

GEAC Minutes
November 4, 2009

Notes taken by Lisa Gilbert, Secretary, and Liesl Bohan

The Meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm by Debbie Napolitan, President, at LWSD Resource Center.

Present –Caroline Benson, Gretchen Colonius, Jodi Gaertner, Pam McBain, Amy Mikkelson, Debbie Napolitan, Lisa Gilbert, Mary Wictor, Sandy Malone-Long, Vinaya Kulkarni, Sylvia Meckem, Djordjija Evans, and Liesl Bohan. Dan Phelan joined at 7:15pm. Eight others were in attendance.

Introductions

1) **Approve Minutes**

Minutes approved for September 2009 meeting.

Minutes approved for October 2009 meeting.

2) **Parent Education – Hosting of NW Gifted Child Symposium**

Debbie spoke for Joanne Hall (not in attendance).

GEAC/LWSD would like to sponsor NW Gifted Child Annual Symposium on 2/27/10 or 3/6/10. Joanne spoke with Dan Phelan, and he is supportive. There would be no cost to the District, GEAC would just need to book the facility through the District. Would need to host at a facility with an auditorium (HS). Suggested Joanne may need assistance, and Pam volunteered to help. All agreed to go ahead.

3) **Quest Information Night - Volunteers**

Quest info night is Thurs. 11/5. Two sessions, 4:30 & 7:00pm at Redmond HS.

Well attended in the past.

Volunteers: Mary, Amy, Pam & Caroline

Sandy Malone – Long: Criteria for admission has increased, as there are a lot of children presently on the waiting list. Reviewed past applicants, and found that most who were admitted received 4's on report cards. Will screen applicants closer using this criterion.

Q: Djordjija Evans: If we have kids on the wait-list, why aren't we opening more Quest classes?

A: Sandy Malone-Long: Budget restraints. LWSD currently serves 2.7% of population.

4) **Budget Approval –**

A) **Teacher Seminars**

Kathy Hiles (3/4) and Lindsey Ward (PO) requested to attend seminars of their choice: “Differentiation for Gifted”, 12/9/09 & “Project Based Learning for Gifted”, 11/10/09, respectively. \$199 each. Principals have approved and will provide subs. \$500 in GEAC budget teacher training.
Motion to approve/2nd/approved.

Q: Djordjija Evans – what type of fundraising exists for GEAC? How can we raise more awareness? How can we do successfully, in a way that is appropriate/acceptable within Quest/LWSD/Home Schools/etc.

A: Mary Wictor – History of GEAC funding

Motion to create Co-funding raising Chair: Djordjija Evans & Liesl Bohan

2nd/approved.

B) Gift Cards for Delivery of Seminar

On October 29, Kathy Hiles & Sandy Malone-Long presented evening seminar for families new to Quest. Debbie Napolitan & Mary Wictor suggested giving each a \$75 gift card as a thank you, as neither received compensation for the presentation. Question from Gretchen Colonius as to whether or not there was a conflict of interest with Kathy, as she was doing the seminar as part of her National Board Cert. Group decided there wasn't as it was a gift card.

Motion to approve/2nd/approved.

5) Procedures for Seminar Requests

- 1) GEAC communicates to teachers that budget exists, and process to access.
- 2) Teacher requests approval from Principal (including sub)
- 3) Principal forwards to Dan Phelan @ Quest office
- 4) Dan Phelan forwards to GEAC

Approval at all levels depends on availability of subs.

Director's Q&A – presented by Dan Phelan

- Procedures for parents to discuss concerns/issues:

- 1) Teacher
- 2) Principal
- 3) Quest Office

Focus of the meeting to remain on child and his/her education.

Explained that child is the most important priority, and the importance to ‘preserve and retain the relationship’ between the child/parent/teacher for the benefit of the child.

Process has been tried and for the most part, has proven successful over the years. Important to have conversations with the teacher in a way that doesn't put the teacher on the defensive. Approach it as problem solving.

A number of issues at various schools have come up lately, and if parents have concerns, it is important for parents to communicate those concerns first to the teacher, and to allow time for a solution to be implemented. At that point, if situation is not resolved, speaking with the principal, and then the Quest office is appropriate. Question arose as to what to do if teacher/principal isn't approachable or responsive. Dan re-emphasized need to approach teachers respectfully, respect boundaries, and to focus on problem solving.

Other options: teacher/principal joint conference, speaking with school counselor.

- He met with Elem Quest teachers recently – ‘achieving consistency and quality between classrooms’. Will have 2 more meetings this year on same subject.

Meeting focused on achieving ‘consistency between classrooms’ and quality control, so that the education a child receives in one Quest classroom is similar to what is being taught across town in another learning community. He emphasized, however that there was no intent to ‘standardize’ classrooms (at Bellevue has done), as kids don't come standard. Teachers need to have professional freedom within limits to address the individual needs of the individual children in their classrooms.

Additional Teacher issues/concerns/comments from meeting:

- By law, teachers must teach to curriculum (they can lose their license if they don't)
 - They must teach curriculum, and then can add to and supplement as needed and as they see fit.
 - Think parents don't always understand curriculum requirements
 - Concerned about how to respond to parents.
 - Can't respond to all parent requests.
 - Some currently feel defensive and ‘backed into a corner’ regarding parent concerns and communication.
- Additional teacher comments:
 - By law, teachers must retain a professional demeanor. This includes not criticizing other teachers (can lose their license for this)
 - Must be willing to converse with parents (written/phone/in person)
 - Can also be uncomfortable/apprehensive about having conversation with parents (just as parents can be)
 - Redmond Jr. High – 2 parents separately brought up concern about excessive homework (from one teacher in particular). Dan suggested first going back to teacher, then okay to propose joint meeting with all teachers and principal together.
 - Suggestion from Quest parent and teacher in Bellevue SD. Conferences are late, and it might help if teachers reached out to parents before November. Helps to develop relationship. In Bellevue SD, at the elementary level, teachers are required to do this. Dan noted that as of next year, conferences will be earlier.

- Enrichment vs. Acceleration:

Pull out is about enrichment.

FT is both accelerated learning and enrichment (and extensions and remediation when appropriate).

Should be the goal of all classrooms, Quest and otherwise

Kathy Hiles – spoke about ‘differentiation’ at recent ‘new to Quest parent night’.

Ability to teach to each child, realizing his/her interests, strengths, areas for improvements, etc.

- Teacher Mentoring Program:

Mandatory for 1st year, available through 4th year.

Helpful for Professional Certification and National Boards.

Experienced teachers can start mentoring new teachers as early as 7-8 years, but often 10+.

- “Best of Quest “ - Gretchen Colonius suggested idea that each teacher present a ‘best of Quest’ project in August at all teacher meetings, as a way of sharing ideas and teaching styles. Dan liked the idea, and suggested she approach a teacher about championing it, as it would probably be more readily accepted, and perceived as less threatening, coming from one of their own.
- Dan thanked people for understanding, apologized for not being available, and for stepping in to help when he was out with family issues.
- WASL – Last meeting, issue was brought up that at least a few of the 4th grade students had not passed sections of the WASL. Dan said he had looked into it, and if the total number of elementary 4th grade Quest students failing a portion of it were more than 10, then he would look into it, but that was not the case, and he would not be taking any action. There are 75-80 kids in this bucket, and of the ones that did not pass (3 or above), they did not all come from the same school.

Parents can request to review the tests at the district office.

WASL designed to evaluate the quality of the education program in general, not a particular teacher. Quality across large numbers, not so great on assessment of the individual teacher/child.

Quest child cannot be removed from program for not passing.

Any automatic help? Yes, most schools automatically offer assistance (extra time outside of classroom, and/or working individually with child’s teacher). If not already in process, parents should be notified before Nov. conferences.

- Q: If there is a large waiting list for Quest – why aren’t more programs being added?
A: Quest has almost doubled in size over the last 4 years.
Need time to regroup and focus on quality and consolidate practices.
Possibly upcoming switch to K-5/Middle school and 4yr HS will require additional changes.

District experienced significant budget cuts last year, but managed to retain program without cuts.

District has proportionally larger percent of bright kids than many other districts, and is working to serve them. Some classes have greater than 50% of children receiving 4's on their report cards. State requires 2-3% of gifted children be served. LWSD serves approx 6% (including PO).

- Dan thanked parents for their continued support and involvement. He indicated that without it (and GEAC), many changes and improvements would not have happen.

Other Business/Announcements

- Jr. High Quest info night 12/9/09 7pm at Redmond Jr. High
- Choice schools have their own info nights, usually in Jan. that must be attended if you plan to have your child apply.
- Thank you to Kamiakin JH and Joe Joss. Quest boxes are now stored in Rm. 138, and Marymoor Storage Unit is closed.

Adjourn: 8:45