Superintendent’s Message

Timothy S. Yeomans

The Compass is the new name for the regular communication from the Meridian School District to the members of our community. The idea for the name Compass comes from our intention to bring to you information that communicates the direction of the school district on the many issues that are important in Meridian.

There are many unique aspects to the educational program in our school district, and we have had a long history of very positive results from the schools in Meridian. This being noted, we are also facing many exciting challenges as we closely examine the continuing efforts of our school system to improve in the ways that we serve our students and our community in Meridian. To this end, we hope to focus the majority of this publication around the educational and system issues.

As a compass provides direction for those who journey in a determined direction, it is the ongoing effort of the Meridian School District to keep our focus squarely on the achievement of our students. In this publication our community will find regular updates on accomplishments of students, updates on assessment and curriculum, news on program modification, as well as updates on issues that will inform the Meridian Community of the work going on in our schools.

The continued improvement of our instruction and district programs is not a destination, rather a journey that is ongoing for our staff, students and community.

We welcome the involvement of parents and community members in helping us chart our course as we work toward superior performance in all aspects of our program. I hope you will enjoy the new format and find the content of the Compass informative.

Assessments Inform Instructional Decisions to Improve Student Achievement

Teachers and principals collaborate to use a variety of assessments to improve student achievement at all levels. State required assessments include the WASL in reading and math at grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10; writing at grades 4, 7, and 10; and science at grades 5, 8, and 10. We also administer a required Second Grade Reading test to all students. Both of these tests are used to develop individual student learning plans for students not meeting standard. The district also uses the Measures of Academic Progress in reading and math to students in grades 2-10 and a district writing assessment in grades 1-8. These formal tests plus a variety of teacher-made tests help identify specific strengths and weaknesses of individuals and guide planning on a daily basis.

Assessments are also used to develop School Improvement Plans leading to overall increases in student achievement. If you have questions about assessment, please contact your school principal or Bruce Burpee, District Assessment Director, at 318-2166.
New School Board Members

At the October 17, 2007 School Board Meeting, Craig Wasilewski was confirmed as the newest school Board member of the Meridian School District. He will be representing the 1st director district which encompasses the northwest corner of the Meridian School District.

Craig brings a number of positive experiences and skills to the school board and is very enthusiastic about the opportunity to serve the children and community in this capacity. He will be replacing Brian Vander Yacht, whose term of service will conclude in December of 2007.

Mr. Wasilewski will officially join board chairman, Brian Evans, Vice chair, Mary Mattison, and board members Judy Boxx and Charlie Crabtree as the school board continues its work in the December board meeting.

In addition, two Meridian HS seniors, Haley Pratt and Clare Chambers are now serving on the school board following their election by the high school ASB last spring. Per board policy they advise the board and provide a student perspective but are not voting members of the board. The district is excited about the perspective that our students can bring as the board continues its focus on student achievement.

As always, school board meetings are open to the public and we encourage your attendance and participation.

Special Programs

The Meridian School District is very proud of our students who are working within our Special Programs. The Meridian High School Special Education Department continues to build strong relationships with community businesses allowing students the experience of specific, on-site job training. The district values the connection with local businesses, and is pleased to assist students with the opportunity to demonstrate the skills they have achieved as they continue to develop further. The bridge from school programs to post secondary responsibilities is a crucial one to build. Meridian would like to express our sincere gratitude for the generous support of the following companies:

- We are training for the second year with ReUse Works, a Bellingham non-profit involved in recycling, repair and sales of washers/dryers, refrigerators and stoves. They have also donated a dryer to our program.
- We are training with We-Care, a Bellingham non-profit involved in providing clothing and household items to our community.
- We are in a paid training opportunity for a second year with Criterion Athletic, a manufacturer of both athletic netting and commercial industrial netting products.
- We are beginning our third year with a training opportunity with our District Transportation Department.
- We are in our third year of training with our athletic director, and football and baseball teams with support for practice and game set-up and direct support during games.
- We are in our first year of a training opportunity with the IRPS PE Specialist as an afternoon physical education teacher assistant.
- Our in-house laundry for the third year provides laundry training as we do athletic uniforms for football and also clothing for We-Care and Blue Skies for Children.
- We recycle packing peanuts for Aqui Esta, a Bellingham tile company, and sell these at a nominal fee to Bramble Berry of Bellingham, a soap making company.

As our students prepare to enter the work force, we look forward to continued relationships with these businesses as well as the development of new services.
Construction Careers Academy Comes to Meridian

If you get a chance to look out behind the high school this fall you will see eighteen students from Meridian and around the county who are partaking in the Whatcom Tech Prep Consortium—Construction Careers Academy. Meridian has been very fortunate to be chosen to host the program and instructor Ted Gores is very pleased with the support that this program has received from the county-wide business, trades and industry community.

The program has received thousands of dollars in outside grants that have allowed it to begin operations. These funds, and donations of time and labor, paid for the renovation of the old animal shed into a very attractive new facility where the class is currently applying its skills to the construction of small out-buildings.

Through the work of Linda Cowan, Tech Prep Consortium Director, and the cooperation of all the school districts in Whatcom County, students who are of Junior or Senior status can opt to begin a paid apprenticeship program as part of their high school study. This type of public/private partnership has great potential to serve even more Meridian students as it expands over time. Local industries, such as INTALCO have shown generous support for the students and have expressed a willingness to continue supporting the program in the future.

Whether it is Advanced Placement Academic classes in preparation for college, or highly relevant technical education programs so urgently needed in the local economy, the Meridian School District is making the effort to support all of our students in becoming prepared for the opportunities that await them after high school.

Meridian Boosters to Hold Auction

In an ongoing effort to support the students of the district, The Meridian Booster Club will be holding an auction on the evening of March 29, 2008 at the Silver Reef Event Center. The boosters are accepting donations of items that may be available for bid during both the silent and live auction portions of the fundraiser.

Supporting student achievement in co-curricular and community activities is the focus and mission of the Meridian Boosters. Research has shown that by keeping our students positively involved we dramatically increase their chances of successfully completing high school and preparing themselves for post-secondary education.

The Meridian School District wishes to thank all of the parents and community members who donate their time and effort in support of our children’s activities. For information on how you may attend the event on March 29, or how you may become a volunteer for the Meridian Boosters please call Gil Huntley at 360-398–1171.

Under the leadership of new District Athletic and HS Activities Director Eric Tripp, the Meridian Trojan Athletic program continues its great tradition of success in interscholastic athletics. The Girls Cross Country Team, Girls Soccer Team and the Trojan Football Team have all achieved state berths during the 2007 fall season.

As an extension of the classroom, the district views all of its co-curricular activities as opportunities for students to extend and enhance their learning. Lessons in sportsmanship, perseverance, hard work and dealing positively with adversity are all forms of learning that students are able to transfer into the academic environment.

These activities are directly supported by the community in the form of maintenance and operations levy dollars. It is through the generous support of the voters of the Meridian School District that such a wide variety of co-curricular activities can be offered for our students. Support for the students and the schools in all of its forms are greatly appreciated by the district and board of directors.

We invite you to attend one of the many events hosted by the district and see your support for our students and our schools in action!
Student Safety

It is always a good idea to review and revisit the topic of safety with your children on a regular basis. During this time of year, the daylight hours are getting shorter and students are busy with many activities in addition to traveling to and from school.

Please remind your students to remain vigilant as they are waiting for the bus. Over 70% of Meridian students ride the school bus regularly. Our drivers are very well trained and are very vigilant with regard to student safety. Remind your child to stay well off the road, especially when visibility is limited and roads are icy. I often notice parents waiting with their children at the bus stop. Besides being an extra level of safety for the student, it is also a great time to talk with your child about their school work.

It is also very important to talk with your children about other potential threats. Remind your children to be aware of strangers who may approach them. Please consider developing a plan for your children with regard to their safety in all situations. The use of a password, predetermined meeting places, and what steps to take in an emergency situation are just a few of the topics that are important to discuss with your children.

If you are the parent or guardian of an older student, please remind them of the importance of safe driving during the winter months. Older students are often involved in many activities that may take them out at night. Driving defensively and making sure that they wear their seatbelts are just two tips in a long list of preventative steps that parents can take with their older children to insure their safety. On so many of our roads, cars travel at 50 m.p.h. or more. A miscalculation on the part of a young driver can be devastating. Darkness, changing weather conditions and inexperience with an automobile can prove to be a very dangerous combination. Again, please take just a few minutes to make your expectations with regard to behavior and safety clear to your older student.

The safety and learning of your children are the prime concerns of the entire staff at the Meridian School District. Please contact us if you have any questions.

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