

# **BOARD BRIEFING..... October 31, 2008**

Yakima Public Schools District Number 7

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors of the Yakima Public Schools met October 31, 2008, at M. L. King Jr. Elementary, opening with the Pledge of Allegiance. A brief summary of the meeting follows.

**M. L. King Jr. Elementary School Presentation** – Phil Vasquez, MLK Principal, reported grade-level teams focused on data to determine staff development and interventions for 2008-09, resulting in an update of the school improvement plan. The staff agreed this year to increase professional development for math and they set math expectations for instruction and students. MLK is maintaining Reading First practices with interventions for every child through Tier I, Tier II and Tier III. Walk to Read is in place for ability grouping, and reading interventions were restructured to help ‘strategic’ students first, then ‘intensive’ students. Growth is taking place at every level and the achievement gap is closing despite MLK’s challenging demographics. Successnet and Investigations End of Unit math assessments are used to identify learning gaps and design appropriate interventions for each individual student. Two students demonstrated math and ACTIVE reading strategies. Music students performed on Recorders for the board, demonstrating levels of achievement they have gained through ‘Recorder Karate,’ a self-motivating program. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant provides before- and after-school programs for students and includes work with community partnerships and parents. MLK’s PTA is a strong group with many involved parents. Recent parent conferences resulted in 100% participation for most classes. Examples of MLK’s community partnerships included Team Home Depot’s donation of a safety fence; Mercy Theatres availability as a secondary site, and the Yakima Valley Mall’s support of MLK’s science fair. A monolingual mother shared about the positive changes in her student since enrollment at MLK, adding the school is friendly and feels safe. The board indicated it is evident that the staff’s energy and enthusiasm translates to the classroom. Mr. Vasquez encouraged the board to visit MLK.

## **Issues of Board Interest** –

- Superintendent Soria shared the precautionary measures the district was taking on a potential security threat received that morning.
- Bunker Frank suggested schools share data on how summer interventions help students.
- Parents honored Mr. Soria at the district’s recent Spanish Community Forum.
- Martha Rice attended NSBA’s recent Technology and Education Conference in Seattle where attendees saw an impressive array of new technology being used to enhance instruction.

Following a break, the board reconvened at Central Services for a work study session on the following topics:

**Report on Possible Community Survey** – Board member John Vornbrock reported on discussions with ‘For a Better Tomorrow’ about a potential community survey of voters related to a bond. The survey would be targeted for completion by early December.

**Superintendent Search Discussion** – Dennis Ray of Northwest Leadership Associates joined the board to review data results from the online web survey and focus groups of staff and community members. The goal was to finalize the Leadership Profile for the recruitment brochure. Mr. Ray indicated that many of the same themes emerged from the focus groups as in the web survey, with more depth. Discussion took place with regard to the value of a task-oriented leader versus a relationship-oriented leader. The board agreed that it needs a superintendent who is high functioning in both areas. The recruitment brochure is targeted for completion by mid-November.

The board agreed the Interview Advisory Committee will be made up of 22-24 people, and be 50% staff and 50% community/parents. For staff members, the board will determine the groups from which it would like to draw membership, and then ask that those staff groups name a representative. The Interview Advisory Committee will be asked to observe all interviews and provide very specific feedback to the board on the interviews and their impressions of the superintendent candidates. The interviews will occur in open public session, and others will be invited to attend and provide feedback as well.