

Parent Advisory Committee Report October 15, 2014

The first meeting of the Parent Advisory Committee went very well. I appreciate all of the parents who were able to attend either the morning or the evening session. I also appreciate the parents who were unable to attend for contacting me, expressing regrets, and confirming that they still want to be a part of the committee. I look forward to future meetings with all of the members.

The meeting began with a brief statement of purpose and introductions of everyone in attendance. Mrs. Kim Maher, Wilson Creek Principal, attended the last half of the morning meeting, and Mr. Scott Mancke, Board President, attended the evening meeting. Both meetings followed the same agenda and concluded with time for parents to express any thoughts, concerns, or ask questions.

New Business presented to the parents by the Superintendent included information on the following:

- 1) Changes over the past 18 months
 - a. Change to All-Day Kindergarten
 - b. Assuming previous Dist. 843 programs (Early Childhood & DK)
 - c. Formation of Dist 114 Curriculum Committee
 - d. Change of transportation to LW210
 - e. Naming of Special Education Director, Renee Karalus
- 2) Enrollment trends over the past 5 years and what it means to MSD 114
- 3) Presentation of the School Report Cards
- 4) Presentation of the Proposed 2015-16 School Calendar

With each of these items, the reasoning for the needed change was discussed along with any additional change that may need to occur in the future. Mr. Ragon indicated the benefits of going to all-day Kindergarten, then expressed the amount of work that has taken place since in developing the curriculum, but also what would need to be done to account for how much more advanced the students would be when they enter 1st, 2nd, 3rd grades...and so forth. Also, Mr. Ragon and Mrs. Maher are planning to hold meetings with the area Pre-K programs to go over the District 114 Kindergarten curriculum and offer assistance/guidance with their pre-k program planning. We actually had 2 teachers from Kid Country observing in two of our kindergarten classrooms on Tuesday, October 21st. Mr. Ragon then explained the reasoning (increasing costs through the 843 Coop and increased student numbers within the district) as to why District 114 made the decision to operate its own Early Childhood, Early Childhood Screenings, and Developmental Kindergarten Programs. Mr. Ragon indicated that last school year, the District Curriculum Committee was instituted in order to drive the alignment to the standards and to bring the work of the 3 separate building curriculum committees together. This, along with the need to address a common assessment for all students and moving away from separate/different assessments at different building levels was also a reason. Moving forward, the administration and the committee will be working

more closely with LW210 and the other LW area Elementary Districts to share expertise and align curriculum. Mr. Ragon then addressed the aging bus fleet and the need to control rapidly rising transportation costs as the reasons for making the change to LW210 transporting District 114 students. LW210 also began transporting District 843 students as well. After the initial transition, LW210 has done a great job with our student transportation. One of the members expressed one concern about a seating situation on one of the routes. Mr. Ragon indicated that he would make Sue Monreal and Dave Armbrrecht aware of the matter and see that it was addressed. Mr. Ragon then indicated that Mrs. Renee Karalus was named as the Special Education Director at the start of last year and has done a tremendous job of working to address the special needs of some of our students as well as bring consistency throughout the entire Special Education Department, K-8.

The last few items that Mr. Ragon addressed was the increasing enrollment of District 114. The student enrollment was up 12 students over the past year as of September 30th. The 6 year trend shows continuous and steady growth. Mr. Ragon discussed the need for the district to restructure current bond indebtedness and prepare for the possibility in the near future that the district would have to approach the community regarding another building project. This is a few years into the future, so long as the current increase in enrollment continues at its current levels. If the increase in enrollment begins to happen more rapidly, then the district may need to act sooner. Otherwise, preliminary plans have been discussed and more detailed plans would need to be made approximately 3 years in advance of when students would be expected to be in the building. Mr. Ragon then concluded the first part of the meeting with a presentation of the School Report Cards, student testing data, and the proposed 2015-16 school calendar.

The last part of the meeting was an opportunity for the parents in attendance to express their thoughts on current programs, bring a question or concern to the attention of Mr. Ragon, or to simply listen to others and offer comments or support.

The following items were noted by members on the Parent Advisory Committee:

- 1) Possibility of having teachers take students out to the bus and go over the rules/expectations when riding the bus, during the first week of school.

We have discussed ways to improve upon our transportation. I believe that the transition to LW210 has been going very well. However, we always believe that we can improve. We are discussing the idea of working with the PTO and utilizing parent volunteers to assist with busing during the first week of school. The parents would be on the bus to assist with the students (especially new kindergarten students), helping the driver to get the students in assigned seats and making sure the students got off the bus at the proper stop. The idea of having the classroom teacher and Mrs. Maher at the K-2 level, go over the busing rules during the first week of school is a very good thought. Not only are the rules and expectations covered with the students, but we may be able to incorporate the annual Bus Evacuation Drill and complete it during the

- process. The administrative team will discuss this further with each other, as well as with LW210 Transportation Director, Dave Armbricht.*
- 2) Instruction/examples for parents on how to help their kids with their homework.
- In addition to accessing lesson videos, parents can access "Reteach" pages for each lesson. This includes an explanation of the concepts, step-by-step instructions, and example problems. Additional practice problems are included. We will continue to discuss other possible resources or options to aid parents in helping their child at home.*
- 3) Concern about the length of student lunch times.
- Currently our Kindergarten students have 25 minutes while 1st-8th grade have 20 minute lunch times. While we are aware of concern and current research regarding everything from appropriate time for school lunches to whether recess should come before or after eating, there are many factors that affect the building master schedules, as well as the number of students and sections that we have. We also have to consider how early we start the first lunches as well as the time of the last lunchtime. Adding 5 minutes seems insignificant, but adding it to each grade level has a significant impact on the overall schedule and when the first lunch would have to begin and when the last lunch would begin. In addition, the extra time must come from someplace in the schedule. Lunch times at K-8 will be reviewed by the administration and we will see if there are opportunities for editing the scheduling as well as discuss the benefits of recess before or after lunch.*
- 4) Board consideration about district support personnel to assist with the amount of paperwork associated with Special Education, SIS, PARCC, Affordable Care Act, Student Records, Enrollment, etc.
- This is an item that the Board of Education has currently taken into consideration and is in the process of addressing. With retirements occurring and an increase in the amount of paperwork and additional reports, etc. that are required, it has become a necessity to increase the level of support. The plan is to replace 8 hours of district level support with 14 hours. Essentially we will replace 1 district level administrative assistant with 1.67 district level administrative assistant. We are in the process of looking at the duties and deciding how those duties will be distributed. Once the decisions are finalized, then the positions will be advertised and filled. Because of retirements, the district will actually be able to increase the number of hours of support without adversely affecting the overall budget. My goal as well as that of the Board is to provide the best support we can while remaining fiscally responsible and conservative.*

- 5) Question about percentages on daily work at K-2 level but percentages are not a part of the quarterly grades.

This item will be addressed by the Wilson Creek School Leadership Team in November. I will be able to give an update at the next PAC meeting.

- 6) Math Fluency at 3-5 and student loss of recess time if they do not achieve a certain goal. Consider rewarding students for making a goal, percentage of correct, as opposed to a negative reinforcement.

My understanding is the administration and staff felt that the additional recess time was a reward for meeting the goals in regard to Math Fluency as opposed to negative reinforcement. It certainly has never been the intention of the staff to do such, but only try to find time during the school day to work with students on their Math Facts or Math Fluency. An alternative that the principals and I will discuss and search for ways to achieve, and what I believe to be an alternative solution, would be to add additional staff in the area of Math Support, much in the same way we currently offer Reading Support. This would allow for students to receive additional help along with more focused, 1 on 1 or small group help during instructional time. We have seen the success that the Reading Support programs have had and believe that it would be a great benefit in the area of Math as well. We will continue to make this a priority for the administrative team. In order to accomplish something like this will require allocating the necessary resources in a very restrictive budget.

- 7) Consider ways to address the amount of testing being done at all levels and work to make certain that testing is meaningful and necessary.

This is something that I think concerns everyone. Unfortunately, we are currently mandated to give the PARCC, formerly the ISAT. Last year was especially bad because we felt it was best to at least pilot the PARCC so our teachers and students would have an idea of what to expect. The ISAT is done and we will not have to administer it. In addition to the PARCC, all grades are administered the STAR test this year. The STAR test became necessary since we are mandated to have some type of assessment to measure student growth, tying it to teacher and administrator evaluation. This assessment also provides immediate feedback and recommendation for intervention and instruction for each student. In addition to STAR, we will also have to identify one other type of assessment to use in the teacher evaluation process. I certainly agree with identifying any unnecessary testing and eliminating it as much as possible. As mentioned, the ISAT will no longer be given, and in addition to the ISAT, we are no longer giving the Terra Nova at 2nd grade, a test that was given there for years. Since Terra Nova was not used anywhere else, it did not make sense to continue with that test. We will continue to discuss this subject as an administration and as part of the District Curriculum Committee.

- 8) Improve/maintain the levels of communication from building to building. Would like to see Junior High monthly newsletter, monthly email blast, or other ideas to increase the communication between the Junior High and parents.

The JH does have a monthly newsletter. Newsletters for all 3 buildings are posted on the school website, under each building heading. Wilson Creek and Anna McDonald currently email the newsletter out as well. The Junior High used to email the newsletter but when emailing it began to slow down the network, the JH simply began making it available on the web and in paper form for those requesting it. With the upgrading of the network and increase in bandwidth, Mr. Pacheco will have the building secretary begin emailing the newsletter once again, sending it out at the end of the day on a Friday. If there are other suggestions or ideas that all of us can improve our communication efforts, we certainly welcome ideas and suggestions.

- 9) Question about math calendar and wondering if students do not master a concept, is it being retaught or are students being expected to do additional practice on their own at home and the class will move forward with the next concept expecting to be taught on the math calendar.

Many concepts are not meant for mastery throughout each level. Therefore, the exposure is focus. All concepts are included and will be addressed in Daily Common Core Review, and concepts approaching mastery are built into EnVision pacing, and therefore math calendars, to allow for appropriate time needed. Spiral review is incorporated into math everyday. And thus if a student does not fully grasp the concept when it is first introduced, it will be reintroduced as part of continuous review that takes place on a daily basis.

- 10) Question about developing district guidelines regarding homework rules for consistency purposes.

I am not certain if this is an item that has ever been discussed among the administrators or if they have had discussion with their school leadership teams. It is certainly a topic that can be discussed, keeping in mind that the type, scope and amount of work differs greatly from grade level to grade level, especially between P-2, 3-5, and 6-8, and also 9-12. Further discussion on specifics as to what area(s) of homework or individual practice that we would like to look at in terms of consistency between grade levels would be useful as a starting point for the administration and teachers to begin a discussion. I know that it takes a great deal of work inside and outside of the classroom in order to meet or exceed the current standards and the way in which students are expected to learn is vastly different than from what we have experienced. I also know that this community and our parents have experienced a high quality of education and the expectation is for the Board, Administration, and Teachers to not only maintain these high standards, but to also improve upon our standing, not only in the Lincoln-Way area, but in the State of Illinois. This is another item that will take further discussion and more information and specifics in order for us to look at areas we can create consistency in, K-8

11) Comment on how successful and beneficial the reading support program has been at Wilson Creek and wondered if consideration could or would be given to a Math Support program at Wilson Creek in hopes of having students perform at/or near grade level by the time they move to Anna McDonald.

The principals and I will discuss and search for ways to achieve a solution that would allow us to add additional staff in the area of Math Support, much in the same way we currently offer Reading Support. This would allow for students to receive additional help and more focused, 1 on 1 or small group help during instructional time. We have seen the success that the Reading Support programs have had and believe that it would be a great benefit in the area of Math as well. We will continue to make this a priority for the administrative team.