

September 27, 2005 Spectrum Meeting Stanford Center

1. Attendance: 30 people signed in, including eight parent Building Representatives
2. Dr. Colleen Stump, Manager of Advanced Learning, other staff members, and volunteer Spectrum Task Force members introduced themselves.
3. West Seattle yellow bus transportation to Washington Middle School: Dr. Stump described the issue involving school bus transportation to Washington Middle School being provided to West Seattle Spectrum students living in Denny's region. This service was started in 1998 to run for three years to give families a choice while Denny's Spectrum program was established. The Board has re-authorized it annually since then, and will consider the issue again this fall. This service is the only one of its kind in the SPS District.

Dr. Stump described Advanced Learning's outreach efforts to gather input, including mailings to all potentially affected families, which included a survey that Advanced Learning is collecting. Surveys must be in by 9/30.

Jeff Clark, new Principal at Denny, and Heidi Lemmers, a Denny instructor, spoke enthusiastically about their program, and Mr. Clark and Dr. Stump described it as well established and strong. A Denny parent spoke very favorably about the Spectrum program there; other parents' thoughts included concern that kids now at Washington be allowed to finish there with transportation, eagerness to have a good program at Denny, and one report that Denny was "dismal" some years back.

4. Spectrum Task Force charge: Mark Miller, Parent Co Chair, briefly described the Board's policy that citizen committees have a charge, which the Spectrum committee currently does not. A draft has been sent around to current committee volunteers. Melissa Westbrook, Building Rep for Eckstein, submitted some written comments and there was limited discussion on

some of this. Copies of the draft were available at the meeting; Spectrum parents who aren't committee volunteers may submit comments to their Building Reps.

Committee volunteers will continue exchange of comments and rewrite proposals.

5. Privacy policy regarding student and family information: SPS cannot divulge Spectrum children's names, nor parents' names, addresses etc., so Spectrum Task Force Building Reps will need to advertise for interested Spectrum parents to contact them in order to develop contact lists. Examples: notes in PTA publications, school newsletters, and local kid mail.

6. Current Spectrum program description: Dr. Stump described Spectrum programs in terms of Spectrum Young Scholars (grades 1 and 2), Intermediate Spectrum (grades 3-5), and Middle School Spectrum (grades 6-8), in which curricula are rigorous and accelerated, achieving one grade level acceleration during the Intermediate Spectrum years. Spectrum middle schoolers can receive the program in Language Arts, Math or both, enabling children who are strong in only one area to continue benefiting from the program.

7. Spectrum eligibility: Dr. Stump briefly described eligibility standards, including the shift to cognitive testing only for K and grade 1 nominees (for 1st and 2nd grade enrollment) in verbal, non verbal and quantitative. Two of three test results at 90th percentile or above constitutes Spectrum eligibility. Nominees for enrollment in 3rd through 5th grades must attain 87th percentile in two of three cognitive abilities, and 87th or above in both reading and math achievement. Nominees for enrollment in 6th through 8th grades must attain 87th percentile in two of three cognitive abilities, and 87th or above in reading or math achievement (or both) for Spectrum services in the areas for which qualified. See <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/eligttestprocess.htm> and <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/ansgiftelig3.htm>. Dr. Stump encouraged parents and teachers who are nominating bi- or multi-lingual children to indicate the children's language status on the application forms, as these students may have special testing

needs and the District does not always have access to this information.

8. Re-evaluation of current Spectrum students: Dr. Stump spoke to the implementation of a re-evaluation program starting in the 2006/2007 school year, in which second and fifth graders will be evaluated for continuation in the Spectrum program during the subsequent school year. Re-evals will take place and results reported to parents in time for "on-time enrollment" of children needing to change schools as a result. Detailed information is on Advanced Learning's web site. See <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/reevaluationgifted.htm>. This link is accessible from Advanced Learning's News and Announcements page (<http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/story.html>).

WASL scores from fourth grade will be used as part of the re-evaluation process in fifth grade, along with progress reports (report cards), and teacher/parent/student input; there will not be additional testing. Although the WASL will be an important factor in screening students for continuation in Spectrum, Dr. Stump indicated that poor performance on the WASL (which may reflect test anxiety, student illness, etc.) will not automatically result in disenrollment from the program. Since the District administers the WASL free of charge, Parents contemplating having their children not take the fourth grade WASL should be aware that they will need to provide another form of achievement testing, at their own expense, for the re-evaluation process.

Dr. Stump stressed during this discussion that the goal of the re-evaluations is that students be appropriately placed in classrooms that best match their learning needs.

9. Spectrum recruitment: Dr. Stump described recruitment efforts to increase the number of Spectrum nominations, which can be submitted by parents, teachers, principals, or members of the community. There is particular concern about the continuing under representation of minorities and children with English as a second language both in the program, and among

those nominated. Special efforts have been taken to distribute posters about Advanced Learning programs around the District's schools, solicit foreign language families through direct mailings, and expand multi lingual versions of the web site. Changes to eligibility testings, particularly introduction of non verbal ability, are also part of the effort to reach gifted children whom previous screening processes did not identify, and get them into a stronger academic regimen early in their school years. These initiatives are in alignment with national best practices for gifted education. See also note in paragraph 6 about nominations for bi- and multi-lingual children.

10. Elementary school Spectrum report card changes: Changes to elementary school Spectrum report cards are in the offing. A draft has been developed based on a version piloted in APP, and use of it has been negotiated with the Seattle Education Association (teachers union). We may see this in November at Spectrum schools where teachers agree to try it. The APP report card, which the Spectrum report will resemble, is on the Advanced Learning web site, linked from the end of the document in the Student Performance Standards menu option. See <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/documents/appreportcard.pdf>

11. Spectrum math curriculum improvements: Dr. Stump spoke about actions taken to improve the delivery of Spectrum math, particularly development of a curriculum map which will be piloted in ten first-through fifth-grade classrooms this school year, evaluated by teachers and staff, adjusted as needed and implemented fully in 2006/07. There's an informative description of this program on Advanced Learning's web site under the Curriculum menu button. See <http://www.seattleschools.org/area/advlearning/documents/mathcurriculum.pdf> and subsequent links. One highlight of the new curriculum is that about half of the units in the early grades will be at-grade-level and about half one-year-above-grade-level. In the later grades, a greater proportion of the year will be devoted to one-year-above-grade-level work, with fifth graders doing almost exclusively sixth-grade math. This

effort will move into middle school next year, provide better consistency across the District, and improve articulation (smooth progression from one grade level to the next), particularly between 5th and 6th grades.

12. Academic rigor; Spectrum seat shortage at Whitman Middle School: A short time was given to these two issues, both raised by Building Reps. The meeting reached the former agenda item too late to address it, other than to acknowledge that achieving satisfactory levels of rigor is an ongoing concern and that we need to talk about that with ample time at a future meeting.

With Whitman being a popular school, the wait list problem there is persistent and likely to remain so, while other middle schools have seats available. There are families who are happy with SPS leaving for private schools because they can't get in at Whitman. Parents in the Whitman region are particularly concerned about this issue.