Superintendent's Report

July 15th, 2011

LEARNING UPDATE

- **Summer Institute** – I am very excited for the upcoming summer institutes we are hosting on August 10th and 23rd. We will be providing training on how to create Learning to Learn focused classrooms to around 80 educators, of which about 30% are from outside our district. Educators from Kalama, White Salmon and Green Mountain School Districts as well as the ESD are planning on joining us this year to partner with us in creating these types of learning environments. I am also very pleased to have several of our classified staff involved this year in learning how to create these types of learning environments.

  The core of these institutes is aimed at helping educators intentionally create learning environments that tap into and harness their student's innate need to learn (the La Center Learning Model). To do this, these educators will work to answer the following three questions:

  1) "Am I asking my students to think or simply asking them to know?"
  2) "Who is doing the work of thinking, me (as the teacher) or my students?"
  3) "What am I (as the teacher) learning about my practice from my students?"

  These three questions are each connected to the three conditions (e.g. Cognitive Demand, Flow of Information and Learning Trust) of the learning model. These educators will learn how to intentionally plan lessons that raise the cognitive demand of the work, engage students in doing the work so as to have them become independent learners, as well as show them how they can collect evidence from students about the learning environments they create in order to improve their practice as a teacher. These educators will also learn through the use of video learning walks (similar to what each board member did when we went on live learning walks this past year) to show them how to become more self-reflective as learners themselves. If they learn how to become a stronger, more independent learner themselves they will be more able to help their students do the same.

  It should be very exciting to learn from all these educators in how they answer these three questions and then observe throughout the upcoming school year how their learning environments change. The energy of these educators learning to see their classrooms through this new lens of helping students learn to think (a.k.a. Learning to Learn) instead of focusing on how to deliver content to students as if they were empty receptacles is very exciting to watch. If you happen to be available on either August 10th or 23rd, I would encourage you to stop by and see for yourself this learning effort in action. You can contact Laurie and she will let you know exactly where these meetings will be (we anticipate them being in the high school library, but may need to move them to a larger space).

BOARD UPDATE

- **Budget Update –** The budget is finally complete. Yeah! As you know, over the past few years we have presented a budget that requested pre-authorization to draw into reserves by around $200K and each year we have finished the year in a balanced or positive ending position. This

current year (2010-11) was the same as we were projecting a $210K deficit and expect to finish around $40K to the positive. Two of the largest variables in this positive swing were a slow but steady collection of impact fees (we built a budget on a zero impact fee model – funds are used to pay our non-voted debt on school property) as well as less than anticipated utility costs. The 2011-12 budget that we will be presenting at the upcoming board meeting includes approximately $150K pre-authorization to draw into reserves, but please know that we have once again built a fairly conservative budget in order to give us flexibility if conditions worsen. As I have said previously, I believe we are in a "new normal" in state funding and therefore our goal is to ultimately move toward a balanced budget. This year we have moved closer to that goal by around $60K from last year's budget ($210K down to $150K). When the dust settles on next year's budget, our goal is to be balanced once again but feel the uncertainty in the variables call for a preauthorization from the board to draw into reserves by as much as $150K if needed. This budget is a bit tighter, but we are still making the necessary investments in our schools as expected and have once again expanded services for students despite the even more reductions in funding from the state.

- **K-8 Campus Parking Lot Traffic Flow Improvements –** We are continuing to work out a way to use levy safety money (as promised to the voters in the last election) to improve traffic flow through the K-8 campus parking lot. The goal is to connect the parking lot from the back of the middle school gym to Ivy Street near the tennis courts at the city park. Bob Colf has been a huge help to us over the years with so many projects (i.e. football field, announcer's booth, etc.) and once again his commitment to the district should help us create an effective solution at a reasonable price. My hope is that we will be able to pull this off this summer and have it ready to go by the time school starts. I hope to have a final proposal to share with you at the board retreat.
- **Summer Maintenance Efforts** – Beyond the normal work to clean, paint, repair/replace and maintain facilities, our maintenance crews are working on several extra projects this summer. We will be replacing the floor in Mr. Westerberg's room transitioning from carpet to tile (remember from the staff linkage meeting) so as to better support middle school art instruction. We are also working to replace storage cabinets in Mr. Landes-McCullough's high school art room that collapsed last spring due to heavy art supplies being stored in them for many years. These new cabinets will be much sturdier and allow for him to once again store his supplies properly. Finally, we will be refinishing all the gym floors as usual in all four gym spaces (elementary, middle school, upper middle school gym and high school). We are also looking at bids to restripe both parking lots to aid in more efficient traffic flows. All of these projects serve to show that our commitment to maintaining the wonderful facilities the community entrusts us to care for is being fulfilled even in these tough economic conditions. I am very proud of our crew for their efforts, as this is a huge undertaking that often goes unnoticed. Kudos to them for all their hard work!
- **High School Counseling Center Counter Project** – As you know, I like to take on a project each summer as a way to switch gears from my superintendent duties to one that is more physical. This year I will be building a new counter in the high school counseling center to serve as space for more computers for students. Even though it is a small project, I am looking forward to the opportunity as it will create more access for students in their work around career planning and the pathway model. It should be fun! Thank you for allowing me to have this opportunity.

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

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