

March 2, 2009

Dear Seattle Public Schools families:

At Seattle Public Schools we are committed to advancing every child's academic achievement. Since the most important factor in student learning is the quality of teaching in the classroom, our strategic plan, *Excellence for All*, identifies key strategies to strengthen teaching of math and science while building on success in reading and writing; retain, hire and support outstanding teachers and principals to ensure excellent instruction in every classroom; and use more ways to assess how students are progressing throughout the year so teachers have more support to meet each child's needs.

Open Enrollment for the 2009-10 school year runs from March 2 – 31. In addition to sharing information about the Open Enrollment process, I want to share some program highlights, provide an update on implementation of the capacity management plan, and invite you to attend one of our quarterly strategic plan community engagement workshops.

Looking Ahead to 2009-10

As I visit classrooms and schools across the district, I see firsthand the level of commitment and skill of our teachers and the passion and involvement of our families. Seattle Public Schools offers great programs, and we will continue to replicate success as we increase access to excellent programs across the district. Just some of the programs offered are:

- ***Expanded international offerings:*** Building on the rich diversity of our city, we continue to expand international programs. For 2009-10 we offer:
 - International immersion programs in north Seattle at John Stanford International School and Hamilton Middle School, in south Seattle at Beacon Hill International, and in West Seattle at Concord Elementary and Denny Middle School; and
 - International Baccalaureate programs in north Seattle at Ingraham High School and in West Seattle at Chief Sealth High School.
- ***Expanded Montessori offerings:*** We will offer a Montessori program at Leschi Elementary and expand to grades K-4 this year and K-5 in 2010. We also offer Montessori at two other buildings: Graham Hill and Bagley elementary schools.
- ***Increased arts and arts integration opportunities:*** With support from the City of Seattle and community arts partners, we have increased arts education opportunities available to students across the city. Highlights include:
 - A \$1,000,000 grant from the federal Department of Education. In partnership with *Arts Impact*, teams of educators at five elementary schools will be trained on how to integrate visual arts, theatre, and dance with literacy instruction. This program will be a model for arts integration across the district.
 - *Seattle Youth Symphony Orchestra* received funding from the Wallace Foundation to work closely with Seattle Public Schools Elementary Instrumental Music staff to expand access to instrumental music instruction in the most underserved areas of the district.
 - Development of a monthly e-newsletter for the SPS community featuring arts education opportunities, resources, arts-related district information, and funding sources.

In addition, a district-wide arts education survey was conducted providing the foundation for continued support of students and arts education opportunities.

- ***New K-8:*** A new K-8 school will open in the Addams building in NE Seattle to meet demand from families in that neighborhood with young children. The K-8 program will include advanced learning opportunities and world languages.
- ***Southeast Initiative:*** Focused academics and signature programs will continue into their second year at Aki Kurose Middle School and Rainier Beach High School (performing arts and media production); and at Cleveland High School (science, math and technology).
- ***Advanced Placement (AP) courses:*** To ensure students are ready for college when they graduate from Seattle Public Schools, high schools throughout Seattle have expanded the number and array of AP courses where students can earn both high school and college credit while they challenge themselves with college-level work.

Open Enrollment March 2 – 31

Open Enrollment is the time when families apply to enter kindergarten, move from one school level to the next, or change schools. School tour information, documents required, and enrollment guides are available at Enrollment Services, 2445 3rd Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98134, phone (206) 252-0760. Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with extended hours until 8:00 p.m. on March 30 and 31. The Bilingual Family Center at Aki Kurose Middle School is open for families needing assistance in a language other than English. Aki Kurose is located at 3928 South Graham Street (Room 104). Tel: 206.252.7750. Fax: 206.252.7751. Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Information is also posted on our Web site at www.seattleschools.org.

Enrollment Services will also provide in-community opportunities at local libraries for families to get enrollment questions answered and to submit applications. Dates and locations include: March 10 at the Northgate Library scheduled for 4:00 – 5:30 p.m. At all other locations, times are 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. on March 11 at Delridge; on March 12 at Columbia; on March 17 at Douglass Truth; on March 18 at Montlake; on March 19 at Queen Anne; and March 24 at Magnolia.

Bell Time Schedule

We are currently reviewing bell time schedules for the 2009-10 school year. We realize that the school day time schedule is a very important family logistics issue and we are carefully considering many factors. We will offer updates on our Web site home page under the category “What’s New?” at www.seattleschools.org.

Strategic Plan Community Engagement Workshops March 21, 24, and 26.

The strategic plan community engagement workshops are scheduled for Saturday, March 21 from 10 a.m. -12:00 p.m. at the John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence Auditorium, 2445 3rd Avenue South; on Tuesday, March 24 from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at the Urban Impact Main Office, 7728 Rainier Avenue South; Thursday, March 26 from 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Ballard High School Library, 1418 NW 65th Street. We will provide an overview on implementation of our strategic plan and then focus on two key areas: the new student assignment plan and math update. There will be opportunities for you to discuss these topics and to provide input and feedback. Interpreters will be available at these meetings. The final series for this school year is scheduled for May, with times and dates to be announced.

Capacity Management Plan Implementation

Our District took an important step forward in our ability to create *Excellence for All* for every child when the School Board approved a capacity management plan last month. The plan is designed to strengthen educational programs across the district; focus resources to improve student learning and protect our long-term fiscal health; and balance availability of spaces with where students live. These efficiencies will result in savings estimated at \$16 million in operating costs over the next five years and avoid \$33 million in capital costs. Additional information is available on our Web site at www.seattleschools.org.

We are now focused on ensuring that the transition to new schools and new programs is as smooth and respectful as possible for all students, families and staff affected by the plan. Program design and transition teams are at work now on the many needed actions. Led by principals, the teams include staff and family representatives as well as central office support staff. Updates on progress of these teams will be shared with the School Board and posted on our Web site in early March.

Students currently attending programs that will be discontinued have received a new assignment in the mail, and also have the opportunity to apply for a different school during Open Enrollment. These students will receive a Special Program Preference, which is the third tie-breaker in the assignment plan, following sibling and reference area or region. We are also providing opportunities to tour new schools, on-site enrollment services, and a series of other supports for students and staff.

I hope that you have found this update helpful. There is a great deal of work underway as we implement *Excellence for All*. Updates on our high school math adoption, improvements to delivery of special education and bilingual services, and a host of other information is available on our Web site at www.seattleschools.org – and you are always welcome to talk with the principal at your school. We are dedicated to providing each student with an education that prepares them to graduate ready for college, work, and life. Thank you for entrusting the education of your students to Seattle Public Schools.

Sincerely,



Maria L. Goodloe-Johnson, Ph.D.
Superintendent

“Every student achieving, everyone accountable.”