

**Lawton Elementary School
CAS Team Meeting # 4
February 3, 2011 (Office Conference Room)**

Members

Present: Christine Helm, Susan Dowd, Lyon Terry, Peter Hubbard, Shirley Rybock
Bryan Hester, Mark Strasburger, Kaycee Pomeroy, Kimball Mullins, and Roger Daniels
(SPS Advanced Learning Department Consulting Teacher)

Absent: none

Quorum Present: yes

Proceedings

Meeting called to order by Christine. Members signed in and signed up for next week's meeting responsibilities (minutes taker (Mark), snack (Lyon), norm watcher (Peter), timekeeper (Susan))

I. Review Norms

Meeting norms were read.

II. Approve Minutes

Deferred until later in the meeting so redlined copies could be made and all team members could review. After some additional edits, the revised minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Share out about Brownsville Elementary School site visit

Team members went to Brownsville Elementary (BE), a K-6 in Bremerton on February 1, 2011 to visit a school that follows the cluster grouping model. We were warmly welcomed by the staff at BE and we met with both administration and teachers and visited classes (a 1st/2nd split, 4th grade writing class and 5th grade reading class). It was particularly helpful to meet with Donna Stanton, Learning Specialist (her job included: Gifted Mentor, Learning Counselor, Building Mentor, LAP Coordinator, and seemingly many other jobs/tasks that served students) and Claudia Rengstorf (Gifted Curriculum Specialist for the Central Kitsap County School District (CKCSD) district)

Observations were as follows:

- BE's students take the same CogAT test as Seattle students, however, BE's gifted program is configured differently. The top 1 % or 99th percentile (Gifted) are given the option to go to a magnet school or stay in their neighborhood school. The top 3% or 97th percentile and higher (Highly Capable) make up their gifted program in the school. Students in the top 4% -10% or 90th percentile and higher are randomly placed in a classroom and the teachers differentiate instruction to meet their needs. BE's Highly Capable students are grouped by

ability in reading and math class, but do not receive curriculum a year ahead. The BE school uses the terminology of gifted, and highly capable, which is different from the SPS. Seattle uses the term Highly Gifted for the top 2% who are served by the APP program, and Gifted are the top 10% (with a 3% margin of error) who are served by the Spectrum Program.

- The needs of the top 3% are different from the top 10% but they both benefit from advanced curriculum
- Roger said that there are other districts that serve the top 10% in their gifted program (Mark said NYC has a new program); other districts provide gifted education via magnet schools, pull outs, and/or part of special education programming
- BE's Free and Reduced lunch population is 28%, at Lawton it is 12%
- BE mentioned that they receive generous support from their PTA
- BE has ~400 students
- BE average class size was 21 (K – 2), 23 (3-4) and 25 (5-6)
- In K-2, gifted learners at BE are identified by teacher and parents, but delivery is still in traditional classrooms because they are focusing on other developmental issues (social, emotional) [*see below for best practices on early identification]
- In 3rd and 6th grades every child takes the CogAT test and placed accordingly.
- There are 20 gifted students at BE (lower number than at Lawton)
- It was hard to see differentiation in action because we hadn't met with the teachers in advance. All students were engaged, meaning that they were on task and participating in the given activity. It was difficult to ascertain the level of thinking and rigor without interviewing students and seeing their final product. We couldn't tell who fell into which ability group. We saw small group instruction (e.g. the Daily 5 in the 1st /2nd) a 5th grade book discussion led by the teacher and a 4th writing class where the teacher reviewed strategies and students went to the lab and worked on a computer program that assessed their writing.
- When placing kids, they are very deliberate; cluster highly gifted students together; look at social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs as well;
- All teachers who teach the gifted clusters have expressed an interest in teaching that group of students and they have participated in gifted education professional development and/or have worked with the gifted
- Because BE sees the individual CogAT scores, they can identify "single peak" kids (i.e. score very high in either the math or verbal but not both) and they can place students with that in mind
- According to Claudia and Donna, gifted kids need 3 things: 1. Each other, 2. a teacher that likes them and 3. a teacher that understands and is trained to teach them
- BE/ Central Kitsap County School District (CKCSD) had a similar political-philosophical shift which required community education and outreach about how and why they were approaching gifted education. Claudia discussed that as a school community they experienced that gifted children often come from gifted parents and that sometimes parents want a segregated setting for their child but there are also social, emotional, and friendship issues that educators like to take into consideration. Claudia expressed that CKCSD has experienced and worked through stigma and prestige issues around gifted education and how over time labeling has been eliminated because of their building site delivery model through cluster grouping. Claudia understood the political problems we were

encountering. She feels that they are now beyond that and that the program is working well.

- CKCSD is a smaller school district; perhaps with more resources

Implications for Lawton from BE site visit:

- To run a comparable program, we might need more staffing like they have at BE. The principal plus someone who filled the role of instructional coordinator and professional development like Donna at BE Donna seemed to know many student's academic and social background and both Donna and the teachers follow their progress from year to year. Every identified gifted student at Brownsville also had an Individual Learning Plan as is required by WA State for schools with programs such as APP. Donna spoke about how she fosters cooperation among teachers to ensure that all students are well-served. Teachers were required to provide her with details of their plans to insure that all students' needs were being met.
- Training of teachers in differentiation techniques is important; selecting teachers who will pursue "knowing how these kids think." At BE (and in the SCGM text) this is a high priority; learn more about gifted education and what best practices are for the staff; BE has some budget allocated for professional development/training and for their gifted program (we do not; SPS has \$400K for administration of gifted programs (staff, testing costs, PD)
- Messaging is key. How we are serving the needs of all kids?
- BE is clustering all gifted kids together per grade level, but their numbers are much smaller
- BE had a lot of trust in teachers and administrators
- Appropriate assignment of teachers to Spectrum classes is important to the success of cluster grouping, and periodic rotation of the Spectrum teacher positions could be considered to prevent some teachers from feeling labeled as either the Spectrum or non-Spectrum teacher. This teacher labeling could remain unless Spectrum numbers were high enough to split cohorts, if the school goes to cluster-grouping. Shirley stated that school principals have full authority over teacher class assignment.
- It was noted that, in the staff petition presented to the District, a grade level would be split into two groups if it had more than 16 Spectrum students. This appears to be the plan accepted by the District in Robert Vaughn's email. In the event the group is not large enough to split, attention should be given to abilities of other students in the other classes to create balanced classrooms.
- It was noted that academic year 2008-9 was the only year that Lawton split the Spectrum cohorts in the 2nd and 3rd grades. It was noted that Lawton took such action on the initiative of staff and former principal Ed Noh

IV. Determine our goals for the district, teachers, parents and students

District Goals (re: gifted education):

1. Provide accelerated, enriched curriculum
2. Provide services for gifted students
3. Use a research based model and create options for services to students identified as gifted.

Parent Goals (re: education):

1. Make sure student is receiving instruction at his/her ability level
2. That students are emotionally and physically safe
3. For students to be excited, engaged and challenged
4. To stay at neighborhood school

Teachers Goals (re: education):

1. Be trained for the material they are responsible for teaching
2. For students to be excited, engaged and challenged
3. Supported by administration (SPS and Lawton) and families
4. For students to reach grade level standards
5. To have profession and decisions respected
6. To work collaboratively
7. Respect

Student Goals (re: education):

1. To feel challenged, not frustrated
2. To feel independent
3. Opportunity to interact with all kids
4. To like coming to school
5. To feel emotionally and physically safe
6. To be excited, engaged and challenged
7. Feel proud of themselves
8. Respect

V. Discuss proposed solutions it issues

Team members are asked to come up with proposed solutions to the issues from the 1/27 minutes (excerpted below) and email the whole group with proposed solutions. All ideas will be brought to the next meeting and we will begin forming the proposal. We want to come up with the best way to roll this out. While our situation may not align with following the SCGM exactly, we can follow the spirit of the model.

VI. "Word on the Street"

Not time to cover this item.

VII. Book Talk

Not time to cover this item.

Additional Discussion:

*Best practice is to identify gifted children early (preschool, K). Early identification is seen as a positive thing, not for 'labeling' or prestige purposes, but to make sure children are placed in an appropriate program and to make sure their social and emotional needs are met. The social/emotional needs of a gifted child are different than those of a normally developing child.

Mark requested a visit from a teacher or administrator from a SPS school who was familiar with the problems we are currently encountering at Lawton regarding the transition from partially filled self-contained Spectrum classrooms to completely filled self-contained Spectrum classrooms. The team could hear from a Seattle school that follows the self contained model and so we can get an alternate point of view regarding the benefits of this model. It would enhance the credibility of the CAS Team if we heard from a SPS teacher who supports self-contained Spectrum. There is not budget for another site visit as Lawton can't pay for another 3 substitutes. View Ridge (Christine or Roger (?) knows the principal) and Whittier (Lyon knows a 2nd grade Spectrum teacher there) were mentioned as possible invitees. The group consensus was undecided, but Christine will look into it. Kaycee offered to host an evening meeting at her house for this purpose or if the team needs an additional meeting.

There is no professional development budget/funding specifically for gifted education, but teachers can have text (SCGM) study groups and/or use the general professional development funding for gifted learning/ differentiation. Christine is committed to the professional development piece. Chapters 5 & 6 from the SCGM text and *Best Practices in Gifted Education* would be good places to start.

Meeting adjourned: 5:05 pm
Minutes submitted by: Kimball Mullins

Issues Identified at 1/27 meeting:

1. Gifted students have special needs.
 - a. Educate parents and students around the fact that we all have different strengths and intelligences; Howard Gardner has identified 9 intelligences. Academic intelligence is only a part of them.
 - b. Staff needs professional development focused on how to challenge all students. “Gifted” doesn’t mean better, but it does mean they having different instructional needs, and clarifying this would help staff, students and families.
 - i. Some parents with gifted students feel a bit stigmatized when they advocate for their kids who are in the spectrum program.
2. Labeling of both students and teachers.
3. The spectrum program is a program for the whole McClure cluster, not just Lawton.
4. Balancing of classrooms both with the number of “time-intensive” students, gifted students and other students given we are an inclusion school and a spectrum school.
 - a. It does state in our mission statement that we are an inclusive school. Roger Daniels stated, “by definition self-contained spectrum is not inclusion.
 - b. **Lawton Mission Statement:** *Lawton learners are kind, respectful, responsible, and are achievers. We support and encourage students’ creative expression and critical thinking skills through an inclusive and integrated education that provides both guided practice and independent exploration.*
 - c. Flexibility with classroom placements. All teachers feel they have a wide range of student ability levels and behavior needs but some feel that in a self-contained model there is no flexibility with classroom placement of students.
5. How do we keep cohorts of students together? And, should we keep cohorts of students together?
6. How are we going to ensure that all students are challenged at Lawton? What are our next steps?
7. Defining inclusion as a specific educational term.