



Nome Public Schools

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Learning from Nome Report June 6 – November 18, 2011 Emerging Themes

One of the top priorities of the Nome Public Schools Board of Education for the superintendent directly addresses the promotion of positive relations with the Nome Community and the Nome Common Council. To this end, the “Learning from Nome” project was initiated as soon as I began work on June 6. Meetings were held the following weeks with over 50 meetings with individuals, 28 meetings with groups and over 60 formal meetings with building-level school staff. Although conversations with community members and school staff are ongoing, the following report identifies core themes that emerged during initial meetings.

During meetings, individuals and groups explained what they viewed as the positive areas of the NPS School District. In addition to providing this information, meetings allowed individuals and groups to identify areas of perceived need. As discussions took place, conversations took many different directions. All conversations were informative to the work of NPS and each person shared perspectives valuable to school improvement planning. All ideas have been collected and will be preserved for future reference. The themes described in this report are those that multiple individuals and/or groups brought forward during meetings. As conversations continue, additional common themes will no doubt emerge and need to be added to this list.

Nome Is Full Of Great People

Individuals and groups stated frequently that Nome is a community with great people. Teachers especially said that kids, families and other teachers were the best part of the NPS District. The size of the district contributes to the ability to know people in the district well. It is apparent that there is a high-level of pride for Nome among members of the community and school staff.

Nome Offers A Variety Of Programs For Students

A number of individuals and groups appreciate that a variety of programs are available in Nome. Programs offered through the Community Schools Program at NES, the Vocational Programs at NACTEC, and the JROTC Program at NBHS are all just examples of what were discussed. Additionally, the Extensions Home School, Youth Facility, Pre-Kindergarten, and Charter School reflect a variety of programs available for a wide range of students.

Effective Communications From School To Families/Community

There were many discussions addressing the topic of school to family and school to community communications. The most effective way to share information needs to be researched and implemented. Several ideas were shared of the types of things parents would like to receive from teachers on a regular basis. There was also interest in seeing teachers and school staff reaching out to individual families more directly through such avenues as telephone calls and home visits.

Courses At Secondary Level That Are Relevant And Tied To Careers

Individuals and groups expressed concern there were not more courses preparing students for specific careers. The generally feeling was that career type courses make school more relevant to students. When students have a sense of relevance for school, this sense will encourage students to take education seriously. Relevance will also aid in preventing student dropouts.

Increase Extended Learning Opportunities – College

Members of the community and school staff expressed a desire in seeing more high-level, college prep courses made available for students. These courses could either be remedial or college entry level in nature. The feeling is that these types of courses will challenge college bound students. These courses will also help students be more successful their first year of college.

Grant Writer Needed To Expand NPS Opportunities

A number of conversations included descriptions of various types of grants that might be available to the school district. Repeatedly, these grant possibilities came with caution as to the amount of time that could be involved in pursuing them. This theme advised that the services of a grant writer were badly needed.

Organizational Structure

Concern was shared that a seeming structural void existed in areas of the school system. Members of the community and the staff expressed concern that this void may directly relate to philosophical implementation of leadership.

Teacher Collaboration Opportunities

School staff expressed a desire that collaboration opportunities be afforded certified and classified staff. Conversations about collaboration time revealed there are many differing opinions as to how collaboration could take place. Though there were many ideas relating to the type of collaboration possible, there was a strong desire to see collaboration occur.

Address Student Apathy, Social Promotion, Low Expectations

Members of the community and school staff expressed concern that there was a seemingly high degree of student apathy in pockets of student groups. This concern was frequently associated with what was described as an apparent pattern of social promotion and low expectations for students. The need to reform the systems directly allowing these situations was emphasized.

Improve New Teacher Transition Into Nome

School staff noted difficulties experienced during the first days and weeks following their move to Nome. Several ideas were offered as to how those first days and weeks could be improved for new district staff.

In closing, it is important to note that these themes represent what has been shared with me during my first months in office. This report is not meant to indicate that I have nothing more to “Learn from Nome”. The office of the superintendent remains open to community and school staff members who wish to share their views regarding the areas that could be improved in the NPS school district. Anyone wishing to schedule an appointment to have a formal conversation with me may do so by calling the district office at 443-2231.

As school superintendent of the Nome Public Schools, I would like to express my appreciation for all who have taken time to share their thoughts and perceptions with me. These meetings have provided the district with valuable information that can greatly help improve schools to the benefit of every student. Continual improvement of schools to the benefit of all students is the shared work of our community.