

## APP TASK FORCE MINUTES

June 14, 2001

7:00 PM

Jane Fellner, Chair

Attendance: Linda Carlson, Alex Ginn, Jane Fellner, Joanna Cullen, Norm Hollingshead, Heather Holmback, Sally James, Ethan Merritt, Dorothy Neville, Joanne Robbins, Nian She, AJ Skurdal, Marian Sussman, Bob Vaughan, Lanie Young

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

## SCHOOL REPORTS

### GARFIELD:

The Garfield principal search is continuing.

### WMS:

Norm reported that they are happy to have Marilyn Day staying as principal at WMS. This year, she has facilitated the heavy involvement by the teaching staff in the Gates grant planning and other important matters.

Norm described the new schedule and elective structure at WMS. There will be a Reading/Literature class for all students who are not taking both a music class and a foreign language class. For students taking neither a music class nor a foreign language class, there will also be a quarterly rotation of humanities (including art, drama, computers). There will not be separate APP sections for Humanities, but for APP students there will be Honors Reading/Literature. This will focus on critical reading, as this was the weakest area on the WASL for APP students. The new electives are supposed to eliminate the number of TA's next year, but several parents questioned that this might cause more scheduling and space problems.

### LOWELL:

Spring Zoog reported that the committee is in agreement about what to submit for the Academic Achievement Plan and that a smaller subcommittee will put together the final version. The technology plan was recently submitted. It is a good plan and includes lots of new computers. As different teachers are at different levels, the Lowell teachers will incorporate more technology into the curriculum in phases. The phase 1 teachers will start using the computers more heavily next year. The technology plan includes curriculum and standards.

Interviews for the 2nd grade teaching position are being conducted next week. The newly-hired 4th grade teachers are Caroline Perkins and Candace Jacobson.

Spring described the new report cards, which will be like the district report card but two grade levels above. 4th and 5th grades will have a separate report card geared to the standards two grade levels above. The teachers will be undergoing training on how to use the new report cards. Next year, all 4th and 5th grades will be doing the same math curriculum. 4th graders will be doing the regular 6th grade Connected Math curriculum and 5th graders will be doing the regular 7th grade curriculum. This should provide a smoother transition to WMS math for all students.

They are continuing to seek ways to accelerate the very high-end math students at Lowell, including the 5th grade math club and special math during the school day. They plan to test the 5th graders in math at the end of this year, but it is unknown how this will affect placement at WMS next year.

### COORDINATOR'S REPORT:

We were happy to know that Bob will continue his position in the Highly Capable Program office next year.

There are 3-4 new candidates for the Highly Capable Curriculum position and the previous selection committee has been reconvened. The primary responsibilities of this position will be defining highly capable curriculum and helping teachers help high achieving students. There was discussion about how much of the job might involve working with the current APP program. There was also discussion about how the school district administration views this position and whether or not this is the best use of highly capable funds.

[CORRECTION]: There are waitlists at 1st,2nd, and 6th grade. The largest is at the 6th grade sitting at 10. As it stood in June, we believed that the 6th grade list would not clear. I continue to believe that 6th grade APP will have a waitlist throughout the school year. It numbered 14 the month of June. Three were actually moved. One family declined and lost their spot. You may know that there are 126 assigned to APP 6th grade. It is a huge class. There is one on the 2nd grade waitlist. The first grade waitlist is in flux. The student was moved in error, but may end up moving back to the waitlist(The parent is OK with that).

## HIGHLY CAPABLE REVIEW SAGA

Jane reported that at the last school board meeting, there was a lot of discussion about the highly capable review, including the high volume of email being sent by parents to the board about discontent with the review process and with the results. There is some disagreement between Superintendent Olchefske and the board about the board's role in Highly Capable policies and possible changes. Several parents spoke at the meeting about non-equity issues and the use of private testing for appeals. (Jane noted that it is important to stress that the Highly Capable Program is a way for lower income students who qualify to be served.)

We discussed whether or not the APP task force, or some ad hoc committee of interested parents, should put together our own Highly Capable review document for the school board. This could involve looking at the "best practices" and making suggestions on how to improve the program as well as refining certain points that may not have received enough attention in the district review results. While Jane is unable to spearhead such a task, she encouraged others who were interested to pursue it.

Relevant questions to consider were brought up at the meeting: How are the top 5% of ITBS scorers being served? How many eligible students are not identified? What are the current alternatives to the highly capable programs? How can a district-mandated program be run with site-based management, which may involve no support from a principal? What good is having a gifted curriculum if there is no program to use it?

One suggestion we discussed was to have a mentoring program at Lowell for teachers interested in gifted education. Many student teachers are reluctant to go into gifted classes because that area of concentration may make it harder to get a job initially. Another suggestion involved setting up regional centers for Spectrum.

## MISC

The current officers were re-elected for next year: Jane will be chair and Heather will be secretary. There may be a meeting in the second half of July if there is sufficient interest.

The meeting adjourned around 9:30.

Submitted by:

Heather Holmback, APP Task Force Secretary