

APP TASK FORCE MINUTES

December 12, 2001

7:00 PM

Jane Fellner, Chair

Attendance: Jane Fellner, Alex Ginn, Edie Holcomb, Heather Holmback, Hal Kimball, Alice Ito, Nian She, A J Skurdal

The minutes from the November meeting were approved with the following change:

Ester Greenfield's name is not spelled: "Esther."

SCHOOL REPORTS

LOWELL: Principal Hal Kimball reported that Lowell had a great holiday concert. The staff is planning to spend some time reviewing the new report card and how it's working out. Hal has received some parental feedback on the report card, not all of it favorable. They have hired a new teacher for the 2/3 grade class to replace Debbie Judd, who resigned for health reasons.

Alex Ginn gave a report about the technology situation at Lowell. They are expecting very soon to be on target in terms of hardware and wiring. Teacher training to bring individual teachers up to speed on using what is available is an ongoing process. The students have been using the Internet for research and each teacher has their own tech plan reflecting how they want to use technology in their class. More computer monitors have arrived and more software licenses are arriving. The goal is to have a 4:1 student-computer ration this year and a 3:1 ratio next year. Darren Smith, from the UW, is again helping out on technology this year.

WMS: There was no representative from WMS, but parents reported that they also had a good holiday concert.

GARFIELD: There was no representative from Garfield. No information on any holiday concert was available.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Edie Holcomb, Director of Highly Capable Services, reported about the application, testing, and admissions to the Highly Capable Program. This year, there are 2765 applicants, similar to last year. They are halfway done with the COGAT testing, which identifies those candidates who get further testing to determine eligibility. Everything is on schedule. Bob Vaughan has been available to help with testing and identification this year and has helped a lot thus far. Edie now has an administrative assistant, Lena Halverson, who is currently helping with communication with parents as well as testing and other, administrative duties. Mary and Virginia are also still working at the office.

COMMUNITY AND OUTREACH ISSUES

Jane reported that a group of parents, led by Ester Greenfield, had drafted a letter to the NAACP in response to their concerns about disproportionality in the Highly Capable program. The plans for the groups to get together have been put on hold as the NAACP and Superintendent Olchefske are currently working on related issues.

James Kelly, head of the Urban League, and Joanna Cullen, chair of the Seattle Council PTSA, organized a series of meetings between constituents of the Urban League and parents of children in the Highly Capable Program. The main purpose is for people to get to know each other so that when issues regarding the highly capable program and the community arise, there is already an established relationship from which to have discussions and work towards a solution. The individuals involved bring different backgrounds and approaches but discussions have been progressing. Some important issues discussed have been: 1) finding a way to make Garfield a more functional building for the various purposes it serves and 2) solving the difficulties that highly capable minority students face in not having a sufficiently large ethnic peer group in the Highly Capable Program. To address the first issue, James Kelly will continue community building. The second issue has been addressed further in the meetings. One question to answer is why parents of highly capable African American students send their children to private schools instead of to the Highly Capable Program. In our brief discussion of this issue at the Task Force meeting, we talked about the recurring topic of having a school exclusively for APP 6-12 and about modifying the APP curriculum to some degree to have more of a focus on different cultures in America.

HIGHLY CAPABLE REVIEW PROCESS

The three work groups have been meeting to address their respective issues in the Highly Capable Review process: 1) integrating highly capable services into a standards-based learning system, 2) program quality and delivery models, and 3) outreach and identification. Edie passed out a handout for each subgroup consisting of: 1) the "recommendations" from the 2000-1 review, 2) the guiding questions of the work group, 3) the critical questions to answer, 4) related issues to consider, and 5) desired products from the work group. The work groups have two meetings per month and are tasked with coming up with recommendations for the Highly Capable Review Steering Committee. Each work group has at least one member on the Steering Committee who reports to the whole committee on the progress of the work group. The results of the standards group are expected to be available and implemented before the others.

In our ensuing discussing, Alex pointed out that there should be some kind of criteria by which to measure success or to have accountability in the results of the groups, e.g. if a delivery model is suggested, it needs to be shown how it would succeed. Edie noted that she did not necessarily see a lot of changes for APP coming out of the review process, except curriculum changes. Jane mentioned that we should use the review process to address some of the important APP issues that have been of concern for some time and that could improve the program. Edie described some of her ideas for improvements in the overall highly capable program: 1) there needs to be a clear continuation pathway for APP students after middle school; 2) the school district designation of "gifted" should stay with the student after 8th grade; 3) the school district designation should indicate that a student was eligible for the highly capable program even if they chose not to enroll; 4) there needs to be a level of rigor in honors courses so that APP kids are challenged. We also discussed the issue of students who are found eligible for a highly capable program and choose not to attend. Currently, if they want to enter later, they need to reapply. On the one hand this does not seem quite right because students have to qualify twice, there may be waiting lists, etc.; but on the other hand, there is the problem of students catching up with others. Even if a student qualifies as gifted, they may not be ready for highly capable program work if they have not been in the program. This is already an issue with the current model of adding new kids to all classes in the program every year and it might be even more difficult if students did not have to requalify. Finally, we discussed the issue of how to serve eligible students who chose not to attend the program. Many at the meeting felt it was unrealistic for parents to expect APP challenge for their students at school if they don't choose to enroll in APP.

At the January 12 Highly Capable Review community forum, Gayle Pauley from the State Department of Education will speak on alternative delivery models of highly capable services, describing the types of successful programs that have state approval. Superintendent Olchefske will also be speaking.

At the School Board February meeting, there will be a working session involving an update about the Highly Capable Review Process and the progress of the various subcommittees.

MISC

At the recent Gifted Coalition meeting, it was learned that the state did not lose any funding for gifted education in the Governor's new budget. There was also talk of wanting to add tracking of what happens to gifted education funding once it reaches the various districts.

There is a Lowell PTSA meeting on Jan 23, with a guest speaker on the topic of developmental and emotional needs of highly capable children. There is an APP Parent Group meeting January 30th.

The next Task Force meeting will be Thursday, January 17, 2002. The February meeting has been moved from February 21 to February 28, as the original date falls during winter break. 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 at 8:50.

Submitted by:

Heather Holmback,

APP Task Force Secretary