

Unity

Bell Times or Bus times?

*By Olga Addae SEA President
and Brian Lindquist SEA VP*

On March 18th the Seattle School Board introduced and took action on the policy of the Transportation Service Standards for 2009-2010.

The School Board provided the following reason for their vote:

“Neighborhood stops and standardized bell times for schools are necessary to reduce travel times, enhance efficiency, and to provide an opportunity to tier buses, creating a budget reduction of \$2.2 million.”

The Transportation Service Standards state:

“START/DISMISSAL TIME SCHEDULE:

- High Schools receiving yellow school bus service:

7:45AM to 2:15PM [changed to]

8:15 AM to 2:45PM

- K-8 Schools, (See K-8 exceptions below)
[changed to]

8:15 AM to 2:45PM

- Elementary Schools (Tops & Salmon Bay K-8’s)

9:10 AM to 3:10 PM [changed to]

9:30 AM to 3:40PM

Bell times are set to minimize transportation cost...

[Schools] may request waiver...”

According to their own policy this is when schools start, **not** when buses arrive! In their haste the School Board verbally changed the long standing practice of what this policy means. The elementary work day for staff remains unchanged. The Collective Bargaining Agreement states the length of certificated elementary staff day **will not** be longer than 6.5 hours exclusive of a 30 minute lunch. It is the belief of SEA that the School Board policy cannot increase student contact time without bargaining with SEA. Therefore, the School Board must change its policy to reflect current contractual obligations.

1,350 members register concerns about SpEd

rollout

District agrees communication was lacking

It only took four days for 1,350 SEA members to sign letters to Chief Academic Officer Carla Santorno and the Interim Special Education Director asking that they begin to include classroom practitioners in the planning to change the Special Education service delivery in Seattle Public Schools.

At a meeting on March 24 District administration admitted there were communications problems and that they had focused significant attention on communicating with parents, leaving school employees in the dark about what was planned and how it would be supported.

Four SEA members, SEA President Olga Addae, SEA staff Maggie Crain and WEA Coordinator of Disabilities, Mark Anderson, met with Carla Santorno and four Special Education managers. The SEA members in attendance were West Seattle Elementary School pre-school teacher, Amy Carlson; Graham Hill Elementary Autism Inclusion teacher, Shelley Hurley; Dunlap Elementary general education teacher, Nancy Porada and Thornton Creek Alternative School’s Autism teacher, Teresa Swanson. We presented the signed letters and SEA members gave examples of the significant communication problems in the rollout thus far.

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Special Ed Rollout (cont'd from p.1)

As the meeting progressed it still seemed that there are not clear answers to many questions about the roll out.

"The administration was not willing to back off their current rollout," said Addae. "They minimize the changes for next year saying that they only affect 67 kindergarten students." This is the first year of a 5 - 6 year implementation plan. The lack of communication and the miscommunication thus far leaves members feeling disrespected and dismissed. To address concerns about what will be expected of employees under the new model and to ensure that the promised services to students will be there, our members want a seat at the table to decide how this will rollout.

The answer to that proposal is still up in the air. Special Ed managers say they are interested in participation of Special Ed and general Ed teachers on their task force, but when pushed about the power of that body, the answers are unclear.

Here's the bottom line. We believe Special Education students deserve a good education. Increasing access to general education classes is an important goal, but we want students to be successful. Therefore, SpEd students need to be placed according to their IEPs and the necessary supports must be in place. Classrooms are bulging in many schools now and with the budget axe falling, that could get worse. The new SpEd model can only be achieved with the classroom and ESA practitioners guiding the implementation. We will continue to negotiate a reasonable outcome with the District.

Our hope is that a joint implementation committee will be formed that:

- analyses changes to the Kindergarten services in 2009-10;
- collects and analyses data (other models in like districts)
- provides clear and specific information re: the supports: staffing; funding; legal guidelines; IEP and SDI responsibility; training; timelines and evaluation.
- coordinates with the Joint Professional Development Committee.

Colleagues Request for Sick Leave Donations

The following is a list of those in need of sick leave donations: Jodie Davis- McGilvra, Victor Perkins, Debra Sund, Sandra Kim- Wing Luke, Fualaau Areta- South Lake, Leyna Lavinthal- T.T. Minor, and Heather Graves-Chavez- Beacon Hill International School.

All donations are greatly appreciated. If you can help, see your school secretary for a Sick Leave Donation Form or call Roxana Melville at 252-0293/email remelville@seattleschools.org.

Bargaining Support Team Organizers

36 SEA members gathered on March 19, 2009 to be trained in the role of being a Bargaining Support Team Organizer (BSTO). They were trained in their role and how it's different than the Association Representative (AR).

BSTO's would be a:

Primary communication link regarding bargaining status once bargaining begins, particularly if issues are unresolved heading into summer.

Sounding board to bargaining team on occasion, but not to set parameters.

To encourage member support during bargaining.

Support to prepare for potential crisis.

Means to administer member assessments if asked to do so on member support activities or on priorities (after bargaining has begun). Crisis organizing team in August if there is still no settlement.

The members were divided into zones: Northeast, Northwest, Central, Southeast, and Southwest. We discussed the importance of getting our members involved in the bargain and having a diverse group in each zone that is representative of all our members and the areas of work they perform. Zones then worked on lists to recommend members from schools which were not represented who they could contact to attend the next meeting of the BSTO on April 30th, 4-7 pm. The location will be determined and we are looking for a site centrally located for all members.

Know Your Contract

Review your Decision-Making Process

As your staff's budget process comes to an end, it's a good time to reflect on how well your school/program's site-based decision making process is working. The spirit of the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) is that those who can best decide how to serve students in a particular school/program are the people who teach and support them every day. In Article II of the all three Collective Bargaining Agreements, Section A 4. states that:

b. The BLT will be comprised at minimum of the 1) principal and 2) Five (5) elected SEA-represented staff. One of the five elected seats will be designated for and voted upon by classified SEA-represented staff. If the BLT exceeds 7 SEA members, representation of classified staff should at a minimum be two, ideally one paraprofessional and one SAEOP.

3) To the extent possible, the Building Leadership Team will reflect the racial and ethnic composition of the school staff and school community. The Building Leadership Team must be selected by a process that is supported by the SEA-represented staff at the school. The structure of the BLT will be reviewed with the staff each year. The documents created will be provided to the SEA and Education Director with a copy forwarded to the Director of Human Resources.

c. The primary function of a Building Leadership Team is to promote and facilitate the collaborative decision-making process which affects academic achievement and to identify how to support the needs of students and staff in buildings. The more specific responsibilities of the Building Leadership Team are to oversee the facilitation and development of 1) An Academic Achievement Plan (not the CSIP plan), including the configuration and structure of the school's classes and/or program offerings. 2) A school-wide professional development plan to support the Academic Achievement Plan. 3) The school's budget.

So, was your staff satisfied with the process to decide the CSIP plan, the budget, the professional development plan and any other decisions your Decision Making Process allows staff? May is a good time to have a staff brainstorming session about how to improve the process and see if you want to vote in some changes. Here are some key questions to ask yourselves:

Are the individuals on the Building Leadership Team elected per the CBA?

Is it clear who represents each individual staff member on the BLT?

Are the decisions of the BLT, the staff, the Instructional Council (high schools) and other decision-making bodies documented and shared with staff?

Is it spelled out what level of agreement there has to be on the budget?

Does the Classified staff have a representative elected by them?

Review the "who decides what" and decide if the current arrangement works.

Review the "how does the discussion of ideas occur" and decide if the current arrangement works.

Is there a notification process to staff to meetings where votes will be taken?

What's the voting procedure? Is it defined that voting occurs at a meeting; over the 24 hours following a meeting; or some other process?

Be ready to develop and approve your professional development plans and your C-SIP plans. Improve your Decision-making process in May!

Bargaining Update

The SEA Negotiations Team has been working hard on your behalf. The team has met multiple times to sift through the input given back in the fall at the various input sessions. The team has also used a contract analysis tool to review all three collective bargaining agreements for areas that are usually addressed in education union contracts. The analysis identified areas that may be missing or need improving in our own collective bargaining agreements. Recently, members have returned and we have submitted the completed classified surveys to WEA Research for tabulation and compilation; the survey for certificated substitutes was sent to SEA members and we are waiting for their return; and the certificated survey results have been compiled and given to the negotiation team.

The results of the survey provide the team with interesting information from 1,259 of our members (about 38% of the membership). Of the thirty-two areas on the survey, we discovered that certificated staff is the most dissatisfied with the district's training, or lack thereof, in working with special needs students and the inclusion program. The district's inclusion procedures and guidelines, along with the staffing of special needs and ELL students were also rated extremely low. Almost as low as special ed training, there is major dissatisfaction about the amount of budgeted expenditures for central office/administration as compared to the educational program itself.

There are major concerns about workload; the amount of top down control of your time and professional development; professional develop-

ment in general; the amount of paperwork involved with your job; the amount of meetings you have to attend; and class size and caseload. As for money items, there are issues around our total compensation and money for supplies and technology.

The negotiation team will look at crafting bargaining language that addresses those needs identified through the survey and input sessions. We will do at least one more survey and will be having feedback groups to review language that is put on to the table.

The first bargaining session with the district will occur on Friday, April 10.

State Budget Cuts

The state is looking at cutting between one billion and two billion dollars from education funding. Items that are being considered will make a difference to your classrooms, your resources available, and your pocketbooks. Here is a list of things on the chopping block:

Voter Approved Initiative 728 which provides more teachers and lower class sizes. This money will be responsible for some of the layoffs that will occur.

Voter Approved Initiative 732 which helps our schools attract and retain the best educators for our students. This initiative mandates an annual cost-of-living adjustment for all K-12 school employees. The COLA for 2009-2010 is 4.2 percent. Not giving the COLA for two years will greatly affect lifelong earnings for all of our members.

Learning Improvement Days that are used for training and professional development. The loss of these two days will result in the state giving us a 1.1 percent salary cut for certificated staff.

Funding for school employee health insurance may not be as high as previously promised. Members may have to pay more out of pocket if state funding for health care does not keep pace with inflation.

A variety of smaller programs are also being discussed. These include professional development, school safety, suicide prevention, counseling, math programs, paraprofessional training, programs for English language learners, anti-bias training, civic education, internet safety, library services, after-school programs, focus assistance for struggling schools, and many, many more worthy education programs.

CALENDAR

Upcoming Association

Meetings:

SEA Board meeting: Monday, April 13th, 4:15 p.m. at SEA. To address the body in the Speak Out section from 4:15 - 4:30, email:

rredmond@washingtonea.org

Parapro Meeting: Tuesday, April 14th, 5:00, SEA.

Rep Assembly: Monday, April 20th, 4:15 p.m., at Washington MS.

Substitute Meeting: Tues., April 28th, 4:00 at SEA.

Support Workshops for Laid Off/Displaced/Rif'd

Certificated workshops

Wednesday, April 15th, 4-6PM @JSCEE Rm. 2776.

Classified workshops

Thursday, April 9th, 4-6PM @ SEA; cover letter, site application & interviewing

Tuesday, May 26th, Certificated Job Fair, 5-7PM @JSCEE

RIF Resource Program

Thursday, May 21st 4-6PM @JSCEE Auditorium

Maximum 40 attendees for workshops. To reserve your spot, please RSVP by calling, 206.252.4800.

Upcoming Interview Trainings:

Tuesday, April 21st, 4-5pm @ JSCEE, Rm. 2700



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