



SYC Education Committee end-of-the-year report

Education is a critically important issue for almost every young person in Seattle. Over 45,000 youth attend elementary, middle, and high schools in the Seattle Public Schools District and hundreds of others attend private schools. The effects of education policy and legislation upon these students is enormous; changes dictate how well their education is funded, what that education entails, and how students are treated in schools. Education affects students to a great degree; despite this, the students themselves have almost no voice upon major decisions affecting education, neither on the school level nor the district level. Thus, the goal of the Education Committee this year has been to increase the voice of students in all areas of education, in order to give youth a chance to voice their opinions and represent themselves. In our projects this year, we aimed to further this goal.

In a continuation of a project started by last year's Education Committee, this year we nominated and saw appointed two Youth Commissioners to the Families and Education Levy Oversight Committee. We collaborated with Tre' Owes from Councilmember Burgess' office and Sid Sidorowicz of the Office for Education to work out the details of the plan; it was ultimately decided that youth would be appointed from the Seattle Youth Commission by members of the Commission to attend Levy Oversight Committee meetings as members and would report back to the Education Committee on a regular basis on the content of the meetings. On February 21, this plan was presented to the full council as Resolution 31359 (attached) and passed with no dissenting votes. Those appointed by the Commission have attended and will continue to attend Levy Oversight Committee meetings until the end of their terms as 2012-2013 Commissioners.

Next, we began to work on a project that we hoped would give youth a direct voice in their education: a survey given by teachers that would allow students to provide feedback to their teacher in order to facilitate teacher improvement. Our goal is to release a pilot program of this survey at the end of this school year at Nathan Hale High School, then to expand it to the rest of the district the following year. First, we met with representatives from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which had successfully run similar surveys in the past, to get their feedback on the issue. Members of the Education Committee then met with teachers at Nathan Hale to get their advice (attached) on the plan; based off of that advice, we began a survey process that would solicit student feedback on the process through a form (attached) administered to Hale students. The form was given to students on May 23rd, and on May 29th, the project will be presented to Nathan Hale's Student Council, and to the Professional Development Team at Nathan Hale on May 30th. Currently, we plan on releasing the survey in June of 2012.

In the future, the Education Committee hopes to further its current goal by continuing projects started this year and beginning new projects.



SYC Environment Committee end-of-the-year report

The environment is an extremely important issue that is perhaps the most difficult issue to face and attempt to fix. The environment committee feels it is of the utmost importance to teach kids of the dangers of continued damage towards the environment and of ways to help protect our world. Today's students are tomorrow's leaders and if we want the future leaders of the world to care about the environment, they must be educated now. For this reason we feel it is critical to introduce a system of composting in Seattle Schools where students can actively be involved in helping the environment. Even just throwing compost in a compost bin is a visible and active way for students to become more connected to the natural world and learn about the challenges and solutions that face us today involving the environment.

Over the course of this year we have arranged a composting system at Ingraham High School that will come into effect at the beginning of the next school year. This will involve compost bins at regular intervals throughout Ingraham near garbage bins to avoid garbage going into compost bins. It will also include a pickup of the compost and will involve students overseeing the bins to help other students get their waste into the right place. While this program may not appear to be significant, changing the habits of our school age kids even one school at a time can make a huge impact in the future. During this year the environment committee has worked closely with Dick Lily, Veronica Fincher, and Rina Fa'amoe for help and support to begin the composting program.

The biggest struggles for the environment committee have been getting in touch with the right people; finding a teacher willing to support and help run the program; and finding a group of dedicated students to watch the bins during lunch, explain to people how to use them, and help get more students involved. We overcame these issues mostly through trial and error (trying something and seeing what worked and what didn't). After a long search of being referred to teacher after teacher we eventually found a great teacher to help support the program. The group of students was mainly other environment enthusiasts and friends willing to help a buddy out.

It's important to keeping our goals realistic; we will try to extend this composting program to other schools in the city that lack a functioning compost program. The program should have regular bins available in strategic places throughout the school and rather than a compost bin in a hallway there should be an attempt to group all three types of bins together, so garbage doesn't end up in a compost bin or vice versa.