Superintendent’s Message

Timothy S. Yeomans

Powerful Teaching and Learning in Meridian!
The Meridian school district is making a long term investment and commitment to a common method of instruction and professional development for teachers known as Powerful Teaching and Learning. This research based approach to quality instruction which was developed by the BERC group from Seattle Pacific University, is now used nation wide as a structure and a model for examining and improving instructional and professional practice among educators.

During the course of the 2007-2008 school year over twenty members of the Meridian teaching and leadership staff have taken part in ongoing training and support around the model.

The program focuses strongly on the on the Rigor of the curricula and the expectations that teachers have for student performance. Additional focus is targeted at the Relevance and applicability of the lessons and the material being presented in the classroom setting. Teachers are also asked to Reflect in a very targeted and specific way on their professional practice using a set of very specific tools and authentic observations to inform their own practice. Most importantly there is a strong reminder of how important positive Relationships with students and parents can be in the effort to help our children succeed.

The concepts of the Powerful Teaching and Learning research come together in the collaborative teamwork that is able to arise when there is a shared vision and an aligned understanding by all members of the district instructional team on how we continue to improve our Powerful Teaching and Learning in Meridian!

School Levy Information

On March 11, 2008 Meridian, along with five other county school districts will be running replacement levies that will be coming to the end of the last four year cycle. In 2004 the voters of the Meridian School District approved a four year levy that would collect a tax at a rate of $3.26 per thousand dollars of assessed valuation. In all four years that tax rate was lower than projected, and this year the rate is actually $2.52 per thousand. For many years Meridian has collected the lowest percentage of Levy authority (the amount that the district is allowed to collect) of any district in Whatcom County. In addition, the Meridian School District has made facilities last, and has continued to use them even after they have been identified for upgrades and/or replacement.

On the front page of the district website there is a link to the state required “Study and Survey” that gives insights into lifespan and condition of the educational and support facilities. I would encourage each parent and community member to read the report, finished in June of 2006 for yourself.

http://www.meridian.wednet.edu

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With a variety of course offerings to support the varied interests of our students.

The final observation I wish to make about the advantage of attending a school in a district the size of Meridian was evident throughout the months of November and December as I attended events at the schools during the school day and in the evening. The support that our students receive from the community is truly outstanding. At parent-teacher conferences, concerts, games, and recognition events the participation by our community was outstanding! While having large numbers of parent, relatives and community members in attendance at events is wonderful, it is the personal connection of our community to the children and their genuine interest in seeing our students do well that makes such a real difference in the experience of our students.

We, as a district are committed to looking inward with a very positive and critical eye at how we can continue to enhance the educational experience in Meridian. Working with our community volunteers in PTA, Youth Sports, Booster Club, The Levy Advisory Group and the district Accountability Committee, we will continue to seek your input on how we can continue to improve the educational program in Meridian every day. Thanks for your support of our schools!

Special Programs — Early Childhood Education

The Meridian School District’s Early Childhood Program offers many exciting opportunities for children and families to learn and develop friendships in school. Our pre-school program is home to thirty three families. The warm and inviting atmosphere allows children to grow to their true potential, learning the skills they will need to be successful in the primary grades while developing friendships that will remain with them throughout their years in the Meridian School District.

Our program offers exciting opportunities for children to learn with the talented staff that includes an early intervention teacher, a special education teacher, paraeducators, speech and language pathologists and an occupational therapist. Children attend as members of one of three class groups, meeting Monday through Thursday for either a morning or afternoon session.

We have open enrollment throughout the year for children with developmental delays. Several children also participate in our program as members of a cooperative pre-school.

In addition to the pre-school programs, we host EXPLORE, a community playgroup that is open to all families with children ages birth to six years old. Parents and children visit with friends and participate in crafts, games and music during EXPLORE. Children ages three through six are welcome to stay and play with our early childhood team so that their parent can volunteer in the classroom of an older sibling at Irene Reither Primary School or Ten Mile Creek Elementary. EXPLORE is held on all Fridays that school is open.

Mother-read Father-read classes will be offered this spring. If you have a pre-Kindergarten age student and are interested in learning about fun reading activities you can do with your child, this program is right for you. Families receive a free book at each class session. These classes will begin in May.

If you have any questions about the Meridian School District Early Childhood Programs, please contact Jeanne-Claire Saucer or Lynne Jermunson at Irene Reither Primary School, (360) 398-2111.
Curriculum Update

We receive questions from time to time inquiring into what areas curriculum development process works and what it is currently focusing upon...

Very briefly, Curriculum decisions are based on district mission and goals, and are organized around the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements and Grade Level Expectations. These documents provide guidance to the district as new materials are considered, and also guide day-to-day decisions by classroom teachers. Parents have access to curriculum materials through the district website, [http://www.meridian.wednet.edu/curriculum/](http://www.meridian.wednet.edu/curriculum/) or at the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) at [http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/default.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/CurriculumInstruct/default.aspx).

There is a focus this year on mathematics curriculum development. OSPI is conducting a review of the mathematics standards, and new standards will be finalized by January 1, 2008. The draft standards have been examined by Meridian teachers to note any changes in emphasis. Preliminary analysis indicates that there will be a greater emphasis on basic math facts, and there have been some changes in expectations at each grade level, with the trend to have concepts taught earlier.

This year, the district has also added additional science kits at grades 1-5. Each grade now has two kits to use during the year, each of which is in use for about 10 weeks. In addition to content knowledge there is an emphasis on science inquiry and the scientific process. Kits include the study of Plants, Insects, Simple Machines, Earth Science and more! They provide many exciting learning activities for students.

As we further refine our curriculum development process to align with state and national standards we will keep you informed in the Compass.

Community Support for Physical Education

The Meridian Community has once again shown a great level of support for the physical Education program at the High School. Students and staff members worked together with the very generous support of the community and the booster club to raise nearly $40,000 for a complete revamping of the weight training facility in the gym area.

A professional layout and plan for the weight training area was created to maximize participation and the safety of students equipment. The target date for completion of the project is in early April.

Having a vibrant Physical Education/Health program at all levels of the district is a very important piece of our overall curriculum. The need for regular physical exercise as well as an awareness of a healthy lifestyle are critical for our students as they grow and mature.

The new facility at the high school will be a very positive support for the co-curricular athletic program as we see more and more of our students combining both Physical Education and co-curricular participation. Thanks to our Community!

School Levy Information

Due to changes in the state funding formula and the recent changes in the overall valuation of the district, Meridian will be losing approximately $300,000 of state funding over the next two years. This loss of “Levy Equalization Funds” in addition to some very specific education needs around the areas of technology, professional development and curriculum materials will provide some unique challenges for the district as we continue to move forward in the overall improvement of the educational program in Meridian.

Other fiscal pressures such as the ongoing physical maintenance of facilities and the need to maintain and update our fleet of buses that transport our children will also be considerations in the work of the school board as they determine a levy rate to send to the voters.

We encourage each voter to examine the information available regarding the levy and to exercise your right to vote when the issue of local school funding comes before you on March 11, 2008.

We thank our community for their continued support!

Meridian is a great place to be!
Our Connection to the Past

Did You Know?

The beautiful large black locust tree that grows on the Meridian High School campus was dedicated to two students who lost their lives in the "World War". A plaque near the tree dedicates it to two boys Will Mathews and Lee Alexander who gave their lives a century ago.

In looking at the memorial to the fallen classmates I am reminded of very important connection that the residents of our communities have to the schools. Our schools provide a place for our community to meet, a place for our students of all ages to play and compete, a place for music to be performed, for issues to be discussed, and most importantly for the learning of our students to occur.

Our history in Meridian is very important to all of us. As the district works through the process of upgrading and modernizing facilities in upcoming years, based upon the 2006 facilities plan, it will always be our effort to provide meaningful connections to the past and reminders of the rich experiences that former students have had at Meridian.

From class pictures to yearbooks there is a great story in our part of the county. If you have a story about your days and times while attending school at Meridian that would be of interest to the community please feel free to forward it to the school district office. We may consider it for use as we continue to finds ways to link a very bright future for our children, to a proud past.

Meridian is a great place to be!

Meridian School District No. 505
214 W. Laurel Rd.
Bellingham, WA 98226

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