

ACOS

Meeting Notes: January 16th, 2013

Meeting began at 9:55 am on January 16th, 2013, in the Quest portable at Hidden Creek Elementary School.

Present:

Maureen, Trina, Joanne, Tracy, Janet, Shannon, Beckie, Rebecca, Jude and Jen

Topics:

- New ACOS Members
 - Maureen introduced new parent group members and summarized the purpose/history of ACOS.
 - Main goal: promote academic challenge in the classroom for high-achieving students.
 - ACOS website was created as a resource for parents.
 - Brain Power Bins were assembled for student enrichment in elementary schools.
 - Two 'Parent Academies' were organized to educate parents about ways they can enrich their children's educations at home.
- ACOS Website Overview (Smart Board)
 - "Home" page describes ACOS and defines its mission.
 - "Parent Resources" page provides links to websites dealing with high-achieving kids' issues and outlines step-by-step actions that parents can take to help resolve their issues at school.
 - "Student Games" page has links to educational/challenging computer games for kids (taken from Quest website).
 - "Photo Gallery" page has pictures of the Parent Academies and the Back-to-School Celebration (picture assembly in progress).
 - Joanne briefed the group about the Back-to-School Celebration: ACOS representatives handed out pencils with the website information attached, informed people about the existence of ACOS and explained the ACOS mission. Also made contact with school board members.
 - "Meetings" page has links to the notes recorded from each ACOS meeting.
 - "What's Happening!" page features education-related events taking place in and around the community.
 - "Blog" page is for posting articles, videos, and connecting with other parents.
- Future Events
 - Not planning a third Parent Academy, but may put on some type of event for Quest parents that will take place in the evening (group members can start thinking about possible speakers).
- Differentiation
 - Discussed the status of differentiated instruction within the school district; the primary focus is on AP classes at the Jr. high school level. Information regarding the progress/outcome of the District discussions will be shared in the spring (March).
- Gifted Education Funding
 - WA State is required to fund gifted education as part of general education (no longer a year-by-year grant); state funding is supplemented by the SKSD.
 - Special education resources cannot be used for gifted instruction.

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- Enrichment Activities/Academic Challenge in the Classroom
 - There are no mandates for enrichment activities in the regular classroom.
 - Parent volunteers organizing enrichment activities for kids at school
 - Would need to be trained.
 - Would need to coordinate with teachers; daily requirements might make it difficult to schedule a block of enrichment activity.
 - Appealing to the School District
 - ACOS representatives could attend a school board meeting and make a positive presentation regarding the issues high-achieving kids are facing in the classroom and gather information about options for addressing the problem.
 - Joanne will get an appointment for the ACOS members to attend a school board meeting (will try for February; perhaps after the new superintendent is selected).
 - Avenues Outside the District
 - The question was asked: Who can be appealed to outside of the district – Rotary? City council? The mayor?
 - A presentation to the city council and/or mayor could be an option if it is an entirely parent-organized effort and is a positive, informative presentation.
 - Brain Power Bins
 - Discussed how to get a 'uniform usage' strategy coordinated between schools (bin creation was approved on the condition there would be no mandate concerning how they are to be used).
 - The bins are widely used in some schools, and rarely in others; some teachers are unaware of their existence. Instructional specialists are responsible for getting the word out about the bins.
 - Bin content: there are answer keys for the bin activities but no instruction sheets; they are self-explanatory enough for most kids to figure out.
 - Maureen will attend a district level instructional specialist meeting to inform about the bins.
 - Discussed the idea of parents speaking with teachers, perhaps at staff meetings, to explain the bins: the activities encourage different types of thinking and they are fun to do - not just extra work.
 - Discussed other ways to get the word about the bins out: PTSO meetings, blurbs in the principal's letter, teacher's newsletter, and District E-news (need to sign up for E-news on the SKSD website).
 - Discussed the possibility of parents having access to Brain Power Bins – it would need to be electronic (now feasible since scanning has become easier). It was suggested that email could be used to send out individual bin activities to pique interest and let people know to ask the teachers for more. (Publishers were contacted when the bins were set up and no issues with using the activities surfaced, but they need to be shared in a way that is legally unproblematic; is probably not a good idea to make them available on the ACOS website).
 - Discussed the benefit of having an ACOS representative at each school. Olalla and EPO (and possible Orchard Heights) still need people.
- Quest
 - Testing has begun; discussed how the word about testing is put out.
 - Will put a blurb about Quest testing on the ACOS website.
 - Teachers can/should nominate candidates.

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- Academic Challenge Issues (General Topics Discussed)
 - Teachers Trained/Required to Provide Special Education Instruction but not Gifted Education Instruction
 - Pros and Cons of Multi-age Classrooms
 - Curriculum Requirements in 4th and 5th Grade
 - ACOS Website Blog for Sharing Experiences/Support
- Gifted Education Day in Olympia (March 19th)
 - Is an opportunity to voice concerns to legislators.

Future Actions Agreed Upon:

- Joanne will set up meeting with school board and inform members of the date.
- ACOS members will meet (if necessary) to plan a presentation for the school board – date will be announced (probably a Wednesday).
- Maureen will meet with Instructional Specialists to inform about the Power Bins.
- Janet will add events (Quest Testing, Connections Symposium, Gifted Education Day) to the ACOS website; ACOS members will email relevant articles, videos, etc. to be posted on the ACOS website blog and the ACOS Facebook page: jananmcd@yahoo.com

Next (Regular) Meeting:

February 13th, 10:00 am, in the Quest portable of Hidden Creek Elementary School.

Meeting Adjourned at approximately 11:10 am.

Notes recorded by Janet.