



Walla Walla Public Schools - High School Facilities Task Force Minutes from 11.29.07

Members present: , Scott Krivoshein, Lawson Knight, Mike Pettyjohn, Jody Schneidmiller, Jim Hayner, Cindy Widmer, , Mindy Meyer, Rob Ahrens, John Butenhoff, Jim Sporleder, , Ruth Russo, Darcy Weisner, Ruth Ladderud, LaDessa Smelcer, Carina Stillman, John Rowley, James Payne, Dick Cook, Jim Sanders, Linda Newcomb, Cindy Meyer, Jim McCarthy, Everett Knudson

Members absent: Clint Gabbard, Dave Warkentin, Nanqi You

Guests: Dave Teater, Rich Carter, Mark Higgins

A. Overview of agenda

Cindy Meyer presented an overview of the evening's agenda, which includes motions to adopt the October 25, 2007 minutes, the four subcommittee reports presented at the October meeting, and the High School Condition Report.

B. Motions for Adoption/Approval

John Rowley confirmed that everyone had received copies of the documents via e-mail and asked for separate motions for each of the items.

- ◆ The High School Condition Report was unanimously adopted.
- ◆ A motion was made to adopt the College Place Issues report. One question: What is the purpose for adoption? John said we need to make sure we all agree that the contents of the reports are accurate so that we can share them with the community. The adoption was approved.
- ◆ A motion was made to adopt the remaining three subcommittee reports" Deferred Maintenance, Facility Impact, and Safety/Security Issues. There was a question on Deferred Maintenance report, second paragraph regarding upgrades on lighting. It was decided that the report should say that some upgrades have been made and the report will be edited to reflect that. The three reports were then approved for adoption.

There was discussion on whether the original reports, not just the summaries, will be available for public viewing. It is legitimate that we show exactly what the committees reported. Some questions/comments did not make the summary reports. We don't want to lose good comments from each report about what was discovered or what questions were asked. The committee feels it is important to include all information in an index (referenced from reports).

C. Subcommittee Reports

Alternative Education

(Cindy Widmer, Clint Gabbard, Mindy Meyer, Max Carrera, Dave Warkentin and Dick Cook)

The report was distributed and is attached to these minutes. Group representatives explained that they had met four times, listened and talked a lot. They contended with questions. They explained that the three guiding questions were difficult to answer without a comprehensive plan. Attached to the report was an article that served as a good resource for their work.

It was explained that this committee looked at everything across the board, researched different areas, and talked to Darcy Weisner They said they continued to have underlying feeling that Lincoln is becoming our second high

school, we need to embrace that and we really need to have a plan . They said the community really doesn't understand alternative education: "those kids."

Some comments/questions from the discussion session:

- ◆ What is the ideal size of a school? When a student shows up, you identify needs and try to meet them. We're talking about 450 kids who have been in alternative programs over the course of a year.
- ◆ Four year high school completion rates were studied and the group found that most who do not graduate are in the alternative programs. There are some pretty significant dropout rates at Lincoln and Opportunity. 85% of those students under poverty umbrella. One resource said they are just kids who need to find a place to fit in.
- ◆ The size of classes is an issue; a teacher/student ratio of 1:10 or 1:15 is best.
- ◆ When an alter school gets too large, it becomes a second high school, not an alternative program
- ◆ Even if we get two other schools, we will still need an alternative school.
- ◆ What does it mean to have a successful alternative program? These students also need additional support and committment from the district and community. More than just leadership is necessary.
- ◆ How do we get to level of care that the students need with a fixed budget? These students belong to their parents, the community, and school system. If we are going to solve this problem, we need to find outside money (ie: community, government). The community will pay the price, one way or another.
- ◆ Do we have a feel for how much a program could grow if it was designed to meet more of student needs, aside from discipline. Dick Cook gave a history of alternative education in WW – even how it's grown just this year under Jim's leadership. Mindy Meyer said we have a vision to offer many possibilities and to meet student needs.

Quality High School

(Scott Krivoshein, Jody Schneidmiller, John Butenhoff, Ruth Russo, LaDessa Smelcer, Linda Newcomb)

The report was distributed and is attached to these minutes. It was explained that everyone on the committee did a lot of research and reading on the topic. A continual theme in research is that students are bored

Members of the committee spent time on findings from the report which answered the three study questions. These focused on the critical and essential components of a quality high school and facility requirements that would help either of the two high schools improve the quality of their programs.

Some comments/questions from the discussion session:

- ◆ What is the impact of a good high school science experience as a means for further study (in college, etc.)
- ◆ The program of instruction should determine building design
- ◆ Community support is essential. Committee members interviewed community leaders to begin gauging voter sentiment about high school education in the district.
- ◆ We need to convince community leaders that we need changes.
- ◆ Data should determine what/any changes can be made. It's important to determine how to both change and then manage change.
- ◆ One committee member said she feels the task force might be moving too quickly with its work and that more time should be spent in research, interviews, etc.
- ◆ Robin Peterson was contacted as a resource for the committee work and he provided some valuable insights.
- ◆ Students need to be included in discussion and planning.
- ◆ There are several state initiatives that promote high school reform through public and private partnerships. The district should pursue this type of funding.
- ◆ It's important to have flexible spaces for testing - since schools do a lot of testing each year. Much larger spaces are required and the infrastructure needs to support them.

Career Issues

(Jim McCarthy, Jim Hayner, Rob Ahrens, Everett Knudson, Ruth Ladderud, Nanqi You)

Jim Hayner distributed copies of the committee report and a document on Career Clusters. Career Clusters reference a method/curriculum based on designing student courses of study around something they are interested in. Jim explained that there is a good, but lengthy, PowerPoint from the state of Missouri on Career Clusters. He said that he would send the e-mail address to task force members.

It was explained that clusters are designed around a foundation of academic skills that lead to a career pathway. The 16 identified clusters are commonly recognized throughout the educational system.

Some comments/questions from the discussion session:

- ◆ The economy is changing – more global. What does it mean in the workforce?
- ◆ Only one in five jobs will require bachelor degrees, so that means that 80% will not.
- ◆ About 40% of students start some sort of career program once they are out of high school.
- ◆ Career used to be “in lieu of,” and now they are not.
- ◆ Missouri has program of study for career pathways/clusters
- ◆ Currently, alternative high schools are based on lifestyle, education and behavior. They are separate, but don’t have to be
- ◆ There is a move toward alternative education based on career cluster vocational education
- ◆ Regarding the Academy idea: Why not take out the students who do want to go on to college and have them in a separate program. It’s done all over the world, but not much in the United States.
- ◆ These ideas need a lot more study and thought. When we look at career education, the relationship between rigor and teaching is most important. Our high school has adopted some, but not all, of these ideas.
- ◆ Question: How does this work in a state in which so much rests on assessment? There are basic levels of requirements regardless of what career cluster/path you take.
- ◆ Rob Ahrens visited a school in St. Louis that was very impressive. He said he saw lots of movement in programs. The students are out working in various career fields. The school’s physics classroom was even on the vocational side.
- ◆ Question: Can you get enough highly qualified people into high school to teach really diversified stuff? Would they also meet state requirements? It is a bit difficult to find someone to teach math and then maybe something different.
- ◆ Question: Can we hire guest teachers? At Tri Tech in the Tri Cities area, a fireman is teaching firefighter courses, and there are chefs, nurses, etc. who are teaching students in their fields of expertise. Someone would typically have to have spent a certain number of hours in a field in order to teach vocational classes.
- ◆ The district could have grade 11-14 career education outside of the high school, with core classes on campus.

Small Learning Communities

(Lawson Knight, Mike Pettyjohn, Carina Stillman, James Payne, Jim Sanders)

The report was distributed and is attached to these minutes. The group met and researched Small Learning Communities (SLCs) in terms of size, scope, focus on student readiness, flexible scheduling, teacher teaming and other areas. Their consensus is that going to SLCs from a large school environment is hard partly because of teacher quality. Committee members agreed it is very expensive to make the transition.

Some comments/questions from the discussion session:

- ◆ In SLCs, peer to peer relationships can be strengthened.
- ◆ As career theme change, flexibility in space is important. Things don’t always stay static (ie: pods at Prospect Point)
- ◆ Need to have eyes wide open when we think about SLCs. The perfect size should number about 400 students.
- ◆ One of the biggest issues is class size and poverty. It’s bigger than just smaller class sizes. Doesn’t know if SLCs are necessarily the answer.

- ◆ Several articles read by committee members showed that people jumped on the small school concept, funded it, and then stopped the funding. In short, big bucks were withdrawn.
- ◆ Ninth grade academies intrigued all committee members and deserve more research.
- ◆ Question: When you go to smaller classes, can the district fund more teachers?
- ◆ Flexible space is a big theme!!

D. What's Next?

A draft Phase III document was introduced to the group. There was discussion on next steps for the committee, as well as the need to bring the community on board with what the task force is doing. Some of that will be accomplished by getting Task Force minutes, subcommittee reports and other documents on the district website.

Darcy Weisner said it is important for the task force members to know that the high school has developed a mission statement that will help act as a filter for our work. Rob Ahrens explained that Wa-Hi has a goal of being the best high school in Washington state - even being a blue ribbon school. He said the mission is to prepare our students to be both career and college ready. Our students can move forward successfully. To do that, Wa-Hi teachers have reorganized to work in horizontal teams (professional learning communities) to focus on instruction. Driving questions are: What are goals?, How do we meet them?, What do we do when students don't meet them?, and What do we do when the kids do succeed?

Rob said structural issues still need to be addressed, but from his part, he is going to work every day to make sure his students succeed. In reference to the structural issues, he said, "If I had 150 kids crawling through my house every day, it would need some work!"

John Rowley explained that the entire time between today's meeting and the next one in January will not be idle for the group. He told everyone to check their e-mails for projects, etc.

Next Meeting:

January 24, 2008 in the district office Mill Creek Room