

Seward Schools Site-Based Council
Meeting Minutes | March 21, 2013 | 6:30 PM
Seward High School, Seward Middle School, Seward Elementary



Present: Alan Nickell, Jason Bickling, Myla Liljemark, Julianna DeBoard, Nickole Lyon, Amy Hankins, Julie Lindquist, Mica Van Buskirk, Stephanie Cronin, Raylynn Zweifel, Leigh Ray, Brian Ray, David Kingsland, Linda Ferkinhoff, Terri McKnight, Stephanie Mullaly, Agusta Lind, Wolfgang Kurtz, Rebecca Brown, Danelle McCarthy, Joel Williams, Ayla & Marissa Lapinskas, Scott & Alden Hamilton, Pam Williams (with daughter and granddaughter), Brockman Family

Call to Order: 6:30 PM

Approval of Minutes: approved

Additions to Agenda: no

Public Comments: no

Special Presentation: *Seward Middle School Debate Team (led by Agusta Lind). This is "parliamentary style." Topic: The middle school should include 6th Grade. The three main points argued by each side of the debate team are as follows:*

PRO:

1. More funding for the middle school.
 - a. The elementary school would not need funds for students who are not there.
2. More activities for the middle school.
 - a. More electives than currently offered at the middle school for middle school students.
 - b. More academic courses offered than are currently available either at the middle school or elementary school.
 - c. More sports programs at the middle school.

CON:

1. Children at the sixth grade level are not mature enough.
 - a. To handle more homework, greater expectations, and resulting stress that comes with middle school.
 - b. To handle greater freedom and less supervision seen at the middle school level.
 - c. To handle greater maturation of 7th and 8th graders,
 - i. Physically
 - ii. Emotionally
2. All of the research available indicates that sixth graders do better academically when part of elementary school.
3. Parents will be worried about their children because of #1.

After the debate team completed its presentation and left the meeting, discussion ensued among site council members about the middle school enrollment issue. The brief discussion mainly focused on homework for 6th graders if they are part of the middle school, specials, and FTE. There was also a lot of discussion about the maturity of 6th graders, which is a major component in this issue for many people who point out that it's not just about academics.

Reports from Student Representatives:

Middle School (no representative)

High School (no representative)

Old Business

Middle School Survey Results (Jason Bickling)

- Thanks to Leigh Ray for advertising, editing, and tech side of survey.
- Our responses were huge compared to typical responses in district-wide surveys.
- See Addendum A, "Survey Results"
- Jason walked through the survey results, explaining each graph, as follows:
 - Graph 1 - the "total," or top row, shows the overall average of the 226 respondents for the various school configurations (which are the column headers)
 - Graph 2 - pure counts, from which averages are created
 - Exclusivity would have added percentages to 100%, but because people could have felt very strongly about more than one configuration, the survey results do not add up to 100%
 - Graph 3 - percentage that correlates the count on Graph 2.
 - Jason spoke about anonymity, mentioning that it would be compromised if he released the raw survey results. (Too easy to see connections and make identifications when looking at specific demographic information.) It was agreed that Jason maintain the anonymity of the survey and not release the raw data.
 - Checks and balances are in place to assure that data were not manipulated (different people "hold the keys" to the raw data).
 - Any questions? There were none.

Middle School Enrollment (Jason Bickling)

- Mica Van Buskirk says by that by the next meeting, we need to give our recommendation.
- Mica asks: If the 6th grade moves to the middle school, it's been said that we'll see a dip in test scores in 6th graders, so is this seen in 7th graders now? Jason replies that no matter the age, a dip will occur AT the age/grade that the transition occurred. This dip in test score is also seen in 9th graders during the transition to high school. In both instances, the dip to middle and the dip to high school, the scores rebound after the first year.

- Regarding the layout of the school, some wondered where the sixth graders would be housed, as there aren't enough wings or pods to house another grade. Jason replied that you don't necessarily need separate pods for separate grades. Instead, you could "create flow and movement" in the schedule throughout the day, which keeps specific grades in groups, so to speak. In other words, the different grades will be in different "areas" at different times. Currently, more than ½ the classrooms are empty at any given time
- There are enough lockers and lunch-room seats to accommodate larger numbers. For example, when this year's exceptionally large kindergarten joins the middle school as 6th graders in the future, it will be able to accommodate that large group in addition to the two other grades.
- Some parents & teachers present at the meeting shared what students were thinking:
 - Stephanie Mullaly said that her daughter is worried about what won't be at the middle school if the 6th grade isn't moved.
 - Terri McKnight said that the 6th graders think 5th graders need to "do their time" at the elementary school.
- Julie Lindquist said she'd like to see an actual schedule (acknowledging that it would be preliminary). She asked, "Would there be one teacher for all those 6th graders?" Jason replied that "no, it's all allocation." Julie restated that she wants to SEE the allocation/schedule to see how it would work.
- Jason continued by stating that there isn't one way to do things. For example, students could go to the high school for electives. It all depends on if the middle and high schools share FTEs again so that they can share electives.
- Jason continued. He said that the students are "fluid and moving." In other words, teachers teach different sets of students throughout the day. When the question arises about having just one 6th grade teacher at the middle school for 40+ sixth graders, it is explained by pointing out that students are with other teachers throughout the day— thus not keeping the entire group with one teacher at any given time. Amy Hankins replies by saying that she thought 6th graders would NOT be moved and mingled. Jason says that they wouldn't be mingled, but "moved or plugged in fluidly."
- Note that classroom teachers also teach an elective. So every classroom teacher equals two more electives, although this is dependent upon scheduling creativity.
- Jason said he could see getting two new teachers plus 2.5 CTE, giving 8 electives next year, IF 6th grade moves up.
- Raylynn Zweifel asks if higher level math would be available to 6th graders? The answer is yes.
- Mica asks if honors classes would be available to 6th graders? The answer is that those are only available in the high school. Jason added that if kids are advanced, teachers are meeting the need pretty well. He said, "Every opportunity we get to advance a kid, we do. Gifted is often underserved. We work to offer enrichment for them. We're small enough to individualize it."
- Mica asks: "Does site council want more information before making a recommendation?" There were no responses.

- Mica asks about band in the middle school. Jason said that the school district doesn't mandate band. Recorder is offered in the 3rd & 4th grade. Breighley Sexton has a curriculum she is required to follow.
- Raylynn asked if the move would affect busing? David Kingsland replied that there would be no changes.
- Could the decision be detrimental to the formula change request we've put to the school board, Mica asks? David replied that it's a district-wide problem that is ongoing.

Seeing no more discussion, a motion was made to make a recommendation that we move the 6th grade to the middle school. Myla Liljemark seconded it.

Julie Lindquist states her request to see a tentative schedule before a recommendation is made. Myla responds that based on survey results, the community speaks loud (in favor of the 6th grade moving to the middle school), so a schedule shouldn't change the overall picture. Still, both Jason and David agreed to bring a few draft schedules with the 6th graders moved to the middle school to our next meeting so we can see how the schedules might look.

Amy Hankins added that some of the votes for moving the 6th grade up to the middle school were based on keeping the sixth grade together, so we'd need to honor that.

The question asked once again was if we need to see a tentative schedule before making our recommendation? The general response was that we are moving ahead based on good faith and good intentions, and that Jason needs a recommendation for the good of the kids.

Mica asks, "If there are big issues after the fact, can we reverse it and put the 6th grade back in the elementary school?" Jason replied that there will be issues but no disasters.

As there was not definitive consensus on the recommendation, there was consensus to take a vote.

Voting commenced, as follows:

1. Alan Nickell - yes (Comments: I have a 5th grader who will obviously be part of this, and I asked her and her friends. We had a discussion. They said, "It's kind of scary." I said, "Yes it is." When the girls heard that they could be offered higher math and other electives, they were excited, and the tone of the conversation changed from fear to "when is this happening?" My finding is that they're looking forward to it. And we talked about sports. Having more opportunities is very important to them.)
2. Myla Liljemark - yes
3. Amy Hankins - yes (Comments: But on the record, I'm not for it. It's what the community said they wanted.)
4. Julie Lindquist - abstains (Comments: I think it's too early.)
5. Mica Van Buskirk - yes
6. Stephanie Cronin - yes (Comments: I see great potential in this move if it's done well.)

7. Raylynn Zweifel - yes (Comments: I have great faith in the administrators making it work.)
8. Leigh Ray - yes
9. David Kingsland - yes
10. Linda Ferkinhoff - yes (Comments: I know there will be issues, but I see positive things in it.)
11. Jason Bickling - yes

After the voting, Mica Van Buskirk officially states that based on nine “yes” votes and one abstention, it is the recommendation of the Site Based Council that the principals pursue the option of moving the 6th grade to the middle school.

She also stated that the site council wants to remain involved as this process moves forward. It still needs approval of the school board. If that happens, the site council would like to remain involved in the planning and implementation of the move. Jason and David agreed to this and said they would bring more information to site council at the next meeting.

Site Council Resolutions (Mica Van Buskirk)

Due to time constraints, a complete report could not be given on the status of the two separate resolutions discussed at previous site council meetings. [Seward Site Based Council Resolution 2013-001: Small Middle and High FTE School Formula Modification; Seward Site Based Council Resolution 2013-002: Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTR)]. Instead, Mica gave a brief update.

She stated that Site Council’s recommendation to move 6th grade doesn’t nullify the issues she brought forth in resolutions for the school board. We need to involve the City Council and the School Board. We need to talk about economic development in Seward and education as a basis for growing the economy. What are we missing out on? We could never have the schedule that Skyview has, but we could have more.

Stephanie Cronin brings up curriculum audit that happened in Seward schools a few years ago as a great resource for backing Mica’s ideas.

Jason suggested that we set up shared Google document to collaborate on the site council resolutions.

New Business

Community Education Foundation (Amy Hankins)

Amy states that she is waiting for critical info from the school board and the District before she can move forward with the project. She is researching setting up a public school foundation, and a major resource for this is the National Schools Foundation. Anchorage has

such a foundation under The Alaska Community Foundation supports the Anchorage community education foundation. In Seward, we could do it under Seward Community Foundation. Our questions are as follows: Will we be required to fund schools outside of Seward? What can we fund? (Can we fund a teacher, for example?)

Site Council Minutes Publishing (Mica Van Buskirk)

A brief discussion ensued regarding publication of meeting minutes. Everyone agreed that the secretary needs to send out a draft of the minutes to all Council members and to the Superintendent prior to the next meeting. After they are approved, they will be published on the SSSBC's blog, on school blogs, etc.

Reports from Administrators, School Board Representatives, PTSA Representative
Due to time constraints, principals' reports could not be given at the meeting. Instead, they were e-mailed to the secretary for inclusion in the minutes.

Elementary (David Kingsland via e-mail)

- Spring Music program for all grades plus the elementary band had an excellent turn out.
- Book fair and Family Art night had great family participation. Proceeds from the book fair have helped with the purchase of a Smartboard for the library.
- SBA testing for grade 3-6, on April 2-4
- Books and Bingo coming up on April 9th, food concessions provided by boys & Girls Club starting at 5:30. Bingo runs between 5:45 and 6:45.
- Swimming lessons have started for K-6 students.

Middle School (Jason Bickling via e-mail)

- Our Girls took 3rd at the Borough Volleyball Tournament
- Track starts on Monday – Shelly Walker and Teresa Bickling are our coaches
- Libby Veasey from HowL (Homer Outdoor Wilderness Leadership) came and did a presentation to our students on her attempt at climbing Denali. She also promoted opportunities that her camp provides.
- SBAs are April 2, 3, and 4. We are preparing for those tests and will be emphasizing to parents that it is especially important to make sure their students are well rested, fed, and to school on time during those days.

High School (Trevan Walker via e-mail)

- Seahawk State excitement reached a fever pitch and I caught it. I'll be heading up tonight or first bells tomorrow morning to support our teams.

- The regional championships came off without any major hitches. In fact, all of the feedback that I fielded from other regional schools was 100% positive. I was quite pleased to be able to demonstrate that a school of our small size is able to successfully host a 16 team championship bracket in three days. Sami King deserves the top billing on the huge list of thanks Seward High School owes. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the army of volunteers and community support on which we were able to rely. I don't think Jackie Marshall left the hospitality room in three days and I know she relied on a whole host of other team parents for their support. This was a tremendous body of work, but absolutely worth it in terms of opportunity for our students, school, and community.
- Test season is upon us. We're leveraging our Advisory to provide last minute mass interventions for all freshman and sophomores prior to the SBA/HSGQE exams and increased/mandatory interventions for all juniors and seniors who still need to pass one or more of the tests. The SBA/HSGQE test dates are April 2 (Reading), April 3 (Writing), April 4 (Math), and April 9 (science).
- Prom is Saturday, April 13. Location is TBA.
- Due to a lack of interest, there will be no Boys' Soccer this season.
- Solomon D'Amico is the Track and Field head coach. Dan Marshall will continue to assist.
- Tim Lebling continues as the Girls' Soccer coach.
- Practices are in full swing for spring sports.

No report from School Board Representative (absent)

No report from PTSA (absent)

Round Table: none

Adjourn: 8:35 pm

Next meeting: April 11th, 6:30 PM

Addendum A “Survey Results”

For the Survey we had 226 respondents. Of those 226 respondents, we had:

- 94 parent/guardians (non-teaching)
- 47 Community Members
- 45 students
- 27 teachers (parents and non-parents of Seward students)
- 13 non teacher employees

There were 6 options:

- Status Quo (K-6, 7-8, 9-12)
- Reconfiguration (K-5, 6-8, 9-12)
- Reconfiguration (K-6, 7-9, 10-12)
- Reconfiguration (K-8, 9-12)
- Reconfiguration (K-2, 3-8, 9-12)
- Reconfiguration (K-6, 7-12)

For the responses as to how the people felt about each option as a solution to the enrollment issues there were 5 options correlated to a number: (Scale: 1 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Disagree, 5 = Strongly Disagree.)

The chart below shows overall average (first row) as well as the breakdown by sub group.

	Status Quo	K-5, 6-8, 9-12	K-6, 7-9, 10-12	K-8, 9-12	K-2, 3-8, 9-12	K-6, 7-12
Total	3.7	2	4.3	4.5	4	4.5
P/G	3.6	2	4.3	4.6	4	4.7
Com	3.8	2.5	4.1	4.6	3.9	4.4
Stu	3.4	1.9	4	4	4	3.8
Teach	3.4	1.9	4.5	4.7	4	4.6
Nteach	3.7	1.8	5	4.9	4.3	4.9

The chart below shows the count for each category to reveal the make-up of the average.

	Status Quo	K-5, 6-8, 9-12	K-6, 7-9, 10-12	K-8, 9-12	K-2, 3-8, 9-12	K-6, 7-12

SA Count	19	116	12	7	15	8
A Count	26	49	11	4	14	7
N Count	50	21	20	17	40	16
D Count	40	13	41	32	42	35
SD Count	89	26	141	165	114	159

The chart below shows the percentage that correlates to the count of the previous chart (based on 226 participants).

	Status Quo	K-5, 6-8, 9- 12	K-6, 7-9, 10-12	K-8, 9-12	K-2, 3-8, 9- 12	K-6, 7-12
SA %	8%	51%	5%	3%	7%	4%
A %	12%	22%	5%	2%	6%	3%
N %	22%	9%	9%	8%	18%	7%
D %	18%	6%	18%	14%	19%	15%
SD %	39%	12%	62%	73%	50%	70%

The chart below shows the combined counts of Strongly Agree/Agree and Strongly Disagree/Disagree.

	Status Quo	K-5, 6-8, 9- 12	K-6, 7-9, 10-12	K-8, 9-12	K-2, 3-8, 9- 12	K-6, 7-12
SA/A ct.	45	165	23	11	29	15
SD/D ct.	129	39	182	197	156	194

The chart below shows the combined percentages of Strongly Agree/Agree and Strongly Disagree/Disagree.

	Status Quo	K-5, 6-8, 9-12	K-6, 7-9, 10-12	K-8, 9-12	K-2, 3-8, 9-12	K-6, 7-12
SA/A %	20%	73%	10%	5%	13%	7%
SD/D %	57%	17%	81%	87%	69%	86%