

APP TASK FORCE MINUTES

December 14, 2000

7:00 PM

Jane Fellner, Chair

Attendance: Linda Carlson, Joanna Cullen, Jane Fellner, Alex Ginn, Norm Hollingshead, Heather Holmback, Courtney Jelaco, Hal Kimball, Ed Mun~oz, Marian Sussman, Katherine Triandafilou, Bob Vaughan, Lanie Young

The minutes from the November meeting were approved with no changes.

SCHOOL REPORTS

LOWELL: Principal Hal Kimball reported that the teachers are continuing to develop the academic achievement plan for the Gates grant. Since the goals of getting all students to meet the SSD academic standards and closing the achievement gap between ethnic groups are not at issue at Lowell, the emphasis is on extending the standards or developing new standards to apply to the highly capable student population and getting a report card that fits the program at Lowell. The technology plan is progressing and should result in having one computer for every five students. No suitable candidates emerged for the full-time math and technology position. Now Lowell is looking to hire a half-time math specialist and will be getting UW students to help out with technology needs.

WMS: Norm Hollingshead, APP team leader at WMS, reported that they have formed two ad hoc committees: one to develop a "de-selection" process for APP for students who are having a high degree of trouble in the program, another to develop APP standards to supplement the current subject matter standards. The APP team is continuing their twice-a-month meetings: one to discuss regular issues and the other to discuss particular cases of at-risk APP students. At the latter meetings, only the teachers of the particular students attend, with Norm facilitating. Several productive meetings have been held so far this year.

GARFIELD: There was no official representative from Garfield, but there were updates and discussion on the upcoming school levy and the Garfield principal search.

Jane earlier sent out information about how parents can get involved in helping to get the levy passed. Volunteers and financial contributions are needed. If the levy does pass, then the important issue is where Garfield stands in line of getting refurbished and whether or not it is to be a rebuild or a remodel. If Garfield comes after Roosevelt, it would be started in 2006. There are safety concerns at Garfield that might lead APP parents to not choose Garfield. This would impact the academic situation for APP students. It was agreed that APP Task Force participants should organize and become active on this issue, by writing letters to the school board and superintendent and meeting with John Vacchiery. Joanna Cullen has agreed to be the focal point on this matter.

There was a letter sent from the Garfield PTSA to Fred Bannister, who is acting as liaison between the

school district and the stakeholders at Garfield. Many felt that it addressed important concerns but did not focus enough on the needs of the students in Honors and AP classes. It was agreed that the Task Force should supplement the PTSA efforts with letters to the superintendent about these needs. This effort might possibly be combined with that of parents who are concerned with Garfield maintaining the quality of its music program. Bob Vaughan emphasized that acquiring a good principal is very important for improving Garfield and parents should work to ensure that there are enough candidates to result in a good choice.

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

STANDARDS: Bob Vaughan encouraged the programs at Lowell and WMS to continue on their efforts to put together standards. Lynn Brogan has been very positive about the APP programs developing their standards and good progress has been made at Lowell and WMS.

WMS MATH: Bob is working with Mr. Buchanan to get the Integrated 1 classes at WMS grouped more by ability. At this point it is felt that this will benefit all students, since there have been cases of students having trouble not feeling comfortable asking questions as well as many students not being sufficiently challenged. Mr. Pounder has been taking steps to make sure there is an advanced 8th grade math class next year.

OTHER

APP PARENT GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS: Courtney Jelaco expressed appreciation to all APP parents who recently gave financial support to the APP Parent Group. She announced that Kate Noble from the Nancy Robinson School for Highly Capable Youth will be a speaker at the upcoming APP General Parent meeting on January 24th at Lowell. Courtney is the state coordinator for Lobby Day, which will be February 7 and they are hoping to have more representation from Seattle this year.

HIGHLY CAPABLE ADMISSIONS/APPEALS: Marion Sussman brought up the idea of creating a focus group to look at certain problems of application to the Highly Capable Program. These include: (1) cases where testing could not be done until after the deadline; (2) students who fit certain criteria of intellectual giftedness but did not meet all the regular requirements; (3) wider dissemination of information about the program; (4) improvement of the appeals process. She felt such a group was needed could help those applicants with special cases and wanted to see how this could be coordinated with Bob's office. Bob explained that his office is already doing a lot of recruitment activities but that the issues that Marion brought up could be addressed to see if the overall process could be improved. He suggested that a list of problems, questions and suggestions for changes be formulated and that these be discussed at future Task Force meetings.

MEETING FOCUS: HIGHLY CAPABLE REVIEW PROCESS

Jane and Bob participated in two planning meetings for the Highly Capable Review Process. Jane passed out a set of critical study questions created by Dr. Lynn Brogan (SSD Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment) who is leading the process. These questions cover the relevant review categories and

are intended to provide a framework for the review process.

There was much discussion on two major questions: Is the APP Task Force a stakeholder in this process, separate from APP parents as individuals? Should the APP Task Force have its own position paper to be formulated at Task Force meetings or by a special subcommittee?

Jane noted that the teachers at Lowell and WMS are putting together their own assessments. The Task Force could facilitate this process or come up with their own position. We might write a letter to each school (Lowell, WMS, and Garfield) with our input or otherwise contribute to their process, but we have to make sure our input does not compromise the objectivity of their reports.

Linda Carlson discussed ideas for a parent questionnaire. Bob reported that his office will be doing some sort of questionnaire. It was discussed whether the Task Force should send out their own questionnaire or work to influence the questionnaire sent out by the district. Bob said that it was important to ask the right questions of a lot of different people, both content and discontent, to get comprehensive input. We need to use the review process not to just defend what we have but to figure out how we can improve. The questions need to reflect the issues that June Rimmer and others have with the current Highly Capable Program. He felt that the Task Force should be involved in shaping the questions and in getting the relevant parties to provide the answers. Bob will make available to the Task Force a draft questionnaire for our input. Others noted that Task Force participants could conduct phone calls as a follow-up to a questionnaire, if needed.

Other ideas about the task force involvement were suggested. We could put together a history of APP issues that have come up over the years as a unique contribution to the process, and also include the role/vision of the Task Force. We could get information from experts in gifted education outside of the school district. We could arrange a meeting with the school board on gifted education topics. We could solicit testimonials from parents on particular topics.

Discussion will continue at the January meeting, focusing around formulating questions for the parent questionnaire and review process.

The meeting adjourned around 9:45.

Submitted by:

Heather Holmback, APP Task Force Secretary