

**Seward Schools Site-Based Council**  
**Meeting Minutes | February 14, 2013 | 6:30 PM**  
**Seward High School, Seward Middle School, Seward Elementary**

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**Present:** Mica Van Buskirk, Julie Lindquist, Leigh Ray, David Kingsland, Trevan Walker, Jason Bickling, Reuben Miranda, Myla Liljemark, Linda Ferkinhoff, Jerry Olive, Sami King, Dan Marshall, Amy Hankins, Mark Fraad, Alan Nickell, Brian Ray, Raylynn Zweifel, Laura Hensley, Lynn Hohl, Stephanie Cronin, Maya Moriarty

**Welcome:** Welcome to everyone present!

**Minutes:** Minutes from the last meeting were approved.

**Additions to the Agenda:** No additions to the agenda.

**Public comment:** none

**Middle School Student Report:** none

**High School Student Report:** none

**Old Business:**

*Middle School Enrollment (Jason Bickling)*

A public meeting on this issue occurred at the middle school Tuesday evening, February 12, 2013. Jason handed out a worksheet based on comments and ideas presented at this meeting. This worksheet lists additional solutions for low enrollment.

Here are the proposed scenarios. There are six of them. Discussion highlights are listed after each scenario.

**Scenario 1.** If the Middle School stays at “status quo” for enrollment, the results would be that the principal would take on teaching duties (1 or 2 classes); the number of classes per day would be reduced; the length of classes would be increased; there would be no explicit electives (although they may be built into other classes, such as doing an art project related to a science topic); students would be placed into classes on ability, not grade level; core classes would be combined such as Language Arts and Social Studies; teachers would teach out of their content area, meaning a social studies teacher would also teach science or math; grading would begin shifting from percentages & letter grades to performance-based, which means that student proficiency would be measured against the state standards (student “grades” would be exemplary, proficient basic, needs improvement); the Middle School would not be bound to the High School schedule; and co-curricular issues (student participation numbers) would not be resolved.

These are the discussion points from tonight’s meeting about the above scenario:

- This scenario robs students of opportunities.
- Having a teacher teach a class out of his or her content area is not a popular idea. A teacher should teach science because that is her passion, not because there are not enough teachers in the school to teach core classes.
- The bottom line is to get opportunities restored to the students—to offer them core classes, electives, and sports, whatever the grade-level configuration. (Jason Bickling)
- If the school district would “programmatically fund” the middle school, then there would be a teacher for each core subject.
- This is not a new problem. We’ve just been so creative to preserve the status quo, but now that this population dip is coming up, it’s over. (Trevan Walker)

**Scenario 2:** We could move the 6th grade to the middle school and based on current projections, the results would be as follows: the Elementary would lose ½ of a “special” (either music, library, or PE); staffing changes would occur in both the elementary and in the middle school depending upon the number of 6th graders and number of kindergarteners enrolled; the ratio of students to secretary, nurse, and administrator would be improved at the Elementary School; a “specials” teacher would have to assume other teaching duties in addition to his or her own “special,” meaning that a gym teacher may teach a library class; the Middle School would gain 2 staff members; staffing would stabilize over the next 5 years at the Middle School, resulting in steady opportunities for students (beyond core classes); theoretically, participation in sports would increase resulting in the ability to offer all sports available; and the Middle School would not be bound to the High School schedule.

These are the discussion points from tonight’s meeting about the above scenario:

- Losing a specials position (0.5 FTE) at the elementary school is not a popular idea.
- Most people agreed that stabilization of staff and opportunities at the middle school is desirable.
- Transitions are harder academically during the crucial years (such as transitioning from elementary to middle school, or middle to high school). Amy Hankins discussed Alaskan schools’ data she assembled regarding pros and cons of various changes in schools.

**Scenario 3:** We could move the 9th grade to the middle school and based on current projections, the results would be as follows: the Middle School would gain 2 staff members; staffing would remain stable over the next 5 years at the Middle School, resulting in steady opportunities for students (beyond core classes); the Middle School would operate under two governing bodies for activities & two sets of rules for eligibility (KPSAA, ASAA); the Middle School would have to employ Highly Qualified High School teachers for 9th graders to receive high school credit; the Middle School extracurricular activity issues would NOT be addressed as the 9th graders would still be at the High School for sports; the Middle School would still be bound to the High School schedule; Seward High’s enrollment would shift from the current 182 to 136. Additionally, at the current Pupil-to-Teacher Ratio, Seward High would lose 2 ½ full-time staff members, and this translates into a cut of 12 ½ classes in its master schedule. This means that the current class offering of 45 sections (including the counseling services) would drop to 33 ½ class offerings. [Note: This does not include sections offered

from other funding sources (Career and Technical Education, Careers in Criminal Justice, etc.).] To continue, the current master schedule provides 9th graders with access to 21 course offerings, including both core requirements such as Biology, LA 9, Geometry or Algebra, and electives, such as industrial arts, creative arts, foreign language, drama, and so on. The current master schedule must contain a minimum of 27 sections of core classes in order to meet graduation requirements (LA x 8, math x 6, science x 6, social studies x 6, health/PE), and this leaves room for 18 electives. Things change with only three grades in the high school, should the 9th grade be moved to the Middle School. In that case, the master schedule must contain a minimum of 21 core classes in order to meet graduation requirements (LA x 6, math x 4, science x 4, social studies x 6, health/PE), and this would leave room for only 12 ½ electives. Finally, with this configuration change the high school would lose one classified staff position (secretarial, theater tech., library, etc.) and its Athletic Director.

These are the discussion points from tonight's meeting about the above scenario:

- This idea elicited groans from most people.
- There was no significant discussion about this scenario.

**Scenario 4:** We could move the 7th and 8th grade to the Elementary School, creating a K-8 school. Based on current projections, the results would be as follows: Seward Schools would lose approximately \$410,000 in funding by combining two buildings into one (based on the school district's funding formula), which would also result in a loss of staff; the Pupil-to-Teacher ratio would increase because not all staff in the Middle School would be relocated to the elementary school; the 0.8 Middle School administrator position would become a part-time Assistant Principal position at the elementary school (0.5+ with other duties), and the student-to-administrator ratio would increase; because of limits of time and space, all students would have fewer opportunities to participate in gym, library, or music; the participation in sports would theoretically increase (6th graders may be included), so all sports available could be offered for middle-school aged students; after-school gym for Middle School Sports would reduce intramural activities for 4th and 5th graders; the Boys and Girls Club classroom space would be eliminated; the Science Lab or Quest Room would be needed as a classroom; and bussing concerns may have to be addressed in the afternoon.

These are the discussion points from tonight's meeting about the above scenario:

- K-8 is a great model. It eliminates one of those difficult transition periods in a child's life.
- This is not about buildings that house students. It's about making sure that when students reach middle school, they have what they need to be successful. The dip in academics that happens during the transition years is constant and common. It's growth, it's adversity, it's good for them, and it's over quick. (Dan Marshall)

**Scenario 5:** We could move the Pre-K through 2nd grade to the building that currently houses the Middle School, and move the 7th & 8th graders to the Elementary School, creating a grade 3-8 at the Elementary School. Based on current projections, the results would be as follows: Staffing in all 3 schools would become stabilized because student numbers in all three schools would be stable; costly

remodeling would be necessary in order to accommodate such a change (for example, the drinking fountains and the toilets in the middle school are too large for preschoolers); the gym at the Elementary School is not a standard-sized gym so athletic events would still need to be played in the Middle School building; there are no lockers in the Elementary School; there is no playground or usable outdoor space at the middle school.

These are the discussion points from tonight's meeting about the above scenario:

- The capital improvements would be significant.
- These things are not insurmountable. These are possibilities that still exist. (Mark Fraad)
- Fewer transitions for older students is an advantage.
- The lack of a playground is an issue. (Mica Van Buskirk)
- This would make the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders farther away from the high school, where they use fields, etc. (Julie Lindquist)

**Scenario 6:** We could move the 7th and 8th grades to the High School, creating a grade 7-12 school. Based on current projections, the results would be as follows: Enrollment would be stabilized and therefore staffing would be stabilized; Seward Schools would lose approximately \$410,000 in funding by combining two buildings into one (based on the school district's funding formula), which would also result in a loss of staff; the Pupil-to-Teacher ratio would increase (not all staff would move up from the Middle School); the 0.8 Middle School administrator position would become a part-time Assistant Principal position at the elementary school (0.5+ with other duties), and the student-to-administrator ratio would increase; because of limits of time and space, all students would have fewer opportunities to participate in gym, library, or music (and athletics practices would be affected); limited classroom space would be a concern as all classrooms are currently occupied. [Note: Three of them are occupied part time and could be consolidated into one, leaving only two classrooms to accommodate two full grades.] Additionally, 7th and 8th graders would not be separated from the rest of the student population because of the layout of the buildings, so this would mean that 12-year-olds would be in daily (hourly) contact with 18-year-olds. Transition supports would be strained between the 6th grade at the Elementary School and the 7th grade at the reconfigured Jr./Sr. High School. Finally, this solution does not address Middle School activities issues.

These are the discussion points from tonight's meeting about the above scenario:

- The loss of funding is a concern.

*KPSAA Update (Dan Marshall)*

Seward High School has been campaigning for non-mandatory participation in Borough meets for cross country, track and field, and skiing since last year. The school district held three meetings (one for each sport) to discuss making attendance at the Borough meets compulsory. Now it goes to KPSAA, where it is sure to be passed. According to Dan Marshall, the school administrators who supported this gave the following five reasons:

1. It's a celebration at the end of the season.
2. We like it.
3. It gives all Kenai Peninsula kids the chance to get together.
4. It's a district-level tournament.
5. It's tradition.

Sami King stated that if it's going to be compulsory, then it needs to be a true championship format, professionally run. Some of her other key points:

- facilities that host the Borough tournament are in deterioration, increasing the chance for injuries
- the district tournament doesn't qualify athletes for anything
- regional competitions follow the district tournament
- athletes should be resting and tapering their training so that they're ready to compete in regions

The language in the new ruling will be "mandatory participation." Dan Marshall pointed out that the waivers signed by athletes are for non-compulsory sports. Since the Borough tournament will be compulsory, the door is opened for litigation if an athlete is injured during the Borough tournament.

Discussion and recommendations for Borough Cross Country Running: A Borough Meet bank account should be created to ensure equitable cost sharing.

Discussion and recommendations for Borough Nordic Skiing: Discussed making it an expectation (mandatory) that all schools in the District that have cross country Ski programs attend. If a school has an athlete or athletes that need to attend the Besh Cup or other national qualifying race they could certainly miss the borough meet for that.

One concession made is that the meet will no longer be on Saturday. It will be on the Tuesday before. Dan Marshall said he supported that, knowing that is the best he could get.

Dan thanked the SSSBC for its letter of support.

**Leigh Ray moved that the administrative reports be moved above new business, and it was seconded by Myla Liljemark.**

### **Reports from Administrators, School Board Representative, PTSA Representative**

Elementary Report

*Given by David Kingsland*

- Morning Family Reading time had high attendance again (Muffins for Moms – Donuts for Dad).

- The annual Jump Rope for Heart event is happening tomorrow afternoon, headed up by Mrs. Ray and the Student Leadership Team.
- February 28<sup>th</sup> is the combined Book & Art Fair in the evening. Hot dogs & chips will be provided by the Student Leadership Team.
- One of our SPED intensive needs aides has resigned, so that position will be advertised.
- Battle of the Books is a success, with grades 3-4 taking 1<sup>st</sup> in the District and moving to the state competition on Feb 28th. Grades 5-6 took 3<sup>rd</sup> place.
- Grades 4-6 will participate in HoWL winter survival training, led by Mrs. Veasey—a representative of Homer’s HoWL Inc., which specializes in Alaskan wilderness expeditions for youth.
- The school will be having a music concert (grades K-6) on March 5<sup>th</sup> in the evening.

### Middle School Report

*Given by Jason Bickling*

- Volleyball will be playing in Soldotna/Kenai this weekend.
- Seward Wrestling Invitational is this Saturday.
- Students completed Ed Performance Testing (in place of the Terra Nova test).
- The SBAs are on our mind.
- Michelle Walker’s class is presenting “Cinderella,” a dramatic production.
- The lockdown drill went well.
- Students participated in HoWL winter survival training, led by Mrs. Veasey—a representative of Homer’s HoWL Inc., which specializes in Alaskan wilderness expeditions for youth.

### High School Report

*Given by Trevan Walker*

- BP Teacher of the Year nominations are due tomorrow.
- Battle of the Books – took 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the District.
- Seahawk Classic and Winter Formal are behind us now.
- Port City Players will be performing in the Seward High School auditorium with 10 curtain calls. We’re excited to have them here.
- District Budget meeting is next Tuesday in the High School library at 6 p.m.
- Ski team will attend Region III Cross-Country Skiing Championship at the Lookout Mountain trails in Homer on Saturday.
- Basketball plays at Skyview on Friday and Nikiski on Saturday.
- Jacob Sears, Hayden Beard, Haden Tiner, Kara Knotek, Robin McKnight and Josephine Braun will represent Seward High School at a Debate, Drama and Forensics state tournament at the University of Alaska Anchorage Feb 18-19, under the steady tutelage of coach Augusta Lind.

School Board Report – *none*

PTSA Report – *none*

### **New Business:**

*Pupil-to-Teacher Ratio (Mica Van Buskirk)*

Mica Van Buskirk passed out copies of selections from the district's preliminary budget and the 2013-2014 staffing formula proposals. She also passed out for discussion copies of two draft resolutions: *Seward Site-Based Council Resolution Concerning Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTR)*, and *Seward Site-Based Council Resolution Concerning True Programmatic Funding of Seward Schools*. The goal is to have these drafts finalized prior to the next school board meeting on March 4, 2013.

The discussions among members revolved around fairness, the pending changes in FTE allotments for our schools, the possibility of getting small-school designation, and the need to pay attention to what is happening in the legislature—writing letters and lobbying as needed. It appears that the PTR is the target for the budget shortfall.

Draft documents will be mailed to site council members for comment. Please respond to Mica with comments by February 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Remainder of agenda tabled due to time constraints.**

**Round Table:** none

**Meeting adjourned at 8:33 pm.**

**Next meeting** will be on March 21, 2013, at 6:30 p.m., in the Seward Elementary School library.