Superintendent’s Message

A Community of Giving

On a night in late May over three hundred community members gathered to honor the academic accomplishments of the students of the Meridian School District at the “Evening of Excellence”.

After well deserved recognition for academic accomplishment and distinguished service were noted and honored, the program culminated with the distribution of over thirty-thousand dollars in scholarships from the Meridian Public Schools Foundation to Meridian students who were furthering their education at a number of post-secondary institutions.

Students attending the United States Naval Academy, Gonzaga University, BYU, WSU and the University of Washington stood next to students pursuing professional certifications from BTC and Whatcom Community College in a celebration of accomplishment and commitment.

It was wonderful to see so many of our students entering the adult world with a clear plan for their future. It was equally as impressive to see the collective efforts of a community come to fruition through the Meridian Schools Foundation in support of each of these students.

Chairman Paul Kratzig and a team of community volunteers meet regularly to pursue the goal of supporting Meridian students through scholarships. The foundation holds regular fundraising events and is dedicated to the ongoing pursuit of building the endowment that funds the majority of the scholarships that are given.

To date the foundation has given over three hundred and seventy thousand dollars to Meridian students in support of their educational goals.

A community is made by the collective efforts of many people coming together around a common goal. Keeping in mind the many positive programs already in place, we are working very hard to align and improve in every aspect of our school district program in Meridian.

With help from the foundation and support from our community there is no limit to the potential of our students and the positive impact they will one day have in our community, state and country.

Community Participation Needed...

Beginning in September of 2008 the Meridian School District will be seeking community participation and input as we seek to configure a bond issue to meet the needs of the aging structures and systems in the school district.

The Meridian School Board recently voted to retain the services of Zervas Group Architects of Bellingham to assist the district in building upon the long range facilities plan that was completed by a committee of community members in 2006.

The district was pleased by the nearly 52% support that the March 2008 bond measure received. Superintendent Tim Yeomans remarked that, “It was great to see that a majority of our community understood and supported the need for modernization of our school facilities. We now need to refocus our efforts and make a strong effort to involve community members at each stage in the process. If we work together I am sure that the community will support the very real need that is present.”

Please look for information coming in the fall about times and places where your valuable input can be given.

Timothy S. Yeomans

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IRPS Receives Grant for Playground!

Building upon the strong fundraising efforts of the Meridian PTA which purchased over thirty thousand dollars worth of new playground equipment for IRPS this past school year, the Meridian School District received a grant from the Catherine Snider estate in the amount of fifteen thousand dollars to help complete the project.

“It is a wonderful legacy that Catherine leaves. Her donation to the children of IRPS will be used nearly every day and will help the kids at IRPS be happy and active.”

The dollars will be used to provide a safe surface upon which to mount the newly purchased equipment.

New and Familiar Faces... in New Places

As the 2008-2009 school year begins there will be a number of changes in positions around the school district.

At TMCE the new principal will be David Forsythe. He comes to Meridian after many years of highly successful teaching and has spent several days this spring at Ten Mile with the staff and students. He is very excited and brings a very positive and supportive attitude and focus to the school.

At MHS Jill Iwasaki will become the new Assistant Principal in August. Jill has served as the founding principal at Ferndale’s Windward High School for the last four years. She is held in very high esteem by both co-workers and parents at Windward. In addition to her AP duties Jill will be working directly with the leadership students at MHS.

Following a mid-year reconfiguration of the Meridian School District Office which saw a reduction in the number of administrative positions from four to three, Fredrika (Deka) Smith is assuming the new post of Executive Director of Teaching and Learning. She will work closely with Maggie Bagwell who will serve in the Associate Director Position. These two positions will be responsible for programs such as Special Education, curriculum development and implementation, instruction, data management, professional development for certificated and classified staff, grant management, early childhood education, libraries, and all other aspects of district involving teaching and learning. By combining three positions into two the district is making an effort to operate as efficiently as possible while still maintaining and supporting the main mission of improving student achievement.

In the Athletic Office, Meridian graduate Chad Larsen brings both enthusiasm and a great deal of applicable expertise to the Job of the Meridian School District Athletic Director. Chad will work with coaches and the community while overseeing the entire athletic program in the Meridian School District. As a former student and athlete at Meridian Chad looks forward to many years of supporting the Trojans in this role.

In the Bus Garage our new Transportation Director/ Head Mechanic is Dan Alverts. Dan comes to Meridian with a wealth of experience and has gotten off to a great start over the last two months. Dan’s responsibilities include bus routing and driver scheduling, all maintenance and repair of the transportation fleet, working with other district employees to schedule trips and providing oversight with regard to driver training and safety programs.
District Happenings...

DISTRICT BUDGET INFORMATION

As most folks are aware this has been a very eventful spring for school districts in Whatcom County as well as districts throughout the state. While providing some enhanced funding for educational programs in public schools, the most recent state legislative action also created a number of unanticipated and unfunded local costs.

Although it has been a difficult process, Meridian has benefited greatly from being one of the first districts in the county to take the steps required to meet the budget targets. Working very closely with the school board and the local unions the district was able to successfully navigate the very challenging situation while maintaining the educational and co-curricular programs that are so important to our community.

MERIDIAN ALUMNI BANQUET

A large annual gathering of Meridian graduates was held in the high school commons/auditorium on Saturday, June 21. Judy Boxx, Meridian School Board Member, was the lead organizer of the event which annually renews the ties of the many graduates back to the Laurel community. The event is held in June and is a great opportunity for the community to gather and reconnect.

THE MERIDIAN BOOSTER CLUB EVENT IS A SUCCESS

On March 29 the Meridian Booster Club held a very successful auction in support of many programs that they support in the Meridian schools. The community came together and raised over twenty two thousand dollars to support the co-curricular activity program in the schools. The money raised supports music, athletics, and academic competitions through monetary and volunteer support. Meridian is very fortunate to have such an active and committed group of boosters to support participation of our students in so many positive pursuits.

If you wish to become involved please contact the district office at 398-7111 and we will be happy to forward your information to the booster club leadership.

MMS GRADE 6 STUDENTS PARTAKE IN OUTDOOR ED.

The yearly tradition of Meridian grade 6 students traveling to Cornet Bay on Whidbey Island and partaking in the outstanding outdoor education program continued in 2008.

The students partook in subjects ranging from applied science, math and writing, while physically challenging themselves with hikes and the study of nature and the eco-system in which we live.

Accompanied by student counselors, adult staff and parent volunteers, the students spent four days in a traditional camp environment where learning and fun are combined for an experience that our students will remember for their entire life.

MMS Music Students Make Outstanding Showings for Meridian

The music students of Meridian Middle School have made outstanding strides over this last school year under the direction of teacher Sandy Rogers. After creating a marching band as well as a flag team, the Meridian Middle School Trojans have represented the district in a number of parades and competitions, as well as providing concerts at the school.

The band received first-place honors in parades at Lynden and Free-land. In addition to the honors, the band was the recipient of $500 that will go toward the purchase of new instruments.

There is a great deal of participation and enthusiasm around the growing music program at Meridian Middle School in both the band and Choir. Mrs. Rogers works very hard to prepare all of the groups for concerts, festivals and competition. This past spring the middle school choir received a superior rating at the San Juan Music Educators competition.

All Meridian Students receive music as part of the school experience in grades K-6. In middle school and high school the participation in the music programs takes place as an elective choice for the students. The district is very proud of the success that the middle school students have had this year and we are excited to see music in Meridian continue to grow.
Parent Access to Student Grades...

Beginning in late-September the Meridian school district is going take the first steps toward providing all parents in the district with access to their student’s academic information.

A district task force consisting of parents, teachers and principals worked collectively over the course of the 2007-2008 school year to investigate and ultimately decide upon a common platform for grade reporting and parent access.

The goal of the group charged with the work was not simply to find a tool for grade keeping and reporting, but to determine which system would give parents the best access K-12 in order to better involve the parents in supporting the learning of the students in Meridian.

The program, The Skyward Grading Module, was piloted by a small group of teachers during the spring of the 2007-2008 school year. After testing, conversations with the testers and the vendor took place where details of use and implementation were discussed.

Beginning in the fall of 2008 training for the staff at all schools will begin, with ongoing support continuing throughout the fall. Shortly following the implementation of the program the district will be distributing information about parent access and the features of the program that will allow parents and students to stay current on their academic progress in a single access format no matter which school their child attends.

As we work toward alignment and efficiency within the district it is also our goal to give our teachers and staff members the tools to positively impact student performance. We believe that the creation of a single access for parents, beginning in the primary school and continuing all the way through high school, will provide the continuity and familiarity necessary for parents in their efforts to support the learning of their child.

As this effort roles out in the fall there are bound to be some minor challenges. We ask for your patience in advance. The Meridian School District is committed to building upon our current levels of student achievement, and we believe that this tool will provide support to both staff and parents as we work together to educate our children.
The Arts

Success Continues in Athletics