

**Steller Parent Group Meeting Notes**  
**Nov. 7, 2006 @ 5 PM**

**Motions/Actions Summary**

- Consensus that it's a good idea to keep the Temple of the Bean going and that we need a student/parent/teacher committee to plan the way forward.
  
- Approved a change moving the Escript tax ID # to the Parent Group and putting those funds into the budget process for annual expenditures that is reviewed and approved by the Parent Group.
  
- Approved funding the \$250 math competition funding request.
  
- Approved the proposed 2006/2007 \$7,000 Parent Group Budget as presented.
  
- Requested a report from parent participants and Karen from the staff/student/parent Wednesday service learning proposal working group and Karen for the next meeting (Dec. 5).
  
- Requested an article on the Wednesday Proposal be put in the next Steller Yeller.

**I. Welcome and Suggestions for Next Parent Group Meeting**

Sharon welcomed meeting attendees.

**II. Report from the Principal**

Full Day Registration - Karen said she had been collecting data from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter registration to see if a full day registration process was still warranted for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarters. She said that some parents have expressed concerns about this. She asked parents to come to Op Group to express their thoughts and let students know the impact these days have on parents (note –this issue was discussed again at the end of the meeting).

Sale of the Temple of the Bean - Karen said that there had been some thought about selling the Temple of the Bean (TOB) espresso machine, as it's not being used and is losing value. She said its operation requires parent supervision/volunteering/ support and student involvement, as well as a bit of a business plan. A food handler's license is needed for cooking, but re-heating of pre-cooked food like soups, etc. is an option. Should we try to run it in the morning and noon timeframes as before or just for special events? Sharon asked for a show of hands and the vote showed consensus on action that it's a good idea to keep the TOB going and that we need a student/parent/teacher committee to plan the way forward for its renewed operation.

Artist in Residence - Karen reported that a core group of teacher and parents had completed a successful grant application for an Artist in Residence. The artist will be a stunt drama specialist.

Vending Machine and Escrip Income - Karen said that the vending machine income has dropped about 75% this year since the implementation of the new food guidelines. Traditionally, this money has been used by the principal to provide for student scholarships, supplies (toner & paper for computer classes, etc.), and testing snacks, etc. So far, since August and through to the beginning of November, about \$700 has come in from Escrip and the plan is to use this money to supplement the lost vending fund. Past Parent Group Chair Alyse Galvin explained that the intention from Parent Group when originally signing up for Escrip was to use Steller's tax ID number because the new non-profit status for the Parent Group was still in process. The intention was for Escrip funds to be transferred to the Parent Group once it was incorporated. Sharon said it would be good for people to understand how this money is spent and to provide input on expenditures. She asked for a written list of budget categories from Karen so the Parent Group could understand the process and budgeting.

Karen offered to transfer the fund to Parent Group if they would like. Originally ASD did say that they would help compensate for vending machine funding losses, but since the budget cuts, all bets are off. One parent asked how do we do what's most beneficial and gets the most people involved and vested – if funds come in in a specific way and people are able to give input that's likely the best. The Parent Group heard a motion and second to change the Escrip tax ID # to the Parent Group and put those funds into the budget process for annual expenditures reviewed and approved by the Parent Group.

Alarm and Security System - Karen said the security system should be functional in one week. They have been locking the south doors for lunch and in the afternoon as a security precaution.

Math Competitions - Jenn reported she was working with students on math competitions. One, "Math Counts," a program for junior high students has been meeting at lunchtime. She asked for funding for the state chapter and to purchase tee-shirts for the team. The high school competition is "American Mathematical Contest." Jen's goal is to have 20 students take the test this year. She said her total request for both competitions was for \$250 and the financial request form discussed and approved at the last Parent Group meeting had been filled out. The Parent Group heard a motion and second to fund the \$250 math competition request and passed it. Karen complimented Jen on all her efforts.

Health Education Classes - Shannon spoke about her teaching efforts for health education and said she would like to teach a class "Starting the Conversations" - a two hour teen health night with a possible date of Tuesday, Feb. 13, 2007. A class description follows:

Uncertain what is happening in health class? Questions from your teen at home? Do you see issues starting to surface? This presentation is designed to help clarify what ASD teaches, identify resources that are available in the community to aid your discussions, and provide lots of ideas and background as to how you can approach these topics with sensitivity and accuracy. Human sexual development, typical behaviors and behavior trends will be covered. Model lessons will be discussed with opportunity to share

in group discussions. I would like you to come with your teen if possible, but its not needed, bring your questions!

### **III. Report from the Treasurer**

Mary Tanner reported that 74 families had contributed \$6,350 so far with \$1,657.50 carried over from last year. The proposed new budget is set at \$7,000. For tax purposes, the Parent Group needs receipts for the \$100 grants to teachers and the Parent Group asked Larry to let the staff know. The Parent Group heard a motion and second and approved the proposed 2006/2007 \$7,000 Parent Group Budget as presented.

### **IV. Volunteers Needed**

A. Teacher Luncheons – next one Dec. 12 - contact Carol Waters

B. Steller Auction Committee Co-Chair still needed – contact Ingrid Parish.

### **V. Old Business**

A. Newsletter Progress

1. Student volunteers

2. Status of Community Page - Karen said she put out a request for information from students, but she has received no real response yet. A student community page is the goal – to give the students a forum to express themselves to showcase written work, sports, volunteering, etc. Support for this concept was also frequently noted in the parent surveys. Parents asked if we could get Op Group notes onto the web page. Basically, if there's an article that meets the deadline, it gets in. Usually the articles are written by Karen, Nurse Kathy, and others. Several people signed up to help with the Steller Yeller on the back of the directory application.

B. Directory Committee Report – Teresa Scott

Work has been initiated and is on-going.

C. Discussion on Progress of the Service Learning Proposal for Wednesdays

Jean presented information on the proposal as a staff member who had worked with the students who developed it. She explained that the proposal is to slightly extend the M, T, Th., & Fri. schedule and dedicate Wed. to three modules of one and one-half hours each, focusing on larger projects. Jean provided a handout of a sample Wed. schedule lasting one quarter. For a copy of it and other information see

<http://www.asdk12.org/schools/steller/pages/specevents/wedschudle/wedsche.html>.

A copy of the student Microsoft PowerPoint about the proposal can be downloaded at

<http://www.asdk12.org/schools/steller/pages/parents/parents.html>.

Under the Wednesday schedule, students would first meet briefly in Counseling Group with their advisor to set their three-module schedule for the day. The advisor would have a contract with the student defining the goals for the module. This contract would also be a way for parents to understand and track Wed. activities.

The first module – *the learning support module* - starts right after Counseling Group and the scheduling of the students' day. There can be more than one class going on in a classroom during a module. So, in Jean's example, there are 34 places for students to be in small groups of around 10 or less. This is also a good forum for peer taught classes. Other options include service work, extra academic help (including peer-taught tutoring), exploration of various passions for independent learning, etc.

The second module – *the service learning module* – is where students do community service in a variety of ways. There are many options and they don't need to be done off site. Students can look for grant money, write for the Steller Old Yeller Community Page, do Recycling Group work, work in the Peace Garden, join a group going across the street to North Star Elementary for tutoring, playground or class support, sew/knit creating things for service, working on the op board and ad board as well as serving the community.

The third module – *the independent learning module* – is an opportunity to focus on independent learning processes such as Passages, Independent Study and Self Directed Learning in areas selected by the student. This provides an opportunity for student presentations, celebrations of their presentations such as passages, internships, etc. that don't currently have an easy forum. Jean clarified that for peer taught classes, this time slot would provide an opportunity for peer instructors to get advice from teachers. Teachers appreciated the schedule as it gave time for them to better support students.

Jenn reported on the concept from the math teacher perspective. One concern is that while the minutes with students are not different, they are losing a contact day - which is important for math. But, those kids that need it can get the support on the Wed. schedule during the support module. Karen and Larry explained that over 10 yrs ago via the North West Schools accreditation process, (took a whole year) a lot of students were not getting into advanced math classes like calculus. But Steller has changed that now putting many more students into advanced math classes. Karen highlighted the lunchtime math workshop Jenn initiated this year. Math is a subject that needs learning, processing, - needs regular presentation. Larry said that as a teacher this schedule takes from personal time i.e. through the need for traveling to off-site visits, etc.

Parents discussed the fact that there have been some rumors that this was another day off for the kids, or more unstructured time, and with intensives and 4 days of registration, etc., no more unstructured time was needed. Many parents expressed their feeling that the information provided in Jean's handout and from the other teachers who spoke had shown that the proposal provided some better and interesting options. They also expressed support for a pilot project to do it part way – its exciting but scary. Shannon expressed support for the idea of a pilot project saying we should try it out.

Karen clarified that this is not a simple schedule change, it's a calendar change that would need to go through the ASD Education Superintendent and the Alaska Department of Education, etc., and it can't be done this year. Alyse said that period 7 is not working and community service is not happening, and that she had seen much more accountability

for community service programs at another optional program. She said she'd like to try to do this proposal this year under a registration day, but the concept needs strong support from administration, teachers, parents and students so we make it truly a whole community effort. Gary Steele said two years ago as a new parent he saw so many ideas being raised but none of them were coming to fruition, so he worked to get a strategic plan developed. We have a mission, purpose, and core values, to give us ways to address issues. How does this proposal fit with the mission, core values and goals of the school. He would like to see it fit into the strategic plan.

Another parent asked - how does this proposal go through a decision making process? The final decisions are made by a vote of the Ad Board to advise Karen, the principal. Traditionally, the Steller principal always goes with Ad Board advice. But, the final decision of the Ad Board comes after input from the Op Group, teachers, and the Parent Group. Each of these three groups review issues and feed advice into the Ad Board for consideration in their final decision making process in passing recommendations to the principal.

Parents reiterated the desire to see this as an opportunity to bring the community together. Karen reported that a small group of parents, teachers, and Karen are meeting and getting together with the proposing students to talk about the proposal's problems or solutions to them. Barbara Wohlforth said that she wanted to clarify that this proposal can potentially take place in some manner and that its not the time to say it can go either way yet. We have the ASD support as a successful school, we have the blue ribbon, but it can't happen without parent involvement. Another parent stressed that there needs to be more communication with the students and parents on this idea as there's no information out there, so its just stories. Another pointed out that there are four days in the calendar that are begging to have this proposal happen. While every Wed. may not be possible, these four days are there, as well as the 7<sup>th</sup> period option. At the same time, we can't force a student to do things like this... Sharon asked for a report on the proposal from the group of parents that are meeting with the students and Karen for the next meeting. The group also asked for an article on the proposal in the next Steller Yeller. Shannon offered to write an article for the Yeller. There is an all-community meeting in January where this can be discussed further as well. Karen and teachers have been developing a pros and cons list and would welcome more ideas for the list from parents. The list can go to the parent group at its next meeting. Karen will collect ideas from all interested parties.

## **V. New Business**

### **A. Strategic Plan**

Karen said that Steller had choir funding for a seventh period choir, but they need a teacher for it. The strategic planning committee meets regularly and some revisions to the plan such as parent expectations will go to Ad Board tomorrow.

**B. Registration Process** – a road map for new parents. This is an effort to get information on how to help parents help their students with registration. Course descriptions are posted in the hall and on the Steller website.

C. Agenda items for next time:

- Letter of recognition to Matt and Reid for coming to the Parent Group as well as a positive generic certificate for others.

- Request for renewed effort in getting the word out to parents more than just the parent meetings, i.e., via the robot caller, and other options.

- Karen will report on the work on taking data to see if registration was an efficient method or not. She said that she was asking for parent volunteers to come to Op Group to explain the need and the effect on parents. The group also discussed the idea that if the students are voting for a day off with no educational component, then they're not being responsible independent learners. Right now it looks like the majority of the registration changes are 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders. These are really the kids the least needing such change – they need continuity.

- Update on the Wednesday Service Learning Proposal and a pros/cons list for it

- Computer Website Proposal

- Parent Surveys Report