



ORCA

WEEKLY BULLETIN

December 9, 2008

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December

10 – ORCA Garden Mtg

18 – Festival of Children

19 – Professional Development

20 – Planting party

22 – Jan 2 Winter Break

3:30-4:30 Orca Greenhouse

6:30pm

Early Dismissal

10am-2pm East garden

NO SCHOOL

THOUGHTS FROM PhiHo Le



What is an alternative school?

Can it be a school which provides an alternative to the traditional school structure and which is designed to meet the unique instructional needs of gifted/talented students or students who are unable to function in a regular classroom? Or could it be a magnet school that is created for a special group of interested students to study a limited curriculum? Or could it be a traditional school with a creative curriculum? These are some of the definitions of alternative schools.

To me Orca is a special alternative school that fits well into all of the definitions above. At Orca we have excellent and dedicated teachers with a well-designed curriculum. We also continue to work on the degree of match between the stated mission and goals and the actual curriculum/practice. It is our duty as parents and educators to teach our students the skills that they need to be successful in taking tests as well as the freedom to learn so they can continue to have a creative and well-rounded happy school life.

Is educating the heart as important as educating the mind?

I believe that our children are bright and capable of learning new things at a faster speed than when I was their age. But sometimes when we let the world dictate what they need to know at a certain age, we also put much pressure on their little shoulders without realizing what we have done. Please, do remember that our children need time to learn and also need time to play!

If we only focus on educating the mind, then what about educating the heart? Isn't it true when a child is filled with love and compassion and has the opportunity to learn at his/her own pace, that child will be able to accumulate knowledge with ease and with confidence! How are we going to educate the heart when we do not give it a fair chance or the time to do so? Isn't it true that a world is a much better place if we have more human beings who are raised with love, empathy and compassion?

Let's join hands and make sure that we will find time to educate the heart for all children.

PhiHo Le

3rd grade teacher at Orca Elementary School

☀️ ANNOUNCEMENTS ☠️



Festival of Children, Thursday, Dec 18, 6:30pm – don't miss it!

One last audition will be held on Tuesday, 12/9 at 3:30 in the cafeteria for those that missed last week's. Come see the talented children of Orca perform through singing, dancing, musical instruments... and so much more! Don't miss out on this annual fun, family event!

Questions? Contact Nina Beach at ninabeach@msn.com or Leda Westberg at leda206@hotmail.com



Orca Garden Meeting, Wednesday, December 10

Hey all you folks interested in the environment, gardens and science---we're ready for your input and energy! If you can't make this meeting time, please contact Sarah Hufbauer or Anthony Warner (Environmental Science Coordinator) to get involved.

ORCA Garden Meeting this Wednesday December 10 in the Greenhouse from **3:30-4:30**

Come get up to date on what's been going on so far, and what's ahead that we'll need everyone's help on, **most immediately, the Plant Planting party 12/20** as well as day to day classroom stuff, outdoor fieldtrips, Native Plant Program, worm bins and cafeteria composting.

THANK YOU,

Sarah Hufbauer sarah.hufbauer@gmail.com
300-8152

Anthony Warner apwarner@seattleschools.org
252-6918



Orca is collecting store food cards to give to Orca families in need. Please donate cards from the following stores in denominations of \$25 and \$50:

- SAARS MARKET
- SAFEWAY
- FRED MEYER
- QFC

Please bring your donations to the Orca office. Thank you!



ORCA ART AUCTION/GARDEN MOSAIC FUNDRAISER

Please join us as we seek art from our community for a one day only silent art auction to raise money to mosaic the garden beds in front of our school. We are asking parents, staff and other artists to donate a piece of art which will then become part of The Orca Art Auction happening on Friday, February 13th at our very own Columbia City Gallery, GATHER (www.gatherseattle.com). The show will be open during that day and culminate in an evening event.

Come Spring we will partner with SEED Seattle to create opportunities, through free after school classes and weekend work parties, for our students and community to participate in creating both handmade clay and mosaic art for our garden beds.

If you have a piece of art you would like to donate or would like to volunteer to help with this project please let us know. You can bring in your art and drop it off at Room 207A. Please also include your contact information.

Thank you! This will be an amazing event and will truly showcase what a creative community we have.

Lily Hotchkiss: lihotchkiss@seattleschools.org

Emily Nagel: eanagel@seattleschools.org



VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR NEWS...

FESTIVAL OF CHILDREN NEEDS YOUR HELP THURSDAY DECEMBER 18th!

The Festival of Children could use a few folks to help out! We need people to help get kids ready, usher them on and off the stage, help move things around on the stage, set up and take down chairs and anything

else that comes up. The event begins at 6:30pm. Contact me if you are able to help make this a fantastic event!

MANY THANKS to **Julie McCann** and her multitude of helpers for creating such a great Math Night!

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.....

Remember that after the holidays we need to gear up for New Family Recruitment (Enrollment Fair Jan 10th) and the Martin Luther King Celebration (Jan 16th). We have chair people getting both of these organized and we'll have the list of volunteer opportunities soon.

Deb Koon, Volunteer Coordinator debkoon/723-7444



From the After School Programs Coordinator

All after school classes will end the week of December 19th. Catalogs for both Powerful Schoiols and our After School Middle School Program will be going out the first week back to school in January.

Transportation for our middle school students will continue to be offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays in conjunction with our programs. If your student is already signed up they will remain on the route. If you would like to add your student please fill out the request fomr available through me or the front office.

We are excited to be offering a wonderful group of classes this Winter including felt making, sewing, dance, painting and so much more!

If you have any questions please let me know. Thanks! Lily Hotchkiss, lihotchkiss@seattleschools.org



ORCA SPACE TEAM UPDATE

CAPITAL LEVY NOMINATION SUBMITTED

In the middle of everything else that's going on in the District, Seattle Public Schools is in the process of putting together its 2010 Capital Levy -- the list of big construction and renovation projects that will be funded by the next levy. (Our Science Annex was part of the last one.) The Orca Space Team, with the endorsement of the Leadership Council, has submitted a nomination for some renovations to the Whitworth Building.

We identified two main areas of concern: Security & Wayfinding, which focuses on making the entrances more obvious and welcoming, and Collaboration & Connection, which refers to the lack of accessible common spaces that support the collaborative, community-based work we do at Orca. The complete nomination, along with drawings, is available on the Orca web site (and attached), but the gist of it is:

1. We'd like to turn the North entrance into the main entrance, by moving the office to that end of the hall (rooms 211 and 209), and creating two classrooms where the teachers lounge and copy room are now. The current office and conference room would remain as centrally located common spaces. The East entrance would become primarily the route to the Garden, and could be redesigned to create usable workspaces for garden projects and other activities.
2. We would also make improvements to the exterior of the North entry, including adding a stairway heading east from the door down to the sidewalk on Dawson.
3. We also proposed opening up some of the internal stairways and creating a seating alcove out of one or more of the enclosed offices between the classrooms. (If this is all hard to picture, please have a look at the "existing" and "proposed" drawings on the web site, or talk to Mikala Woodward (722-5177 / jojoma3@aol.com) or Elizabeth Maher (boathousemaher@yahoo.com).

The levy nomination is a long-shot for us, and a slow process even if all goes well -- we won't know until March how our nomination is ranked by the District consultants, and it would be 2012 or later before any construction actually happened. But we thought it was worth a try. And we may be able to shop the proposal around to other funding sources -- if you have any ideas about this, please let Mikala know!

Thanks so much to Elizabeth Maher for sharing her ideas & expertise, and for doing the bulk of the work on writing up the nomination.

Mikala Woodward, Space Team Co-Chair

SCHOOL CLOSURES AND STATE FUNDING: LET'S MAKE THE CONNECTION by Mikala Woodward

I'm sure you've heard the grim news about the School District's budget shortfall (up to \$37 million at last count, and still rising) and the latest round of school closures and consolidations. You may be depressed about the burden borne by South End schools, or outraged about the terrible toll on alternative programs district-wide -- or you may be simply breathing a sigh of relief that Orca is not on the chopping block.

However you're feeling, there are some things our community can do as responsible parents, neighbors, and citizens. We need to support our South End neighbors throughout this difficult process, and we need to take our anger and frustration where it belongs: Olympia. As my friend Maggi says, "We have to make sure that a phoenix rises from the ashes when this pigeon is done burning."

There is no doubt that the District is in an awful situation. They have to find \$37 million in new revenue or cuts, and they are nowhere near that goal. Closing schools is only one of many painful decisions they are facing. Their capacity analysis shows empty seats in the South End, and overenrollment in the North. That's why so many South End schools are on the closure list.

But many people have legitimate questions about these capacity numbers. Did you know Orca is listed as having 40 extra seats, even though our K-5 is stuffed to the gills and we are slated to add 50 eighth graders next year? And that 613 empty seats -- two-thirds of the SE Cluster's excess elementary capacity -- are attributed to the New School? This is partly because they are also not done adding their middle school, but also because of their intentionally small class sizes. You may recall that the whole point of the New School was to show that small class sizes and other resources can make a huge difference for at-risk kids. Maybe that whole marvelous experiment is simply too expensive for us to undertake right now, even with the New School Foundation footing the bill for the extra teachers. But is it right to simply call this "excess capacity"?

That's just the S & SE clusters, and just for elementary school. I don't know enough about middle and high school, or other parts of the city, to know if there are similar problems with those capacity assessments. (They're available here, if you want to see for yourself: www.seattleschools.org/area/capacity/index.dxml)

It's heartbreaking that beloved, successful programs are getting slashed. It's a grim thought that we can't afford to provide things that we *know* are good for all kids, and absolutely *crucial* for some kids. It's even more discouraging to see the South End pitted against the North End so bitterly, with racial issues exacerbated in this fight over scarce resources.

So what do we do?

First of all, our South End neighborhood schools need our support right now -- we need to make sure the District comes up with a school closure plan that is as equitable as possible. You can call or e-mail Cheryl Chow, our School Board Member, at 252-0040 or cheryl.chow@seattleschools.org and let her know your concerns: South End capacity assessments, alternative schools, allocating resources for closing schools and transitioning all those students -- those are mine, but you'll have your own, I'm sure. There are also public meetings to go to at the various affected schools on December 15th, 16th, & 18th. Details: www.seattleschools.org/area/capacity/public_hearings.pdf

Second, we need to turn our anger toward the *real* problem here: **inadequate state funding**. Washington ranks 44th in the nation in per student funding (\$7432). If our state provided even the *average* state allocation (\$8973), SPS would get \$70 million more each year. Would we be closing schools right now? The School Board can't fix this problem. Maria Goodloe-Johnson can't fix this problem. That can only happen in Olympia.

We have an opportunity to make progress on this NOW. The Legislature's Basic Education Finance Task Force (*could* they have picked a more awkward, mind-numbingly dull name?!) is about to release its recommendations. These brave, smart people have come up with an ambitious plan to restructure school funding, improve our schools, and phase in new resources.

So please read Rhonda Aronwald's excellent report on the BEF in this bulletin (below). And then please, please, please, do as she says: **CALL YOUR LEGISLATOR**. Tell them pathetic school funding has real consequences in our community. Tell them we need them to be *leaders* on this issue. Tell them what they can do to help: **we need them to enact the BEF plan**. They may not have more money for schools right now, but they *can* make the crucial structural changes so education funding is transparent, flexible, and accountable.

Yeah, I'm discouraged. And outraged. And sad, and angry. (Can you tell?) I don't blame you a bit if you've gone off in search of the tequila, or the chocolate chip cookies, or the "Bolt" matinee, or whatever cheering distraction is at hand. But when you're done with that, I hope you'll take some action. It will make you feel better. And it *just might* make a difference.

For More Information:

- School District Info on Capacity Management & Closures: www.seattleschools.org/area/capacity/index.dxml
- Basic Education Finance Task Force (BEF) Process & Recommendations: www.leg.wa.gov/joint/committees/bef

- League of Education Voters – www.educationvoters.org
- Seattle Council PTSA—www.seattlecouncilptsa.org
- Community & Parents for Public Schools: www.cppssofseattle.org
- www.fundingwaschools.org

Rhonda Aronwald’s report on the BEF:

Report of the Basic Education Task Force due this month; make your voice heard!

On Dec. 1, Rep. Ross Hunter reported to the Seattle PTSA on the work of the Joint Task Force on Basic Education Finance (BEF). The 2007 Legislature created the Task Force to "develop options for a new funding structure and all the necessary formulas, and propose a new definition of basic education." The work of the task force is scheduled to be released the week of Dec. 8. The Washington education finance system has not had an overhaul for more than thirty years.

Hunter talked about teacher quality as a main driver of student success and a key focus of the task force. The proposed plan will support strong teaching with competitive salaries for teachers and merit pay based on peer review among other elements. He also described how the plan would address inequities in funding by providing significant additional resources based on low-income and ELL students, for example. There’s a lot more to it, so check it out! A more detailed report on the task force’s proposal can be found online on the task force’s Web site under the “documents” tab at: <http://whatittakesforkids.com>. An editorial in the Sunday Dec. 7 Seattle Times “Solid education funding begins with a clear vision” talks about the proposal and next steps in Olympia. Additional information can also be found on the WA State Leg Basic Ed Funding Web site at: <http://www.leg.wa.gov/joint/committees/bef>.

Hunter underscored that his task force will release their report into an economic climate that is even more grim than when the committee began. In coming months the legislature will be dealing with even more difficult choices and competing demands. He encouraged parents to make their voices heard and emphasized that for him personally as a legislator, first-hand stories have the most impact.

Because of the State’s own budget crisis, we can’t expect to see increased education funding this time around. But we may be able to prevent even more painful cuts by speaking up NOW. And the proposal of the BEF task force makes crucial changes to our school funding structure to pave the way for increased funding in the future. This may be the only thing our legislators can feel good about doing in this economic downturn!

So e-mail, call, and write your legislators and encourage friends and family to do the same. The Washington State PTA has a legislative action center at <http://capwiz.com/npta2/wa/home/> that provides resources for connecting to legislators. Here also is contact information for the Governor and legislators from the 37th District.

Governor Chris Gregoire Office of the Governor PO Box 40002 Olympia, WA 98504-0002 Web Site: www.governor.wa.gov	Contact Via Web Form , at: http://www.governor.wa.gov/contact/default.asp Give Governor Gregoire’s Office a Call: (360) 902-4111 Fax Governor Gregoire a letter: (360) 753-4110
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