

Friday Memo

December 9, 2016

This memo includes 12 attachments

Dear Board members,

Recognitions:

- **Board President Patu:** I began recognitions by thanking Director Patu for her leadership as Board president over the last year. Director Patu has been connected to the district for decades. She leads with a passion for connecting with, and caring for our students – and particularly for those students who are often the hardest to reach. Over the last year, she has represented this district in numerous venues from hosting community meetings in Southeast Seattle to traveling to the national conference for the Council of Great City Schools to present data on our work to eliminate opportunity gaps. The theme of relationships has been central in training this year, transforming classroom instructional practices district-wide. She set a powerful positive tone for our school leaders by sharing the importance of relationships in her own life at the Summer Leadership Institute and our community at last month's State of the District. So, for what is all too frequently a thankless job as Board President, I thanked Director Patu on behalf of Seattle Public Schools for her leadership and support of all students. Director Patu received a standing ovation, a plaque of recognition and many thanks from her colleagues.
- **2016 Schools of Distinction:** Eleven Schools of Distinction were recognized at a reception with the Board before the Board meeting. These are schools that the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) recognized in November for their continuous and sustained improvement in English language arts and math over multiple years. Out of 36 schools across our region, 11 of them were from Seattle Public Schools. Nine of our schools are repeat recipients! I am proud of the accomplishments of these schools and our staff. I thanked the principals for everything they are doing to ensure student success.

The (11) Seattle schools awarded are:

- BF Day Elementary – Principal Stanley Jaskot
 - Broadview-Thomson K-8 – Principal RJ Sammons
 - Cleveland High School – Principal George Breland
 - Hawthorne Elementary – Principal Sandra Scott
 - Hazel Wolf K-8 STEM – Principal Debbie Nelsen
 - Madrona K-8 – Principal Mary McDaniel
 - Olympic Hills Elementary - Principal Stacy Crum
 - Rainier Beach High School – Principal Keith Smith
 - Rainier View Elementary - Principal Anitra Pinchback-Jones
 - Viewlands Elementary - Principal Michelle Ota
 - West Seattle Elementary - Principal Pamela McCowan-Conyers
- **Board Office Manager, Theresa Hale:** Theresa Hale who has managed the Board Office for six years, has recently taken another position in Seattle Public Schools.

Theresa has provided great support to the School Board over the years. She has taken a new and really exciting opportunity in the Human Resources (HR) Department. I thanked Ms. Hale for her tireless support and congratulated her on her new position.

Board Actions:

During the December 7, 2016 Board meeting the Board:

- Elected officers for 2017: Director Sue Peters as President, Director Leslie Harris as Vice President and Director Scott Pinkham as Member-at-Large. These Board members make up the Executive Committee
- Approved 1.8% cost of living salary increase for the Superintendent; comparable to what has been previously extended to other district staff
- Approved \$3M in funding from the BTA levy to purchase replacement computers for classroom use
- Accepted a grant of \$465,000 from the Seattle Foundation and Vulcan Foundation in support of Media Arts Skills Center and a Regional Arts Showcase. Thank you to these funders for helping SPS move forward in the Arts

Superintendent's Comments:

I shared:

- 1) Highlights of these last two weeks tied to the strategic plan 2016-17 goals and four signature strategies: positive learning, positive relationships, positive beliefs and positive partnerships
- 2) Critical issues coming up that we want our public to be aware of
- 3) Highlights of the good work around our district
- 4) And ways to get more involved in Seattle Public Schools

SMART GOAL/Key Strategy Highlights:

As I have said many times before, Eliminating Opportunity Gaps (EOG) is the issue of our time. Our EOG worked is anchored by 4 key strategies: positive learning, positive beliefs, positive relationships, and positive learning.

Improving community engagement, which includes our internal staff is reflected in Goal 3 of our strategic plan. The HR department has set goals to improve employee engagement and build a culture of caring, recognition and support. To kickoff this work they implemented an employee engagement survey for central office staff to collect employee perception data around clarity of role, overall division culture and support. There were 464 respondents to this survey. One of the areas for improvement, as stated by employees, was how conflicts are resolved in a timely and effective manner.

In an effort to improve school leaders' and central office managers' skill sets in effectively engaging in challenging conversations that are a result of workplace conflict, HR has implemented a professional development series that is currently being offered. The School Board supported this effort as part of Superintendent SMART Goal 5. We will be measuring employee engagement each year to ensure that the strategies put in place are having a positive impact on our culture.

Another highlight is evidence that our work around improving positive student-teacher relationships and creating a sense of belonging is working. On September 1 over 4,000 staff went through a district-wide training on creating positive school climates and creating positive relationships. All staff were asked to create one personal goal related to this strategic focus. Over 50 schools have also committed to implementing the school climate survey multiple times a year. One of these schools is Viewlands Elementary. They recently implemented their climate survey with students and have seen dramatic increases in students' sense of belonging and positive perceptions of their relationships with staff. This type of progress monitoring helps us know if we are on the right track. Similar increases have been seen in other schools and our Research and Evaluation team will be working with them to surface the school-based work that is making a difference for students.

Hot Topics/Critical Issues Coming Up:

Budget Process: We are in the process of launching our budget work. The key points are:

- \$100M of our local levy goes to salaries – an unfunded state responsibility under McCleary
- \$30M of our already approved local levy has been cut by the legislature
- This is our biggest budget impact in more than a decade, possibly since the 1970s.
- The legislature drew a blueprint for funding and has not followed their own plan.
- Our Seattle Legislative Delegation has been extremely helpful. Without statewide legislative action, we must cut hundreds of positions. Other school districts will have similar problems, though not at the scale of Seattle Public Schools due to our size.

Last week this information was shared with our community, families and staff. This week we held internal meetings with the JSCEE staff and principals – digging further into the types of cuts that may need to be made. Our goal is to determine budget reductions early in January in order to provide staffing allocations to schools in February.

Community engagement sessions on December 13, 15 and January 3 will be held in the coming weeks and co-hosted with the PTSA. I want to recognize and thank our partners for helping us share out information and better engage our families.

So far, parent, student, staff and stakeholder concern is strong. Budget cuts create tension and anxiety. We certainly wish it wasn't necessary. We have received several messages from concerned parents telling us to simply not make cuts. Our answer must be: school districts are required by law to pass a balanced budget. If we do not have a balanced budget, meaning yearly expenditures must be less than total yearly revenue, a school district moves into a fiscal position called "binding conditions." OSPI and the local Educational Service District (ESD) work independent of any district requiring us to adopt a balanced budget. Our budget plan must be based on fiscal reality and having the revenue to cover expenses.

Some concerned parents have asked, why can't we keep spending as we need to and sue the state? School districts already sued, the state lost, and now the state legislature must step up to the problem.

What about the city helping us? A question came to us about city support as we seek legislative relief for state under funding K-12 education. While the Mayor believes in fully funding high quality K-12 education, *the City is not in a position financially to step into the shoes of the State and take on the responsibility of adequately funding Seattle schools.* His full statement can be reviewed in last week's Friday Board memo. We deeply appreciate the support of our mayor and the citizens of our city during this fiscal challenge. My commitment to our community is to provide more detail as it becomes available. We have developed a budget webpage to host current information and any updates.

Twenty Minutes: Based on the best information that we now have, our recommendations are:

- Add 10 minutes in the AM and 10 minutes in the PM; this reflects the survey data.
- Go with an early release; not a late start; all surveys agreed.
- Do early release on Wednesday (staff Professional Development (PD) preference); not Friday (parent preference).

Note: Friday has been problematic for staff and student attendance in other districts.

The Operations Committee has asked that we do a cost analysis on a two-tier transportation system. Transportation has done several scenarios that get the cost down from \$3.8M to \$2.8M. The transportation bids include the two-tier option, which will give us actual price. With \$3M representing another 30 job cuts; the likely recommendation is to retain a three-tier system for the coming year. This information will be presented to the Board next week. Additionally, Pegi McEvoy, Assistant Superintendent for Operations, is working with the Transportation department to determine if there might be other alternatives for schools that might want to switch times if we stay with the three-tier system.

Incident Weather: As you may be aware, the district has been coordinating with city planners, schools and families related to the winter warning this week. Today, we had a 2-hour late arrival district-wide with one school (Sacajawea) needing to be closed due to local street issues. For the most part everything went smoothly, but as with all situations we will debrief to ensure that we capture "lessons learned" so we can continuously improve.

Good News

KUDOS from the Community

Franklin High School Unified Robotics Team: Kudos to Franklin HS (FHS) teacher Stacia Hawkinson and Information Security Manager April Mardock for leading the FHS Unified Robotics teams. The FHS team earned the Spirit award and the Perseverance award at the Pacific Science Center Championship. Great work by the FHS team xbot students! The Franklin High School Unified Robotics team was highlighted in the [Seattle Times Article](#).

Other Good News

November substitute fill rate: I congratulated the Human Resources and substitute office staff! This November our fill rate was up 3%. Filling critical substitutes jobs is essential to serving our schools and students well.

School Board Retreat: I thanked our Board Directors, who met for their quarterly retreat on Saturday, December 3 and discussed updates on the budget, community engagement and

eliminating opportunity gaps. A rich and highly interactive conversation was had around these three board goals. We look forward to continuing our goal work.

Leadership Learning Day: Dr. Daudi Abe led a discussion with school leaders about race and equity in the context of Seattle's racial history and current events. He drew strong connections to the district's commitments to our African American male students, relationships and improving instruction and curriculum. Board Directors Blanford and Harris as well as community members joined the session for learning.

Skill Center student recognized: During a luncheon hosted by the Manufacturing Industrial Council on Tuesday, December 6, 2016, State Superintendent-elect, Chris Reykdal recognized Jacob Uppasai, a student from Rainier Beach High School, who participated in an internship at the Port of Seattle. The Skills Center has partnered with Core Plus to deliver material science, applied math and technical skills to students. I thanked Director Harris and Director Burke for attending.

Building Resilience in the Face of Trauma

On Tuesday, December 6, the Office of School & Community Partnerships hosted a training of 25 attendees with the Behavioral Health Department. The workshop was developed by David Lewis to equip frontline youth workers and managers with the tools to better understand how adverse childhood experiences may be impacting Seattle Public Schools students and families.

School Visits:

On Tuesday, November 29, 2016: Associate Superintendent for Teaching & Learning Michael Tolley visited two schools along with Executive Director for Government Relations & Strategic Initiatives, Policy and Board Relations Erinn Bennett. Sand Point Elementary School with Principal Kristen Roberts and at Laurelhurst Elementary School with Principal Sarah Talbot. At both schools, Mr. Tolley discussed with principals their problem of practice within the school's Cycle of Inquiry in regards to Eliminating Opportunity Gaps, and to see firsthand the impact the school leaders and teachers are having.

Instructional leadership strategies discussed and observed during the school visits include:

Sandpoint Elementary School:

- Deep focus on building strong positive relationships with students and their families
- Development of staff's knowledge of Trauma Informed Instructional Practices
- Building shared understanding of expectations around core instructional practices (small group and direct instruction)
- Weekly Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) reviews of students' progress at classroom, grade and whole school levels
- Project-based learning with instruction
- Balanced Literacy with embedded workshop model strategies

Laurelhurst Elementary School:

- Career Ladder Teachers (CLT's) facilitate the implementation of:
 - Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

- Grade Level Professional Learning Communities (PLC's)
- Grade Levels 2, 3 and 5 teachers active participation in the Assessment Training Institute (ATI).
- Development of teachers understanding of the Charlotte Danielson Framework
- Curriculum Scope and Sequence Alignment in Literacy and Math across classrooms at grade level
- Continue to increase teachers' ability to form positive supportive relationships with students.

On Thursday, December 1, 2016: Michael Tolley, Brian Vance and Kim Whitworth, along with other school leaders, welcomed Mr. Ng Chee Meng, the Singapore Education Minister and 14 visitors from Singapore at Roosevelt High School. During the visit there was a comprehensive briefing on Roosevelt High School, one of the top schools in Washington state, and also one of the partner schools of Microsoft's TEALS ([Technology Education and Literacy in Schools](#)) program. There was a tour of the school facilities and time for interaction with Roosevelt students and teachers.

Task force/Partnerships Engagement Updates:

Licton Springs Community Meeting. On Tuesday, November 29, 2016 a meeting with the wider Licton Springs community was held to discuss the option of moving to Cedar Park in lieu of moving to the Robert Eagle Staff Middle School (RESMS) in the fall of 2017. Subsequently, a general survey was issued to parents, staff, students and community members. The survey consisted of paper copies distributed at the November 29 community meeting, paper copies sent home with students, an online survey and a staff meeting survey. Targeted outreach was conducted for the Native community by calling each family on December 1. Licton Springs Building Leadership Team reviewed the collected data and recommended staying at RESMS with additional rooms provided.

Garfield High School's Report Card Conferences. As part of their commitment to facilitate student success in their 9th grade year, Garfield High School held their first Report Card Conferences on Friday, December 2, 2016. This was an opportunity for professional members of the community to connect with our students and speak to them about their academic goals. Each individual conference took about five minutes and gave an opportunity to check in with students to help them set goals related to course performance. Through asking questions, visiting community members assisted students in self-reflecting, self-advocating and setting goals. Kim Whitworth our NE Executive Director of Schools was one of the coaches and highly recommended expanded cabinet participate in the next event.

I know this event raised some questions and concerns regarding volunteers versus visitors/guests. A volunteer is an unsalaried person authorized by the School Board to perform volunteer services for the school district. Volunteers have regular schedules and ongoing roles in our schools. Volunteers are required to have a background check run. A guest or visitor is an unsalaried person who, with district approval, assists at a school on a non-regular or one-time basis or attends a school sponsored event or activity. A guest or visitor would typically be required to report their presence at the school office or other designated location, except for specific events such as athletics, performing arts, etc. Garfield High School's Report Card event

used visitors/guests so they did not need to have a background check. Hopefully this background information clears up questions in our community.

Upcoming:

Community Engagement Task Force Meeting will be held on Monday, December 19 at the JSCEE from 6 –8pm. The focus of the meeting will to be review edits to the community engagement tool and develop criteria for a two-way communication tool.

Cedar Park Community Meeting: On Thursday, December 15, 2016 from 6:30 – 8pm, Cedar Park Elementary will hold its first community meeting after being designated an option school. Please join SPS staff at Cedar Park to learn more about the next steps on this exciting journey.

Seattle Council PTSA (SCPTSA) Budget Meetings: We are working very closely with the SCPTSA to launch additional family communication and engagement regarding the budget deficit. The SCPTSA will be hosting engagement meetings for us on:

- Tuesday, December 13, 6:30 – 8pm, Ballard High School
- Thursday, December 15, 6:30 – 8pm, South Shore PreK-8
- Tuesday, January 3, 6:30 – 8pm, Franklin High School

Translation will be available at all sites.

Attachment:

Upcoming Items/Jigsaw

Larry

Associate Superintendent for Teaching & Learning Update: Attached please find Associate Superintendent for Teaching & Learning Michael Tolley's update for this week.

Associate Superintendent for Facilities & Operations Update: Attached please find Associate Superintendent for Facilities & Operations Flip Herndon's update for this week.

Chief Engagement Officer Update: Attached please find Chief Engagement Officer Carri Campbell's update for this week.