

## APP TASK FORCE MINUTES

August 23, 2001

7:15 PM

Jane Fellner, Chair

Attendance: Barbara Boardman, Linda Carlson, Jane Fellner, Ester Greenfield, Elaine Greggs, Heather Holmback, Sally James, Katherine Triandafilou, Lanie Young

The minutes from the June meeting were approved with the following amendment:

Mary Batie, assistant to Bob Vaughan in the Highly Capable Office reported in an email message that there are currently some students on APP waitlists. As of mid-August, there were 10 on the 6th grade waitlist for Washington Middle School. There are 126 students in the APP 6th grade class, which is unusually large. For Lowell, there is one student on the 2nd grade waitlist and one on the 1st grade waitlist.

## SCHOOL REPORTS

### GARFIELD:

Garfield's new principal is Susan Derse. New members are needed for the site council at Garfield.

### WMS:

We discussed the APP waitlist situation at WMS (currently 10 6th grade students). The 6th grade is extremely full and there would have to be a 5th APP session added to accommodate them. This does not seem possible with the current staffing situation at WMS. It was suggested that we approach WMS Principal Marilyn Day about the current situation and future potential waitlist issues. It was also suggested that a goal of the Highly Capable Review could be to solve the problem of making a place available to all students who qualify.

WMS is thinking about having a room parent program, similar to the successful program spearheaded at Garfield by Ellen Mohl.

### LOWELL:

All three new teaching positions at Lowell have now been filled. The newly-hired 2nd grade teacher is Althea Chow. The new 4th grade teachers are Caroline Perkins and Candace Jacobson.

## HIGHLY CAPABLE REVIEW PROCESS

Jane reported on a meeting she had with Dr. Rimmer on August 22. The Highly Capable Review document presented to the School Board in May is considered to be a work in progress. Dr. Rimmer feels that it is currently missing a clear description of the programs we currently have and that there has not been adequate public engagement. The following areas will be tackled this year: 1) curriculum development, 2) professional development, and 3) assessment strategies (for qualifying for the HC programs).

Communication is another piece of the overall project. There is discussion of a District newsletter and/or web site, separate from the APP newsletter and web site. Over the next 6 months, there will be three more Saturday parent/community sessions on: 1) increased rigor, 2) increased access, and 3) increased capacity. The intent is to share information on the issues and then obtain input that can inform the ongoing review. The first meeting is scheduled for September 22. The keynote speaker will be Richard Strong, author of Teaching What Matters Most, who will talk about how to increase rigor.

It is hoped that the HC Review Committee will morph into a Steering Committee, which will become a standing committee. One proposal would include the current membership (4 principals, an APP parent, a Spectrum parent, Dr. Brogan, Dr. Rimmer, and Dr. Vaughan) with the addition of a few teachers. This committee would meet every few months to review all of the activities related to Highly Capable programs. There may also be an Advisory Committee intended to represent all the constituencies in Highly Capable Education (i.e. parents, teachers, principals, community, etc.), but the exact format and mandate is yet to be determined.

Dr. Edie Holcomb is on special assignment from her current position to serve as Highly Capable Curriculum Director. She will spend 4-6 months doing a curriculum audit (i.e. visiting the programs, getting familiar with the current curriculum, meeting with teachers). This will include development of a set of "culminating activities" that will be expected for APP, Spectrum, IB, and AP students at each grade level, to be linked in some way to continuation in the programs. Dr. Holcomb will work with Dr. Vaughan on a review of current assessment tools and other instruments that might be used to identify eligible students who are missed by the current tests, including techniques to help teachers identify such students. Issues surrounding parent notification will also be addressed. A Teacher Network, consisting of teachers who will assist Dr. Holcomb in curriculum development, may also be developed.

#### PROGRAM HOUSING

The discussion of the APP waitlist issue led to a suggestion that we revisit the idea of a separate school for APP 6-12 graders. There are controversial issues on both sides of this topic. There are political problems with the idea of APP as a school within a school. While many parents believe that having a separate 6-12 school would solve a lot of educational issues, it is not clear that all APP parents would favor a separate school. Public perception about the program needs to be taken into account and this might worsen if a separate school were proposed.

One suggestion was to present the idea of a separate school as a way to positively affect the disproportionality issue (i.e. the fact that there are a smaller percentage of minority and lower-income students in APP than many think there should be). Minority students sometimes leave the program during the middle school years. Lanie and Barbara volunteered to investigate and report on the situation with minority students getting into and staying in gifted programs in other cities with substantial numbers of minority students.

#### SCHOOL BOARD

Don Nielson and Michael Preston are retiring from the school board this year and several candidates have been in communication with Jane. We discussed providing a forum for school board candidates to express their views on gifted education and other SSD issues of concern to APP parents. The goal would not be to endorse any candidates but to provide more information to parents on issues relevant to APP. Linda Carlson will contact all the candidates and ask them to send in a short paragraph about their commitment to gifted education. The information will be distributed to parents through posting on the APP Parent Group website, the APP/Spectrum e-group, and parent email lists.

#### WEB SITE

We all agreed that we should be using and promoting the APP Parent Group website better. For example, the monthly task force minutes should be made available there. We plan to discuss the current and possible functions of the web page at a later meeting.

#### NEXT MEETING

The next Task Force meeting will be Thursday, September 20, 2001. Task Force meetings are the third Thursday of each month, unless there is a conflict with another event for a large number of regular attendees.

The meeting adjourned around 9:00.

Submitted by:

Heather Holmback,

APP Task Force Secretary