

Port Angeles School District
216 East Fourth Street, Port Angeles, WA 98362-3023, 360.457.8757

**Minutes – Elementary Transition Team
Wednesday, May 23, 2007**

Attendance:

Kate Wenzl, Jeanne Wolfley, Michele Haworth, Doug Hayman, LeAnn Johnson, Nancy Pack, Debra Roos, Holly Juskevich, Loren Engel, Gunnar Thomason, Karen Fox, Michelle Olsen, Theresa Schmid, Vicki Helwick, Kat Dadd, Sarah Jensen, Theresa Rothweiler, Nolan Duce, Mary Hebert

Others in Attendance:

Heather Chapman

Meeting Opening:

Mrs. Hebert welcomed the members to Phase II of the Elementary Transition Team meetings.

On behalf of the school board members, Mrs. Hebert has invited the Elementary Transition Team members to the school board meeting of Monday, June 11, 2007 at 7:00p.m. which will be held at the Central Services Building, 216 East Fourth Street, Port Angeles. The Elementary Transition Team members will be honored for all their hard work, contributions and decisions made thus far, as well as the decisions to be made in this and the following two meetings.

The members were given a copy of *Elementary Transition Team Report 7* dated April 16, 2007 and *Elementary Transition Team Report 8* dated May 7, 2007, as well as the meeting minutes of April 11, 2007 and tonight's agenda for review.

Welcome and Check-In:

Since the newly assigned elementary school sixth grade teachers for 2007-2008 school year have been invited to join these meetings, Mrs. Hebert asked everyone to introduce themselves and state their assignments.

Mrs. Hebert emphasized that the members' questions, concerns and ideas are always welcomed. She reiterated that their open-ended communications during these meetings have lead to the necessary and timely decisions on some difficult issues.

Sixth Grade Recess and Lunch/Afternoon Break Discussion:

Jennifer Soule, who has been assigned as a sixth grade teacher at Dry Creek for the 2007-08 school year, was unable to be at tonight's meeting. She therefore asked that Mrs. Wenzl, principal of Dry Creek Elementary School to read a letter from her which addresses several issues, including that of sixth grade recess.

In her letter, Ms. Soule proposes that the sixth grade (first) recess be eliminated for the following reasons. 'As it stands, Dry Creek sixth graders will start at school at 8:00a.m. They will have a daily 40 minute music block first thing in the morning. They will be back in their homeroom around 8:45. There is a scheduled recess at 9:45.'

She points out that by eliminating the first recess, the students would gain an additional seventy five (75) minutes of instructional time per week.

Sarah Jensen who has also been assigned as a sixth grade teacher at Dry Creek for the 2007-08 school year informed the members that she has created a chart that compares the (Dry Creek) fifth grade students' library, morning recess, music and lunch/afternoon instructional time with that of the sixth grade students in an effort to provide more instructional time for sixth grade students.

According to the chart, and as stated above, the sixth grade students' music instructional time for 2007-08 school equals two hundred minutes per week (40 minutes per day x 5 days per week.) Compare this with the 70 minutes per week of musical instruction for the fifth grade students. In addition, the fifth grade students have 30 minutes per week of library time, 15 minutes per day of first recess, for a total of 75 minutes per week and forty minutes a day for lunch/afternoon recess. That totals 375 minutes.

Both Ms. Soule and Ms. Jensen suggest that the 30 minutes of library time for sixth grade students be eliminated.

Ms. Jensen also advocates eliminating the first recess for the sixth grade students thus adding seventy five instructional minutes to their week.

Another suggestion both teachers have made was to shorten the sixth grade students' lunch/afternoon recess. Ms. Soule suggested reducing the sixth grade students' lunch/afternoon recess time from 40 minutes to 35 minutes per day. Ms. Jensen suggested reducing their lunch/afternoon recess to either 30 minutes per day or 35 minutes per day. That would give the students 20 minutes to eat and 15 minutes for recess. By shortening their lunch to 30 minutes per day, eliminating the library time and first recess, the sixth grade students would have the same 375 minutes as the fifth grade students at Dry Creek.

Another member pointed out that all the discipline problems 'come out' at recess and therefore, she suggested that recess for sixth grade students should be eliminated.

This discussion on sixth grade recess and reducing lunch/afternoon recess time continued.

One member asked if the twenty (20) minutes of lunch included the time the students spend in line to get their lunch and was told that yes, that time spent in line was considered part of those 20 minutes.

A member asked how much time for lunch was required by state law and Mrs. Hebert stated that the Port Angeles School District is required by state law to provide students 20 minutes for their lunch.

The discussion then led to the fact that, with the addition of the sixth grade students at the elementary schools beginning with the 2007-08 school year, the teachers may have to spend more time supervising recess.

A member pointed out that recess is contracted time but it is not to be used as planning time for the teachers.

Other members also voiced their concern about their contracted break time/planning time and lunch breaks and Mrs. Hebert stated that she is concerned about the teachers' morning break time and does not want teachers to lose contractual time.

A parent member stated that she does not have a problem with eliminating the first recess for the sixth grade students but does have a problem with having a 20 minute lunch with a 10 minute recess/break. She is concerned about the 'free time' that her children will lose since her children need all their allotted free time.

Another member brought up the case of a student who must take daily medication but wants to be a part of his class by eating lunch with them. Although this student is given extra time to support his needs, she is concerned about shortening the lunch time/afternoon recess.

During subsequent discussion, it was learned that there are not many students who must take daily medication, but those who do will be given the necessary time to support their needs.

A parent member wanted to know what activities would be available for students if there were two recesses per day.

Another parent member stated that her son would rather do many other activities than 'go out and play' and felt that eliminating the first sixth grade recess did not present a problem for the students.

A member pointed out that since the sixth grade will be the transitional period for students beginning in the 2007-08 school year, there will be less time for recess. It is a time for preparing the students for the next phase of their education, i.e. moving on to the middle schools. He stated that because of this, additional boundaries should not be imposed on the sixth grade students with regard to recess.

In an effort to bring the issue of sixth grade recess to a decision, Mrs. Hebert stated that she is hearing some concerns about the length of the lunch break. Members have been saying that there should be at least a 20 minute lunch break provided, with probably closer to a 30 minute lunch break so that the students have enough time to eat and also have recess time. She also noted that the actual recess time would be determined by the particular buildings.

Mrs. Hebert asked if there were any further comments. Since there were none, Mrs. Hebert reminded the members that a consensus must be reached so that the decision can be presented to the school board. She stated that she is hearing that the members have reached a consensus that the first recess for sixth grade students should be eliminated. The members agreed to this consensus that the first (a.m.) sixth grade students' recess be eliminated, thereby benefiting the sixth grade students by offering more instructional time.

For students, there will be an eating time of no less than 20 minutes, and there will be 10 minutes for afternoon recess time.

Also, each building will insure that the teachers will have morning breaks and a 30 minute 'duty free' lunch. The morning breaks are to be determined by each school based on their culture and climate.

Teacher-Lead Enrichment & Remediation Opportunities:

Mrs. Hebert would like this issue to be a broader discussion. She stated that the remediation opportunities are different at each school and that each school may have its own philosophy. However, there is only remedial instruction in reading at this time in the elementary schools provided through Title I.

Question presented: because the sixth grade students will have music five days per week, could we use the new opportunities to have sixth grade teachers use this music instructional time, three times per week, to assist younger students in remedial math, thereby addressing and correcting this issue?

It was stated that there is no guaranteed amount of contracted planning time for teachers through state law.

A member pointed out that each building should decide how to use the three music instructional periods. However, Mrs. Hebert pointed out that should one principal require a teacher to use this time for remediation, but another principal decides that his/her teacher is not needed to provide remedial instruction, would that be considered equitable? She is concerned that everyone be treated equitably.

In her letter, Ms. Soule also addresses the issue of teacher-lead enrichment and remediation. She states that 'First, I think we owe it to our sixth graders to make up the instruction time lost in core areas due to increased music time, rather than have sixth grade teachers work other grades.' (Her suggestions for gaining instructional time have been discussed above.)

'Secondly, if we go forward with a plan in which sixth grade teachers are working with fifth grade students, I'm concerned with how we would make a meaningful plan to remediate students with the limited time we have. Sixth grade teachers wouldn't have a time to collaborate with fifth grade teachers to learn about the needs of the students or the curriculum.'

One member stated that she uses a high school student to assist her students with math. This student will 'pull' her students from class and help them in the commons for fifteen minutes.

Several members pointed out that a sixth grade teacher could be one of a team of teachers. In this way, s/he is offering support but would not be the 'main' teacher.

Another (newly placed) sixth grade teacher pointed out that she does not have the time in which to make a teaching plan for remedial math.

A member second her opinion. She stated further that she has spoken with the fourth and fifth grade teachers at her school and they felt they were unable to create a teaching plan for remedial math for another class because of their time constraints.

Mrs. Hebert pointed out that this is new ground. The members have only just begun this process of discussing this important issue. She stated that she and the principals and the sixth grade teachers will be meeting on June 7th to further discuss and collaborate on this issue.

Mrs. Hebert also stated that because we must offer the same opportunities to all students at all schools, it is important for all schools and all students to have a consistent plan.

Question asked: Can there be a consistent program to offer equal opportunities to all students – not just remedial opportunities, but also enrichment opportunities?

A member pointed out that because para educators will be 'stretched thin' during recess time, it might be a good opportunity to offer enrichment/remedial opportunities during recess.

A member asked if the focus on the enrichment and remediation opportunities will be on math only and was informed that this is not the only area. Enrichment and remediation opportunities will be offered in many areas. The areas of focus will be generated by building data.

A member stated that there is a grade team who are offering tutorial enrichment now.

Mrs. Hebert asked the members to continue to discuss this topic with their peers during the next two weeks and gather information, review the information from this meeting and be ready to offer ideas and suggestions as they continue this important discussion at the next meeting.

Meeting Adjourned:

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05p.m.

Next Meeting:

The next Elementary Transition Team Meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 6, 2007 from 6:00-8:00p.m. at the Central Services Building, 216 East Fourth Street, Port Angeles.