

Seward Schools Site-Based Council
Meeting Minutes - September 5, 2013 - 6:30 PM
Seward High School, Seward Middle School, Seward Elementary School

Present: Mica Van Buskirk, Emily Brockmon, Raylynn Zweifel, Jason Bickling, Trevan Walker, David Kingsland, Alan D. Nickell, Myla Liljemark, Lynn Hohl, Reuben Miranda, Justine Pechuzal, Julie Lindquist, Nadene Brown, Maya Moriarty, Stephanie Cronin, Heidi Zemach, Wolfgang Kurtz, Laura Hensley, Amy Hankins, Linda Ferkinhoff, Leigh Ray

Call to Order: 6:30 PM

Approval of Minutes: May 2013 minutes approved

Additions to Agenda: Justine Pechuzal (mural)

Public Comments:

Laura Hensley (Friends of Jesse Lee Home)

- The film festival went well, with more than 100 people attending.
- On September 27 at the Seward Community Library, there will be a community reception and 65% design unveiling from 6-8 PM.
- We're working on updating the science curriculum to meet current standards.
- We hired two people from AmeriCorps--one to oversee healthy lifestyles, the clinic, and lunch; one to be the activities coordinator (who will coordinate with Seward High School and the City of Seward)
- We met with KPBSD last week to discuss options.

Nadine Brown (Common Core concerns from a parent)

Ms. Brown stated that she has been hearing a lot about the Common Core Standards and has questions. She says she is well read about it and finds that there is a lot of negativity surrounding the Standards. She quoted someone who holds a PhD who reviewed the Alaska State Standards and says it only prepares students for a 2-year community college. Ms. Brown doesn't want students to be guinea pigs and doesn't want them to suffer as these Standards are implemented in Alaska.

Trevan Walker commented that he just attended a workshop at a KPBSD meeting about the standards. He says the standards are the "science of teaching" and how the teachers implement them is the "art of teaching."

Mica Van Buskirk added this subject to the agenda for the Site Council's October meeting.

Reports from Student Representatives:

Middle School (no representative).

High School – *Emily Brockman*

- High School sports, such as swimming, cross country, volleyball, and football, are keeping everyone very busy.
- Many other activities are underway, such as debate, the National Ocean Bowl, Battle of the Books, and National Honor Society
- All student council representatives from the District will meet on Sept. 24th at the Alaska SeaLife Center. Lunch will be served.

- September 24th is a busy day, with a home football game against Valdez, cross-country regions, and Homecoming.
- The High School is hoping to start a Pep Club.
- New door restrictions are underway at the school for safety reasons. Emily states that students are okay with it.

Old Business

Football (Trevan Walker): We had 23 kids dressed out for football. Because the coach resigned, Officer Nickell has stepped in as the volunteer coach for now. There is a signed Memorandum of Agreement with the newly formed, local referee association. We have only two more home games! Go support your team! We still need referees for volleyball and basketball, and it would be nice to have local referees, as we must pay mileage and hotel expenses to bring in referees.

Bus Drivers: We are in need of more bus drivers in order to cover all the schools' field trips and activities.

New Business

School Updates

Elementary School (David Kingsland):

- This year we have 14 classroom teachers.
- Our total enrollment is about 14 below projections.
- We have about 54 Kindergartners, and they are accommodated in three classrooms (two full Kindergartens and one half first/half Kindergarten).
- Our scheduling this year allows for common planning time (grade-alike).

Middle School (Jason Bickling):

- The enrollment projections were 77, and currently we're at 83 (45 of them are 8th graders).
- We are running on the same schedule as last year, with one unallocated .5 FTE, which allows us to continue our 4 electives.
- We have the same staff as last year, but new classroom aides.
- Also, we're offering a new elective 2nd quarter called LEGO Robotics and are hiring a person to teach it, including setting up a Robotics lab and keeping it going. It will be a 5th elective offered during the 2nd quarter.
- We have music this year, with Breighley Sexton, the music teacher, designing how it looks (with band/choir).
- This year, we will be doing "Ed Performance" testing that provides benchmarks, which will be tied to teacher evaluations.

High School (Trevan Walker):

- The enrollment projections were 175, and currently we're at 183.
- FTE is the same as last year (with 10 FTE in general education, including a school counselor and an activities director).

- Project *Lead the Way* begins with an engineering class being offered by Stephanie Cronin. High School Representative Emily Brockman says she is very excited about the course Mrs. Cronin is offering because “it’s something new for me, and it’s challenging for me. I’m really excited that Ms. Cronin is teaching this class!” Mrs. Cronin adds that this could be college credit at UAA, but that is still in the works.
- As far as the master schedule, Trevan said that the .5 FTE that the Middle School used last year came back to the high school and fit nicely into the schedule without having to remove anything to fit it in.
- Mica Van Buskirk asked what it takes for the District to reconsider staffing (i.e., add more teachers). Trevan replied that it would take a 10-day hard count (students present), but even then, the District has 44 sites to consider and prioritize. Jason Bickling added that official count is in October and is the number used for state funding.
- Julie Lindquist asks about Career & Technical Education, and Trevan replies that the shop improvement project has gone to bid, and there will be four new welding booths (self-contained) - these are on order. No construction academies are being planned, but that doesn’t eliminate it as a possibility. Judy Odhner’s food class will be offered for two semesters and is already funded.

Student Safety/Security Enhancements

KPBSD recieved \$1.5 million toward school security enhancements. All classroom locks will be changed so they can be locked from the inside--in every classroom across the District. David Kingsland said that the elementary school has been on the list for a window in office for 13 years. Lynn Holh said that the greatest needs get funded first. Several people commented that it is not a very transparent process. Mica Van Buskirk proposed that all three schools get together and write a letter to emphasize our needs for views from each office to the doorways to monitor who comes in. Trevan Walker said that Seward High and Kenai Middle have same problem with offices located away from doors, and so additional security measures at the entrances have been requested.

Capital Improvement Plan walk-throughs will be happening at our schools soon. This is when District representatives walk with principals through their buildings to talk about and take notes on problems with things such as lighting, traffic patterns, and entrance safety. Then schools get prioritized and a report is issued sometime in October. Lynn Hohl says that the Site Council has the ability to give input on capital improvements. Mica Van Buskirk said she would be willing to write a letter. She requests copies of past Capital Improvement Plans from each principal. Officer Nickells speaks up and says he has huge list of safety improvements that are needed, and he’s willing to send it to Mica Van Buskirk. Additionally, a School Board Policy was passed this summer that promotes surveillance at schools.

David Kingsland mentioned improvements at the elementary school, which include visitors’ passes, having parents drop lunches at the school office for delivery as opposed to walking to the classroom themselves.

City Of Seward Construction Update

RE: *The construction happening across the road from the elementary school.*

Mica Van Buskirk talked to city officials Ron Long and John Foutz about the construction that is happening across from the elementary school. Mica Van Buskirk asked David Kingsland if he has had any questions or complaints from parents of elementary students, and he replied that he hasn't had any. Currently truck traffic is closed between 7:00 and 8:00 AM, and between 3:00 and 3:30 PM. The project end will be sometime in 2015. The city officials said they'd like to have landscaping suggestions. The builder is Harmon Construction, and there should be a building shell up by freeze-up. The entrance/exit is directly across from the entrance/exit of the elementary school, creating a four-way in/out. Officials stated that the driveway had to be placed there so that deliveries could locate the new building by its street address. The Seward Planning & Zoning Commissioners recommended at their last hearing that the city works with the Site Council. There is a city council meeting next Monday, and council members are asked to be present, if possible, to testify.

High School/Middle School Gate

RE: *Why does this gate remained closed?*

Trevan Walker said that six years ago, this was a big issue and everyone settled on the current traffic pattern. "I welcome talking about opening it up full time and maybe changing the community perception about it," he said. Further, he noted that the campus belongs to the Borough and so is private property. Basically, opening that gate for through traffic would be like having folks use your driveway as a throughway. To really make this happen, it would take a land swap, and the road would then need to meet Department of Transportation standards, such as two lanes with yellow/white paint, curbs, and gutters. The questions are: 1.) Would the Borough be willing to do a land swap? 2.) Would the City of Seward be willing to accept the swap, which would add to its upkeep and maintenance responsibilities? Clearly there are major logistical issues to deal with in order for the gate to be opened. Finally, it would create new safety issues, because it is high pedestrian area.

Site Council Newsletter

RE: *Increased Publicity (Mica Van Buskirk)*

Could we create an e-mail listserve? We need regular updates on Seward City News. During the first week of school, a handout went home with students about the Site Council so that parents could sign up for regular updates by returning it to the school. These were collected and returned to Mica Van Buskirk, who said that she hopes to increase awareness of who we are and how we can help. "I feel there is a big disconnect between the community and the Site Council," she said.

There is a STAR Form on the Borough's website, which is a form for parents when they have a concern that they wish to communicate to their local Site Council.

Justine Pechuzal & Bethany Waggoner Project

Justine spoke at the Site Council meeting about a new, exciting proposal to add a mural to the high school. She and Bethany Waggoner, the high school's art teacher, approached Trevan Walker about enhancing the Schoolyard Habitat project at high school with a mural to beautify the buildings, although the funds would not come from the Habitat project. Funding is being sought elsewhere. The buildings are owned by the

Borough, and the school district is just a tenant in it. If the Site Council approves of the mural idea, Trevan can bring it to the District as a first step toward approval. The project is in its early planning stages, and an emphasis is being placed on the mural's creation happening through collaboration with students. The theme would be the local environment and/or habitats. AI Plan would be interested in involving science students in it. Justine would work on site for two weeks. The students would help paint the mural, in conjunction with Bethany's art classes.

Reports from Administrator's, School Board Rep & PTSA Rep

Administrator Reports

David Kingsland (Seward Elementary School)

- This year, we received more staffing allocation for our Title 1 pre-school and additional office support .5 FTE.
- Carl Locke retired as the head custodian and Blake Wooten, a local barber who also has custodial experience, is taking Carl's position (full time). One other half-time custodian has been hired (Mike Glaser.)
- We have a new certified librarian, Julie Deopken.
- All three schools share the newly hired psychologist.
- We have many activities, including band, running club, Student Leadership Team, and the Schoolyard Habitat (wrapped up for this season to pick up in spring).
- The old bike rack is being replaced with new one.
- September 18th is an early release day for students at 1:30 for collaboration time with staff. They have an agenda with training.

Jason Bickling (Seward Middle School)

- We have a soccer and cross-country meet at home on the 13th.
- We're without a custodian temporarily, so I'm filling in.
- We are hiring an ELL tutor and a teacher for our LEGO Robotics elective.
- Slightly more than half of all students' parents came to the Open House.
- We will offer Battle of the Books again this year.
- We have new math textbooks.

Treva Walker (Seward High School)

- New staff: SPED teacher Logan Shulz - brand new to profession and is a great fit!
- Shoshannah Brasher, a certified teacher, was a SPED aide in the high school two years ago. She left for a teaching job at Homer Middle School. I have hired her to replace Carlyn Nichols as our new math/science teacher.

- Sept 21st at 10 a.m. -- there will be a new, fun event! The Halk Walk fundraiser has evolved into the SeaHawk Scamper - a color run! There will be six paint stations, and runners pass through the paint gauntlet to be sprayed with cornstarch-based green & gold paint. Sponsors can paint them from head to toe! The Scamper begins at the Alaska SeaLife Center and ends at the high school. \$50 to join (but you'll get painted) or \$25 for youth. Contact Sami King at the high school for more information or to sign up.
- We're looking for an advisor to lead a Pep Club at the high school We are aiming for a formal, organized club, in which students can earn & bank pep club points toward away trips. Students could earn a spirit point, thought up by Carol Thomassen, and these would be club points earned by attending games, helping with concessions, and so on. The goal is to transport club members to away games to cheer!! There will be a stipend for the advisor/leader.

Site Improvement Plans/Goals

Treva Walker (Seward High School)

- SHS Improvement Plan (Follows a report given to the School Board in May): We are working toward becoming a hybrid high school. Each teacher submits a technology integration plan that details how his or her class is available online to students. We're changing the paradigm as to how, when, and where students access info. At this point, only one teacher is not using a blog or Moodle, but is getting there. So almost all of our courses are digital.
- We are creating a goal for attendance and chronic absences. If a student misses so many instructional minutes, the Intervention Team could pull credit from the student. We have adopted the policy, as follows: seven absences and a letter goes home. After 15 absences, a parent comes in for a discussion with the Intervention Team, who may sanction the student (athletic eligibility, disenroll student). Options include offering credit recovery or receiving an F. Our tardy policy also adds up minutes late to effect attendance. We want students to graduate and not drop out, so we maintain a *credit acquisition strategy--thus the availability of courses online*.
- We've been directed to create a *standards implementation goal*. During teacher inservices at the start of the school year, we began the process. For example, the State of Alaska adopted content literacy for all core subjects, which means that all teachers (including math, science, etc.) are responsible for teaching literacy. So I had to teach math/science teachers how to teach reading/writing. Jason Bickling met with math teachers to go over the new math standards. This work will continue on Sept. 18th (an early release day). Teachers will use specific processes during professional learning communities and will come up with assessment strategies together to make sure new standards are being met.

Jason Bickling (Seward Middle School)

- The Alaska Schools Performance Index will require us to change what we do in practice.
- We will focus on improving attendance.
- We will focus on certain subgroups (disabled, Native, English Language Learners).
- When teaching subject areas and preparing students for standardized assessments, we need to consider the fact that we are a transient population. Now if a student enrolls at any point right up to the day of the standardized tests, his or her scores will be included on our results. We have no control over what they learned prior to coming to us, but we will nevertheless be responsible for their score. [*This is true at all schools.*]

- We are open to trying new things. We're trying to think outside of the box.

David Kingsland (Seward Elementary School)

- This year, we looked at longitudinal data and discovered that writing skills spiked in 4th grade. We want to focus on writing and see if we can create an overall increase in writing skills for each student as he or she travels across the grades (and not just in 4th grade).

Julie Lindquist comments after the principals' reports, and says, "Hooray that writing and reading are becoming accountable in science and math."

School Board Report

Lynn Hohl (School Board Representative)

- We have a Board meeting Monday in Homer, and the worksessions are packed.
- One goal is to discuss district funding.
- Another goal is to discuss student performance here compared to national student performance.
- Also under discussion is the improvement of capital projects & borough maintenance between both the School District and the Borough.
- A small school formula decision will be handed down in November.
- The Board approved the KPSAA mandatory Borough meets for cross-country/track.
- About *Vocational Academies*: There is a district-wide plan, so if anybody is getting Academies, Seward should be getting one too.

PTSA Report

Maya Moriarty (PTSA)

- The Imagination Library fundraisers were a success (boat tour, trail run).
- School Open Houses went well, but there were not a lot of membership applications filled out. However, applications were placed in each family packet (which were either picked up at Open House or went home with students afterward). This may generate more memberships. Applications should also be a part of teacher newsletters.
- There will be a membership drive at end of month.
- Land lawsuit should be active in 2014.
- The Believe Fundraiser is going on.

Round Table:

- Mica Van Buskirk explained the handout she provided to attendees at the start of the meeting. A 2014 legislative priorities list and school performance index were included.
- Maya Moriarty thanks Mica Van Buskirk for her hard work.

Meeting Dismissed: 9:00 PM

Next Meeting: October 10, 2013, 6:30 PM, Middle School Professional Development Room