

Approved

## District Advisory Committee Meeting

May 9, 2013 - Hollister Elementary School

Meeting commenced at 9:16 a.m.

Attendees: Bill Banning, Elizabeth DeVita, Ryan Sparre, Joanna Lauer, Yvonne DeGraw, Donna Madrigal, Susan Zink, Jennifer Tangel, Kary O'Brien, Tammy Johnsen, Carin Ezal, Melissa Fitch, Sue Bruns, Cheryl Weakliem, Tammy Merritt, Karen Van Gool, Sandra Edgar.

Cheryl Weakliem made a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting. Sue Bruns seconded the motion. Minutes of the April 11, 2013 meeting were approved.

### School Report – Ryan Sparre, Principal of Hollister Elementary School

Hollister School has 451 students, 19 regular teachers, 2 special education teachers, a garden manager, and specialists for art, computer, and PE.

Over the last 7 years as Principal, several improvements have been made and programs added: library expanded, updates made to multipurpose room, flags put up in the courtyard, space net and school garden installed, butterfly garden planted, interactive white boards in every class for grades 3-6, and afterschool enrichments programs (lego robotics, fitkidz, garden/cooking). A current improvement project is the blacktop area and basketball courts. Plans for lower grade classes include flat screens and apple tv's.

Each grade level has events for kids to look forward to. Kindergarten - Holiday Sing. 1<sup>st</sup> - The Great Kapok Tree play. 3<sup>rd</sup> - Biomes play. 4<sup>th</sup> - gold rush and tall ships field trip. 5<sup>th</sup> - pioneer days and Rancho El Chorro. 6<sup>th</sup> - a play and CIMI camp.

Testing is promoted as a positive thing. Beginning in April, the school starts phasing into smart walking to get students alert and ready for testing. K/1<sup>st</sup> grades have the option to participate. Music and microphone interactions during the walk help build community. For common core standards, depth will be emphasized over breadth. Hollister is starting to address this change for math with adoption of number talks, FactsWise, and grade level meetings.

Karen commented that Hollister has the reputation of having a good grasp on boy culture. What's the secret? Jennifer Tangel commented that it is a very active school, with students always running and playing during recess/PE. Ryan stated that they are sensitive to the issue. He and Dr. Jay talk often about boys and girls, how they are different, and how to address that.

### Differentiation in the Classroom

**Elizabeth DeVita** - Differentiation is to be the tool of the strategic plan to address different skill levels of students. Professional development happens at the beginning of the school year. Experts on the topic are secured to train our teachers. Then at the site level, professional learning communities identify advanced students and decide on appropriate activities to give them. In addition, strategies are developed to help lagging students (reteach what is needed as opposed to repeating everything).

**Joanna Lauer** - Joanna provided an overview of differentiated instruction, which includes but is not limited to: addressing the varying needs and abilities of students, incorporating critical thinking, assessment throughout the process, and flexible grouping. Multiple differentiation practices exist, but it is a fluid and flexible process where some and not necessarily all practices are used by teachers. The teacher needs to identify who needs what instruction, and when, how, and where that instruction will happen with the goal being that all learners in a classroom will be challenged and can succeed. Joanna gave an example of how differentiation can occur for a unit study on the California gold rush. Parents can start a dialog with the teacher by asking, "What are the strengths and weaknesses of my child? How are things being accommodated in the classroom, and how can I help?"

## **Comments**

Kary – Differentiated instruction is a good idea, however, is it possible when the range of abilities is so divergent? More importantly, how are we evaluating whether it is actually occurring or to what effect? Is it the most effective approach for very low or very high achieving students? From her observation, it is not happening in the classroom or occurring effectively.

Joanna – There will always be a spread, but what is the best way to address that? At Kellogg, her class was mixed (she did small groups within her classroom) while the other 5<sup>th</sup> grade classes were leveled. She did self-assessments in class. Was one way better than the other?

Elizabeth - Addressing the varying needs of children is a complex issue. Differentiation is one way to do that, but it is not the only thing being done. With the move to common core standards, teachers will need continued training and lots of planning at the grade level.

Karen - At the Goleta Family School, teachers have the freedom to create their program, and it is all differentiation and works well. However, whether it works in a given classroom is dependent on the individual teacher. With common core, all teachers will need more training.

Ryan - The Tomlinson training started 7 years ago, and we are still working on it. He has seen it working in classrooms but not all of them, yet. He believes it is not the skill of the individual teacher but that of the grade level team.

Bill - Kary's concern is for all children and not just her own. Differentiation is not a new issue. There are varying programs and varying results. Proper evaluation of these efforts will need to be developed. His previous district is heavily invested in differentiated instruction but is still struggling with its implementation. While an open dialogue on the subject is welcome, we don't have all the right answers at the moment. It will be an on-going challenge.

## **District Update – William Banning, GUSD Superintendent**

Bill - What is the roll of DAC, or what should it be? What does the A for advisory really mean? To this end, two surveys have been created and links to them will be sent to all DAC members. The first is a membership survey, and the second is a meeting content survey (which can be submitted anonymously). Everyone is encouraged to complete the surveys by May 17. A summary of the results will be sent out in June.

Bill will be talking with the school board about the strategic plan drafted in 2006, which had 30 objectives with various goals. In a 2008 review of the plan, these objectives had to be prioritized due to the economic downturn. In the next board meeting, they will be discussing how to review and/or refresh the strategic plan, whether the GUSD mission has changed or not, and do we have the right strategy to accomplish the mission.

Kary - It would help if members received information beforehand, so that we could be ready with questions on the topic being discussed. Also, school reports could be emailed instead of spending time on it during the meeting.

## **“Ask the District” – William Banning, GUSD Superintendent**

Melissa – What is the status of the inclusion program? Brandon parents were asked to tour the program at Mountain View. She is concerned about children being moved from their neighborhood schools, and about rumors of the program at Brandon being dropped. She does not want new parents to have to fight with the district for services and believes that other parents without special needs children should be aware of the situation.

Donna - The district is not getting rid of any programs. Margaret Saleh has gone through all IEPs to determine whether an individual student will be moved or not out of a program. Mountain View has a program in the upper grades for severely handicapped students and it will be offered for lower grades.

Bill - Please do not spread rumors. The district is not warehousing students or turning their back on them. The focus is still on the I (individual) of IEP. He encourages parents to talk to Margaret about any concerns, and if they are not satisfied with the response then please move up the chain of command to a discussion with him.

Carin - As a parent at Mountain View, she has witnessed the success of the inclusion program at their school.

### **School Council and PTA Report**

School reports were not presented due to time constraints.

Jennifer had one announcement: she may be moving out of the state and wanted to thank both Bill and Elizabeth for all they have done. In case her family remains in Goleta, she will be back next year as a DAC member.

**Next Meeting:** 9:15 a.m. on Thursday, September 12, 2013 (location TBA).

Meeting concluded at 11:18 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Cheryl Weakliem.