

**VIBRANT SCHOOLS TACOMA COALITION**  
**SCHOOL BOARD MEETING THREE PAGE BRIEF FOR APRIL 14, 2016:**

**TOPICS AND ISSUES**

**1. Recognitions:**

Tacoma won a perfect score on its risk management survey and Mount Tahoma High School won a state award as 11 of 25 Palmer Scholars and 3 of 6 ACT scholars were Mount Tahoma students. Finally, the District won a College Board award based on recent outcomes in the district for access for under-represented students

**2. Testimony**

- Alton McDonald, commenting on his concern that there are no black contractors on current construction projects and no black principals at the district's comprehensive high schools. He also expressed concerns regarding the hiring and retention of teachers of color in the district and around a recent disparaging comment directed toward a student of color.
- Bill Hanawalt, parent, and Executive Director of Peace Community Center, asked that neighborhood integrity be maintained and that community agencies' efforts to support students in schools be honored during the redetermination of middle school boundaries. He asked that community members be included on the District's middle school boundary committee.
- Liesl Santkuyl, a parent, indicated that there are real neighborhood identities and natural neighborhoods that need to be honored in the boundary-setting process. She suggested a number of community groups to include on the committee, and asked specifically about the Tacoma Mall area which now has many children but no school.

Deputy Superintendent Garcia noted that the current process is designed for all middle schools, and noted that forums will be available for community members but that community members will not serve on the committee.

**Vibrant Schools Question and Concern**

***The coalition does not understand the rationale behind the policy of excluding members of the community from school boundary committees. Further, committee members should have notice and access to discussions that lead to boundary recommendations.***

**3. Report to the Board. Goal One, Academic Excellence, Part One.**

Marie Verhaar and Toni Pace reported on middle and high school metrics. The staff, administrative leadership team and school board members had an involved discussion around high school graduation rates and ninth grade failure rates with

numbers and outcomes varying for each different groups of students with the need to review and present some of the results at the next meeting with clearer conclusions.

**Vibrant Schools Questions and Concerns:**

- *Has the percentage gone up or down (or stayed the same) with the implementation of report card standards for 9<sup>th</sup> graders?*
- *The purpose of report card standards is to set clear learning goals for each subject at each grade level. Once these learning goals are clear, Vibrant Schools would assume that the focus on them should ultimately result in more students passing their classes but it is hard to assess this based on data presented thus far.*

- Superintendent Santorno asked about a decline in Asian students' graduation rates from 86.2% in 2014 to 82.6% in 2015.
- Dr Garcia noted that each year the students are different--these are not cohort-adjusted numbers.
- President Vialle asked the definition of "multi-racial" and Dr Garcia replied that students self-identify by racial/ethnic group.

**Vibrant Schools Comment**

*While cohort groups may differ, when some student groups do poorly or really well every year, it may be an indicator of systemic impacts on certain groups of students and those systemic factors should be explored, understood and acted upon.*

**4. Middle School Extracurricular Participation**

Dr Jennifer Kubista then reported on middle school students participating in extracurricular activities.

**Questions from School Board Members**

- Director Cobb asked about the link between the participation levels of male students in activities and whether that participation impacts these young men's graduation rates.
- Director Heinze asked if the cost of participation is prohibitive for kids and how families go about seeking financial assistance.

**Other Comments**

- Student Representative Bernante remarked that cost is an issue and students do not know about the help they could get, and that the help needs to be publicized more widely.
- Director Cobb asked about access to specialty clubs like Robotics.

**Vibrant Schools Comments:**

- *There was no discussion about a possible link between participation in extra-curricular activities and either attendance or academic progress, despite the fact that this is a Goal One Academic Excellence metric.*
- *Vibrant Schools has heard from parents and community members that activities may be cost-prohibitive for many youngsters and families and so access to activities can become an equity concern.*

**5. The Goal 2 Partnership Report**

Partnership staff Amanda Scott Thomas and Merilee Tanbara indicated there has been an overall increase in parent volunteers. Ms. Scott Thomas highlighted several key partnership efforts including the Tacoma Public Library, Family/Community Learning Academy at Jason Lee, College Tours for Parents and an effort to improve attendance by writing a letter to parents whose students have missed 18 or more days of school (10%).

- President Vialle asked if the list of partners could be broken out by level of partnership, so that it is easier to see who is doing what.
- Director Cobb suggested that the District then follow up with parents who respond positively to the first letter, thanking them for their efforts.

**Vibrant Schools Observation**

*Because the data was not reported based on different demographics, it is not clear which groups of parents are increasing their volunteer activities within TPS. We understand that an on-line volunteer access capacity is being developed. Some climate survey data were shown from the old climate survey so will be of limited value as the district moves forward with the new climate survey tool.*

**General Board comments.**

- Director Heinze had no comments.
- Director Cobb reported attending the National School Board Association and seeing well-designed reports for the community. She also asked how children are assessed and identified as “gifted.”
- President Vialle talked about historically black colleges and universities and teacher recruitment, the assignment of mentor teachers to young teachers and her concern about takeovers of school districts in other states and the possibility that charter schools might receive large amounts of public funds. She expressed sadness at the unexpected death of Ms. Dralle, a teacher at McCarver.
- Student Representative Bernante gave additional kudos to Mt Tacoma High School staff.
- Student Representative Olson gave similar kudos to the Stadium High School staff.

**VIBRANT SCHOOLS CALL FOR ACTION:** None at This Time

## **Vibrant Schools Tacoma Coalition**

### **School Board Report**

**April 14, 2016**

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School Board Directors present: President Karen Vialle, Director Scott Heinze, Director Andrea Cobb. Student Representatives Bernante and Olson. Excused: Directors Cathryn Ushka and Debbie Winskill.

Both Superintendent Santorno and Deputy Superintendent Garcia were present.

#### **Recognitions:**

- Risk management survey score—  
Tacoma Public Schools earned a perfect score again this year which will lead to a 5.75% reduction in insurance premiums. The area surveyed was civil rights and Title 9 compliance and was led by legal counsel McMinimee.
- Mount Tahoma graduation rates— The High School won a state career guidance award as 11 of 25 Palmer Scholars and 3 of 6 ACT 6 Scholars this year attended Mount Tahoma.

#### **Comment:**

***Vibrant Schools believes this is an outstanding showing from a single high school and merits further exploration as to how and why Mount Tahoma generated so many Palmer Scholars, so that this success might be replicated in other schools.***

- The Tacoma School District won a College Board award based solely on recent outcomes in the district for access for under-represented students. The Metrics reviewed included:
  - The number of students expected to get B's in college was up 22%
  - The number of students taking AP exams was up 24%, and scores of 3, 4 or 5 (college credit qualifying score) also went up.
  - Tacoma District parents accumulated \$550,000 in College credit savings.
  - The number of students applying to more than one school was up 8%.

#### **Comment:**

***Vibrant Schools recognizes that this is an important indicator of students enrolling and graduating college.***

#### **Vibrant Comment:**

***Congratulations to the District and these students!***

#### **Members of the public wishing to address the Board.**

- Alton McDonald, commenting on his concern that there are no black contractors on current construction projects at McCarver, Stewart, Wainwright, Wilson and that high school principals at the five traditional high schools do not reflect the community as there are no

black principals at these five high schools. He expressed concern that there is discrimination and racism in TPS and that he feels that the District needs to make an effort to address this systemic problem. Mr McDonald noted that black teachers are not hired or retained and are mistreated. He also noted an incident where a teacher called a student an “animal.”

- Bill Hanawalt, parent and director of Peace Community Center, commented on the middle schools boundaries process. He asked that neighborhood integrity be maintained and that community agencies’ efforts to support students in schools be honored. He further requested that community members be part of the District’s middle school boundary committee.
- Liesl Santkuyl, a parent, also commented on the middle school boundaries process. She pointed out that there are real neighborhood identities and natural neighborhoods that need to be honored in the boundary-setting process. She suggested a number of community groups to include on the committee, and noted that Policy 3130 offers good guidance in the importance of doing this. She asked specifically about the Tacoma Mall area which now has many children but no school.

Deputy Superintendent Garcia noted that the current process is designed for all middle schools, not only Hunt, the school specifically mentioned in the first reading document tonight. He noted that forums will be available for community members but that community members will not serve on the committee.

Superintendent Santorno added that if people experience incidents of discrimination, please bring these to the District’s attention.

### **Vibrant Schools Question and Concern**

***The coalition does not understand the rationale behind the policy of excluding members of the community from school boundary committees. Further, committee members should have notice and access to discussions that lead to boundary recommendations.***

**Superintendent’s Report.** Superintendent Santorno indicated that she is meeting with high school staffs and recently participated in the University of Washington Tacoma’s Education Director hiring process.

No Policy Matters or Curriculum and Instruction items. The Financial report is on the District web site.

**Business Matters.** There were a number of furniture and construction items on the Business Matters list.

### **Other Business.**

Middle School Boundaries--first reading. No Board comments. The item was approved for second reading, likely April 28.

Presentation of All Hazard Mitigation Plan.

## **Report to the Board. Goal One, Academic Excellence, Part One.**

Marie Verhaar and Toni Pace reported. This portion focused on middle and high school metrics. The first metric focused on high school graduation rates while the second metric focus was the percentage of ninth graders failing one or more classes. The tables on slides 19 and 20 showed uneven results for some student groups. The staff had reported these as red arrows indicating a movement in the wrong direction, but Deputy Superintendent Garcia took issue with this interpretation as the numbers went both up and down over two years. The 2016 results, however, for these groups were lower than the 2014 baseline. Dr Garcia requested that the staff go back and re-assess the numbers. However, the results for English Language Learners (ELL) and Special Education (SPED) students went steadily down from 2014 to 2016 which was visually apparent on the slide but not referenced in staff commentary or questions. The metric in question was the percentage of 9th graders failing one or more class.

### **Vibrant Schools Question:**

- ***Has the percentage gone up or down (or stayed the same) with the implementation of report card standards for 9<sup>th</sup> graders?***
- ***The purpose of report card standards is to set clear learning goals for each subject at each grade level. Once these learning goals are clear, Vibrant Schools would assume that the focus on them should ultimately result in more students passing their classes but there is no current evidence to draw upon.***

Superintendent Santorno asked about a decline in Asian students' graduation rates from 86.2% in 2014 to 82.6% in 2015. The Superintendent's question is consistent with her recent efforts to illuminate the data more fully, especially for various groups of students.

Dr Garcia noted that each year the students are different--these are not cohort-adjusted numbers.

### **Vibrant Schools Comment**

***While cohort groups may differ, when some student groups do poorly or really well every year, it may be an indicator of systemic impacts on certain groups of students and those systemic factors should be explored and understood.***

President Vialle asked the definition of "multi-racial" and Dr Garcia replied that students self-identify by racial/ethnic group so the number of students identifying as multi-racial may vary from year to year.

Dr Kubista then reported on middle school students participating in extracurricular activities. Board members asked that these activities be separated out between athletics and non-athletics. Dr Kubista noted that students can start clubs in their areas of interest.

## Questions from School Board Members

- *Director Cobb asked about the link between the participation levels of male students in activities and whether that participation impacts these young men's graduation rates.*
- *Director Heinze asked if the cost of participation is prohibitive for kids and how families go about seeking financial assistance.*

## Other Comments

- In follow up to Director Heinze's question, Student Representative Bernante remarked that cost is an issue and students do not know about the help they could get, and that the help needs to be publicized more widely.
- Director Cobb asked about access to specialty clubs like Robotics.

## Vibrant Schools Observation and Question

- *There was no discussion about a possible link between participation in extra-curricular activities and either attendance or academic progress, despite the fact that this is a Goal One Academic Excellence metric.*
- *Vibrant Schools has heard from parents and community members that activities may be cost-prohibitive for many youngsters and families and so access to activities can become an equity concern.*

## The Goal 2 Partnership Report

Amanda Scott Thomas and Merilee Tanbara reported. Partnership Staff indicated there has been an overall increase in parent volunteers. Amanda Scott Thomas specifically mentioned Extended Learning Opportunities (ELOs) as a current focus. The number of partners supporting student success is growing. Some of this data will not be available until May.

Ms. Scott Thomas highlighted several key partnership efforts including the Tacoma Public Library, Family/Community Learning Academy at Jason Lee, College Tours for Parents. She also highlighted an effort to improve attendance by writing a letter to parents whose students have missed 18 or more days of school (10%).

- President Vialle asked if the list of partners could be broken out by level of partnership, so that it is easier to see who is doing what.
- Director Cobb suggested that the District then follow up with parents who respond positively to the first letter, thanking them for their efforts.

## Vibrant Schools Observation

*Because the data was not reported based on different demographics, it is not clear which groups of parents are increasing their volunteer activities within TPS. We understand that an*

***on-line volunteer access capacity is being developed. Some climate survey data were shown from the old climate survey so will be of limited value as the district moves forward.***

**General Board comments.**

- Director Heinze had no comments.
- Director Cobb reported attending the National School Board Association and seeing well-designed reports for the community. She also asked how children are assessed and identified as “gifted.”
- President Vialle talked about historically black colleges and universities and teacher recruitment. She noted the assignment of mentor teachers to young teachers. She expressed concern about takeovers of School districts in other states and the possibility that charter schools might receive large amounts of public funds. She expressed sadness at the unexpected death of Ms Dralle, a teacher at McCarver and noted that this is a hard time for the McCarver community.
- Student Representative Bernante gave additional kudos to Mt Tacoma High School staff.
- Student Representative Olson gave similar kudos to the Stadium High School staff.

**Upcoming Board meetings:**

April 21—Study Session on Browns Point and Mary Lyon Elementary new schools

April 28—Regular business meeting.

May 12—Regular business meeting