



DRAFT



City of Seattle

**FAMILIES AND EDUCATION LEVY  
LEVY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**  
Tuesday, March 11, 2008 • 2:30-4:15 p.m.  
Denny Middle School

## MINUTES

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Tim Ceis, Cheryl Chow, Kris Hildebrandt, Antonio Hopson, David Okimoto, John Pehrson

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Cleressa Brown (Denny Middle School student), Eduardo Cardoza (Denny MS student), Lin Carlson (Seattle Public Schools), Daisy Catague (Parks), Michelle Corker-Curry (SPS), TJ Cosgrove (Health), Kathleen Groshong (Human Services Dept), Michael Griffin (Denny MSSP), Becky Guerra (Finance), Kacey Guin (Office for Education), Aimee Hirabayashi (MSSP), Jennifer Hodges (Aki Kurose MS), Jill Hudson (Madison MS), Bea Kelleigh, (Human Services Dept), Jennifer Kniseley (Madison MS), Lauren Lee (HSD), Patricia Lee (Council Staff), Andhra M. Lutz (Asa Mercer MS), Maureen Massey (SPS Team Read), Ruth Medsker (SPS), Holly Miller (OFE), Erica Mullen (YMCA), Ana Ortega (Aki Kurose MS), Sid Sidorowicz (OFE), Kristi Skanderup (MSSP), Mia Williams (Denny MS)

Tim Ceis called the meeting to order, thanked Denny Middle School for hosting, and asked for introductions. The minutes of the January 22, 2008 meeting of the Levy Oversight Committee (LOC) were approved.

### **Overview of Middle School Programs**

Holly Miller reviewed the 2007-08 School Year Investment in Middle School Programs, noting that the Levy originally funded two distinct programs, Middle School Support and Out-of-School Time/Community Learning Centers. While the programs were encouraged to collaborate the first two years, the decision was made to combine the programs in the third year, setting joint outcomes. The combined program was to align efforts with current school programs and to target interventions for low-performing students. H. Miller noted that this work is cutting edge and commended middle school staff for its great work.

Ruth Medsker thanked the LOC for its generous support of the Middle School Program and noted that having targets encouraged them to stretch their thinking. She outlined three key areas of this work. First, interventions have improved both during and after school. R. Medsker noted that previously intervention were done across the board and were not tailored for individual students. Now intervention had gotten more focused and staff could be more intentional with their work. Second, the use of assessments is critical but finding ones that predict the WASL and help inform instruction has been difficult. Assessments need to be level specific to be predictive. There is a particular lack of meaningful assessments for Level 1 students. Third, Writers' Workshop has brought

instructional best practices into the middle school classrooms. Writers' works for students across all levels and is offered both during the school day and in after-school programs.

John Pehrson asked why the word intervention is used, given its medical connotation. R. Medsker answers that teachers diagnose problems students are experiencing, and use appropriate interventions to help solve the problem.

D. Okimoto asked to hear more about Writers' Workshop, given its effectiveness as an intervention. R. Medsker said that Writers' is a strategy that teaches different component of writing — for example, how to write the end of a story.

Andhra Lutz, principal of Mercer Middle School, said the Levy funding had allowed middle schools to dream big and be more intentional about their interventions. Levy dollars were used primarily to provide additional math instruction for Level 1 and Level 2 students. In addition to helping improve students' math skills, 7<sup>th</sup> period math also helped staff get to know Level 1 kids, and to connect with their families. Over 50% of Level 1 students are attending additional classes 3 times per week. One of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes is conducted in Spanish.

In addition to math, Levy funding is used to provide training and implementation of the Readers' and Writers' workshop curriculum. This curriculum, paired with School Turnaround benchmark assessments, give staff the data they need to develop meaningful interventions and to demonstrate progress.

D. Okimoto asked what data points Mercer had to demonstrate results. A. Lutz said one example was a measured increase in number sense for students participating in the math enrichment class. A. Hopson asked how much it cost to switch to the Readers'/Writers' curriculum. A. Lutz answered \$30,000 per school, which paid for training a group of teachers and materials. A. Hopson noted that while \$30,000 seems like a lot for professional development, this is a very good investment because by training a larger group of teachers it creates the critical mass needed for a cultural change in a school.

Jennifer Kniseley, assistant principal of Madison Middle School, said the Levy dollars allowed the school to engage families and that they were continuing to work on improving attendance. There has been significant outreach to families to improve attendance at the Levy funded programs. Jennifer noted that school was using the Navigator curriculum and had also incorporated a WASL-like problem of the week to allow students to practice their new schools. She said that while instruction was adjusted to each student's level, there was a need for a different curriculum for low Level 1 students. There are about 130 Level 1 math students at Madison. J. Pehrson asked if they would connect instruction back to the elementary school curriculum. J. Kniseley said yes, they were looking to the Everyday Math curriculum for Level 1 students.

Ana Ortega, principal at Aki Middle School, said that Aki is working on a paradigm shift from a teacher-focused to a student-focused approach. Aki uses a data spreadsheet with individual student information to drive instruction. Interventions include double doses of math and reading during the school day, 7<sup>th</sup> period math, individual tutoring, and break camps. Aki has seen a dramatic improvement in attendance in these programs in the 2<sup>nd</sup>

semester of the year. Ongoing review of data allows the school to keep adjusting their approach. A. Ortega's goal for Aki is to go from 24% of students meeting standard on the math WASL to 42% passing math.

Jeff Clark, principal at Denny, introduced the Mini-Metric Olympics and invited everyone to the cafeteria to participate.

### **Mini-Metric Olympics**

LOC members joined Denny Middle School students in the cafeteria to participate in the Mini-Metric Olympics. Events included the Cotton Ball Shot Put and the Paper Plate Discus. Students were asked to estimate their distance, measure their distance, and calculate the difference.

### **Denny Program Overview**

Jeff Clark said the goal of 7<sup>th</sup> period math was to make math engaging and fun. Denny starts with data analysis in the summer and continues to use data throughout the year. In addition, every student has a home visit by a school member to learn more about the child and family. Every child below standard gets an individual plan to meet their academic needs. Denny is designing its own math curriculum to meet the needs of its students. In addition to 7<sup>th</sup> period, Denny hosted break camps that have been well attended.

Two students shared their experiences with after-school programs at Denny. Eduardo Cardoza, a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at Denny, said the 7<sup>th</sup> period math has encouraged him to become an architect. Cleressa Brown, a 9<sup>th</sup> grader at Sealth, said she attended after-school programs at Denny for three years. She said the WASL camp was particularly helpful because it provided students with the opportunity to ask questions about the test beforehand. She said she was taking the 10<sup>th</sup> grade WASL early.

J. Clark noted that matching students with programs is based not only on academic needs but addresses social and emotional needs as well. For example, Denny decreased 7<sup>th</sup> period math to twice per week and increased enrichment programs to three times in order to improve student attachment to school.

Cheryl Chow asked the student if he had recruited any of his friends to attend 7<sup>th</sup> period math. He answered that he had encouraged his friends to join but that they were reluctant.

Kris Hildebrandt asked how information was captured and shared on individual students. J. Clark answered that the "Source" can be accessed across the district. K. Hildebrandt asked about the spreadsheet Aki presented and if it was part of the data system. A. Ortega answered that the spreadsheet was just for Aki's use but it would be great if such information was in a central database. R. Medsker said that while the source does provide some information when students switch schools, the database is still a work in progress.

T. Ceis asked why Denny chose to design its own curriculum. J. Clark answered that there are pros and cons to every curriculum and using student work samples to develop curriculum would provide an approach more tailored to their needs.

C. Chow asked when teachers develop the curriculum. J. Clark said the Levy provides funds for them to have weekly planning meetings. D. Okimoto asked how 7<sup>th</sup> period math class was different from math classes during the day. The student replied that 7<sup>th</sup> period math classes were smaller and that the content was different. Jill Hudson, principal at Madison, said that class size doesn't matter until you get down into the teens, so 15:1 is a huge benefit to the students. A. Hopson noted that the Levy is essentially funding lower class sizes. J. Clark said that Levy funding allows Denny to hire a math coach to put CMP2 (the district math curriculum), MESA, and 7<sup>th</sup> period math all together to make sure the school is being consistent. J. Pehrson noted that the LOC will use data to show improvement and acknowledge gains, such as moving from Level 1 to Level 2.

The LOC meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.