

**South Anchorage High School
Academic Programs/Smaller Learning Communities Committee
December 18, 2003
Old Dimond High School Library**

Chuck Fannin opened the meeting at 3:30pm.

New members introduced themselves.

Mr. Fannin indicated that the Academic Belief Statements that the whole committee had developed in the first meeting still needed to be approved by the committee. If time was available at the end of the meeting, the statements could be reviewed and approved at that time.

Richie Goldstein, a Social Studies teacher at West High School, gave a forty minute power point presentation on the International Baccalaureate Program that WHS plans to implement next fall. Mr. Goldstein asserted that the IB Program is the best program designed to prepare students for postsecondary education. He then covered the major components of the program – the six academic group courses that need to be taken and the types of examinations that are required of each. The other required components – Theory of Knowledge Class, Creativity, Action, and Service requirement, and the 4000 word extended essay were also briefly described. Mr. Goldstein asserted that the required teacher training is critical and necessary. He also indicated that each school approved for a program does a significant amount curriculum and class design for their own program. He indicated that he would be willing to work with SAHS, if we decided to pursue an IB Program. Mr. Fannin said that he would like to pursue a program at SAHS. Teachers who would be willing to teach in the program would have to be identified and the funding necessary for training and other initial start-up costs and fees would have to be secured prior to officially applying for a program.

Rhonda Gardner, the NCLB Coordinator for the District, gave an overview of the Smaller Learning Communities initiative that the District has undertaken in the last few years. She served as the Smaller Learning Communities Coordinator for two different high schools and is one who has helped take the lead with this initiative since its inception. She briefly reviewed the five key findings relative to the tension and challenges associated with restructuring the large comprehensive high schools. She said that when the District discussed the restructuring with parents and students, both groups were adamant that core academic and elective offerings not be limited by the efforts to create an educational structure that would be smaller and more personal for students. Questions and commentary followed. The most common “Multi-Grade House Model” was described. Mr. Kniefel, the Student Government teacher from SHS, indicated that the “Academic Houses” were starting to replace the class (seniors, juniors etc.) structure in certain cases. Some parents expressed their concern that this may not be the direction that the schools should go. There were a variety of committee members who expressed opinions in favor of the “House Model,” as well as those who had reservations about it.

Lian Crabb, currently a Social Studies teacher at Service High School, gave a brief presentation on the Service Seminar School. She had taught in the program for three years, but decided to leave it because she was spending too much time teaching out of her subject area. She said that she supports the program, but had concerns with the way it was designed when she was teaching in it, particularly in light of the “Highly Qualified Teacher” component of the federal NCLB. Several parents and students spoke in favor of the program. One parent indicated that she had a student in the program but could not tell the difference between those classes and regular classes. Another indicated that instead of referring to it as the Seminar Program, we should pursue a program that was centered around the Socratic Seminar teaching methodology

Mr. Fannin once again indicated that identifying teachers who were willing and excited about teaching in the specialized programs, ensuring that the proper training was available and taken, and securing the necessary funding were all critical elements that needed to be in place prior to initiating new programs at the school.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:10 PM and the group was reminded that the next committee meeting would be held at 7:00 PM on January 13 at the old Dimond Library. He also indicated that the group should review the Academic Belief Statements and approve them at that meeting.