation system off the ground. I would also like to say thank you to the tech team for getting everything rolling with the iPads. Kudos to them all.

BOARD UPDATE September 22nd, 2013

- **Chromebook Deployment** – We have received our recent order of 120 Chromebooks and they will be deployed in the coming days to both the middle school and the high school. I am looking forward to getting these devices into the hands of students to see how they can use them in their learning. I am also excited for our teachers as they work to weave them into their classroom assignments.
- **Old Dog Alpha** – I am starting a brand new Old Dog team (remember, I am the 'Old Dog' and they are teaching me new tricks), but this time it will be with all of our new teachers across the district from both regular education and special education. Dave provided these new staff a half-day training before school started on our learning culture and business processes to help get them off to a great start. My job is to extend this effort to support them in their learning journey in how to create student centered learning environments, but more importantly I want to learn from them how they see their job as learning environment creators. Most of this group brings real experiences in this responsibility from other districts, so I am really curious to hear their thinking about this way of approaching our work to achieve the mission of the district. I will be meeting with this new team on four different occasions this first semester (12 hours of training time occurring after school). As in previous Old Dog teams, these learning opportunities have really helped me grow and learn more about my own practice, so without a doubt I am looking forward to this new opportunity.
- **Budget** – Our budget for the current year is looking very strong as our overall enrollment is up slightly from our budgeted numbers. Additionally, as Brett works to close the books for the 2012/13 school year, we continue to do very well in managing the resources provided to the district. To have consistently expanded services to students during the past five years of economic downturn while strengthening our overall fiscal health is a real testament to the hard work of so many. What we have to keep in mind is that with our flat levy for the next three years, continuing to monitor our resources with a sharp eye for being thrifty is still very much a must as we move forward.
- **Certificated Negotiations** – Having just completed our classified negotiations for the next two years, the job of working with our teachers' union on a new contract for the LCEA (La Center Education Association) is beginning to take center stage. Most of this work will take place next spring and early summer and what the legislature does is critical to this work. We have a great group of teachers who are very student centric. With that said, the state absolutely must address salary adjustments for them as well as addressing the cost of health care. Very little if anything has been done to increase this funding over the past five years or so. It is a huge problem that I have no doubt will bubble up around the state and certainly will impact the discussion with our teachers.
- **Athletic Facilities** – I continue to work with various stakeholders in our community about the need for a quality facility at our high school for track, soccer, football and PE. I hope to be bringing forward a new proposal for moving this important issue forward as the ideas solidify. Please know that I remain committed to finding a reasonable and quality solution to this important facility need.
- **School Boundaries** – We are approaching the date where a new appeal to adjust the school boundaries between La Center and Ridgefield School District out to the La Center junction area is possible. The goal of this effort previously was to broaden our tax base by adding

more commercial property to our district as the junction develops in the years ahead. The hope is to also align our school boundaries with those of the City of La Center. In previous Board-Council linkage meetings, the city has been very positive and supportive of this effort. With their recent expansion of the city limits out to the junction with strong landowner support, the time to revisit this matter with the landowners, the Ridgefield School Board and the ESD has never been better. I ask that as a Board you consider whether this is something you want to revisit again.

- **Graduation Requirements** – I have begun a conversation with a few staff members and stakeholders about our current graduation requirements and our Pathway to the Future model. What I have learned is that many students may want to take the Technical Pathway, but because it doesn't keep their options post-graduation as wide as the Academic Pathway, students are tending to avoid the Technical option. This sends the wrong message to students and parents about this pathway and the importance of this learning trajectory.

  From these conversations, I am considering starting a broader discussion about possibly making some adjustments to the requirements so as to bolster the supports for students interested in the Technical Pathway. I will be bringing forward what I am thinking about this matter very soon. I just need some more time to sort this out a bit further with staff, but I wanted to give you a heads up that I have been working on this issue.

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

Mark