

September 20, 2001
7:00 PM

Jane Fellner, Chair

Attendance: Linda Carlson, Marilyn Day, Jane Fellner, Alex Ginn, Edie Holcomb, Norm Hollingshead, Heather Holmback, Courtney Jelaco, Hal Kimball, Ethan Merritt, Dorothy Neville, Martha Rothe, Nian She, A J Skurdal, Katherine Triandafilou, Joan Tupper, Bob Vaughan, Lanie Young

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

SCHOOL REPORTS

GARFIELD:

Bob met with new principal, Susan Derse. He believes good things are in store for Garfield. Ms. Derse has experience with developing a good science program, and Bob is working with the Garfield staff to offer more AP science at Garfield. This, along with the development of WASL science test, should increase the pressure to have better science at the middle school level.

Garfield has new counselors this year and the others have been there only one year. There are many AP European history classes this year and several new teachers. The PSAT will be given to sophomores and juniors on October 20th.

WMS:

Marilyn Day reported that there are 1050 students currently at WMS, with a wait list of 100, and the school is closed except for homeless students. The APP wait list has been nearly taken care of. The school has been wired for phones and an intercom and more technology in the classroom. There is a comprehensive technology plan including staff training and more computers are on the way. 7 new teachers have been hired at WMS. The school continues to work on the Academic Acceleration Plan

Marilyn and Norm Hollingshead explained several important scheduling and curriculum changes. There is now LA/SS blocking in all programs in 7th grade and half of 8th grade. There is now a humanities rotation differentiated for each grade. For APP students, the humanities rotation is taken for a semester by 6th graders who do not take music and by 7th graders who do not take music and a foreign language. The other semester involves a reading/literature course. 8th graders currently take a year of humanities rotation, as the schedule did not allow an appropriate reading/literature course. Some students may also be TA's in lieu of the humanities rotation. Mr. Henry is the new 6th grade APP math teacher. There are 4 sections of Integrated 2 and one section of Integrated 3, and more math team activities are planned for this year.

Parents at the meeting saw the value in the above changes, but many were concerned about some of the unified arts classes and about the fact that some students are TA's because there is no other desirable alternative. Marilyn pointed out some plusses with the TA program and believes it is useful.

There was also a discussion about science at WMS. Many parents expressed the desire for a full year of science for 7th and 8th graders. Marilyn reported that the district and the principals want more science in general. WMS does not have the facilities to do lab science and it is difficult to take students off site during the school day on a regular basis. It was acknowledged by all that science offerings are an area for improvement in APP. Marilyn suggested that there could be more after-school enrichment activities for science. It was noted, however, that this would not work for a large number of students.

The overriding concern was that there should be more challenge for the students during the school day, and the group needs to put together some possible solutions.

Hal reported that the addition of three new teachers, made possible by funds from the PTA and I-728, has reduced class size to around 24 per class, which has helped morale. They are using the Gates grant money to learn about other programs to improve the rigor at Lowell. The building is now fully wired and new computers are expected soon. The goal is to have teachers integrate technology more into the classroom to enhance their teaching. There is a continued effort on bullyproofing, concentrating on eliminating verbal abuse. Bob Schilperoort has put "The Lowell Way" to music.

Dr. Fritzi Reisner, a former math professor at UW, has been hired for 4 hours a week to help with students who need more math challenge. She worked with the Lowell team in the Math Olympiad last year and will continue that this year and will work on aligning the math program with WMS math

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Bob gave the APP enrollment numbers for this year. Lowell: 375 (95% of total school enrollment), WMS: 335 (32% of total); Garfield: 338 (19% of total). All students have been placed, except possibly 1 or 2 in 6th grade. The percentages of ethnic minorities among APP students are: 27% at Garfield, 30% at WMS, and 33% at Lowell.

APP PARENT GROUP REPORT

Courtney reported that there will be a school board candidate forum on October 16 [JF - note date change to Monday, Oct 22] at Lowell, co-sponsored by the Spectrum Alliance and possibly the Urban League. The forum will bring together candidates to discuss issues focusing on highly capable education in the Seattle School District. We were encouraged to submit input on questions for the candidates to Courtney, Jane Fellner, or Jim Corcoran.

October 23 is the general APP parent meeting. Dr. Vaughan will speak and Edie Holcomb, the new highly capable curriculum director, may also.

The APP parent group meets the first Saturday morning of every month and organizes activities such as Lobby Day, APP transition meetings, and new parent meetings. Anyone interested in participating can get more information from Courtney or Jim Corcoran.

HIGHLY CAPABLE CURRICULUM DIRECTOR

Edie Holcomb, on special assignment as highly capable curriculum director, gave a brief introduction on her background and responsibilities. She has been a classroom teacher at all levels of K-12 education and has also taught at the college level. She has taught gifted and talented students and was a gifted and talented coordinator in Wisconsin. She has been a principal and most recently was a regional supervisor of principals in the Seattle School District. She has also been director of standards and assessment in the Seattle School District. In August, she was asked to work with Bob Vaughan in the Highly Capable Office to focus on developing a consistent definition of standards and expectations for students who need more challenge at all grade levels. Her goal is to enrich and strengthen what is already in place in the district and look at including more gifted and talented students.

In the group discussion following her introduction, Edie stated that one goal is to individualize the program, as she believes that students who qualify for highly capable programs have diverse needs. The hard part is how to meet all the needs. Her immediate focus for curriculum is on APP and Spectrum but she expects to address the issue of how to serve highly capable students in the regular classroom. Bob noted that Edie was instrumental in developing the school district standards and that this will be very valuable for developing the highly capable program standards.

HIGHLY CAPABLE REVIEW PROCESS

to focus on this year. The three issues for this year are: 1) identifying and serving all qualified students (i.e. improving access through testing, outreach, and communication and increasing capacity to serve those identified); 2) improving rigor in the curriculum (including different classroom options for delivering that curriculum); and 3) integrating highly capable education into the standards-based system (involving the alignment of the highly capable standards with the SSD standards). All of these questions must also be addressed in terms of the "disproportionality issue." There will be working groups to focus on each of these areas.

A lively discussion followed Jane's report. Highlights included: Edie noted that it may be difficult to address the different needs of different highly capable students and issues with one single review committee. Katherine Triandofilou pointed out that more facilities and infrastructure are needed, or else all the ideas and discussion will not be useful. Jane reiterated that a goal of the process is to put more rigor in the regular program, improving schools so that the neighborhood school becomes an option for more kids.

NEXT MEETING

The next Task Force meeting will be Thursday, October 18, 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 9:30.

Submitted by:
Heather Holmback,
APP Task Force Secretary