

Superintendent's Advisory Council Talking Points

February 3, 2015

2014 bond projects update

Mercer Island High School

Dr. Plano shared that the Mercer Island High School project is going very well. It is on schedule and in budget. The addition should open for the beginning of the 2015-16 school year, with four science labs and six general purpose classrooms.

Islander Middle School

Dr. Plano noted that this project is also on schedule and will be operational for the 2016-17 school year. The district opened bids last Friday from five contractors after giving specifications to about a dozen contractors. All of the bids were in budget and the five (5) bids are all very close. It was noted that bids coming in so close shows how well the district's construction consultant prepared the bid specifications. It is conceivable that contractors will be on site at IMS 45 days from now.

Elementary No. 4

Dr. Plano reported that the new elementary school will be operational on the first day of school for the 2016-17 school year. General contractor bids for construction of the new elementary school will be opened on Feb. 11 with a bid award planned for February 24, 2015. On-site demolition is almost complete. Dr. Plano says that our progress on the elementary school means it is time to name a "Planning Principal" for the elementary; information will be shared before the mid-winter break. Regional and state PTA organizations are helping current PTA leaders with the process of organizing the new PTA for the fourth elementary school.

High school bell times

The Mercer Island and Bellevue School District superintendents are working together and the [High School Start-Time Committee](#) is digesting reports about the benefits and other impacts of possible later start times. They have found that there is an immense amount of literature to review. There will be outreach to students and parent to get their opinions. The committee should send a recommendation to both superintendents by the end of June 2015.

Technology Advisory Group

The purpose of the [Technology Advisory Group](#) is for stakeholders to provide input in the instructional and operational technology program of the Mercer Island School District. The group is an advisory body for the Technology Services Department. At past meetings, the group has discussed technology integration into the classroom, Smarter Balanced testing, parent education, our ongoing review of Office 365, and evaluated technology in the classroom, among other things.

Learning Services Advisory Committee

The purpose of the [Learning Services Advisory Committee](#) is for stakeholders to provide input in the instructional program of the Mercer Island School District. The committee is an advisory body for the Learning Services Department. In the Learning Services Advisory Committee, there are many parents and staff involved and providing input. We have discussed graduation requirements, world languages in elementary schools, response to intervention, and HiCap testing, among other topics.

Diversity Advisory Committee

The [Diversity Advisory Committee](#) website can be found under Superintendent Services on the district website or accessed under “Popular Links.” The district has a committee that represents various ethnic groups in our community. The Diversity Advisory Committee is charged with reviewing the district's continued efforts to provide all students, irrespective of racial and ethnic differences, with access to the following: equity of educational opportunity; individual empowerment; and, equal and fair treatment. The members of the committee and their contact information are listed on the website.

District Boundary Committee

The Boundary Committee was charged with presenting the superintendent with a recommendation for new elementary boundaries for the four elementary schools by the end of February. Those boundaries will determine school placements for students beginning in the 2016-17 school year. The superintendent will bring the recommendation to the Mercer Island School Board for affirmation. There has been very good feedback about the present proposal. People who have an interest, or have comments and ideas, should speak directly to [Todd Kelsay](#) about specific routes that are being proposed.

It was noted that if everyone attended their neighborhood school, the district would save about \$100,000 a year on transportation. Some students spend up to 40 minutes on buses. That would be reduced to a maximum of about 20 minutes. The Boundary Committee has felt that it is not fair to allow any student to wait a full year before moving to their neighborhood school. There is conversation that a preference given to incoming fifth-grade students in 2016-2017 for in-district transfers. Parents may need to take responsibility for their student's transportation needs if attending a school outside of their geographic boundary.

World languages in elementary schools

The Mercer Island School District is studying the feasibility of adding a world language program to our elementary curriculum in the fall of 2016. Nationally, about 25 percent of all elementary schools have some form of world language instruction taught in elementary school. Research shows that the period of early childhood is an optimal time to begin the study of a second language. Adding an elementary world language program is subject to finding adequate resources, including capable instructors certified to teach the target language to K-5 students. Parents, staff, and other stakeholders are presently being involved in the conversation.

Legislative action

Dr. Plano noted that we are still early in the legislative session. One bill that impacts Mercer Island includes changing bond proposition passage requirements from 60 percent to 50 percent plus one vote. Education funding is very complex and the state needs to redefine basic education. Levies are currently paying for a lot of basic education, which is the aspect that is unconstitutional.

Announcements from members of the group

The “Breakfast of Champions” is coming up on April 28 and [Penny Yantis](#) can be reached about sponsoring a table at the breakfast.

Future meetings of the SAC: [Thursday, June 4, 2015, 9:15 – 11:15 a.m., Board Room](#)