

District Advisory Council "Talking Points"
October 12, 2011

- John Harrison has resigned his position as principal of Mercer Island High School effective October 14, 2011. He has accepted an administrative position with the Bellevue School District where he will be working at the central office in secondary support to coach and mentor principals.
- Pat Blix, a retired administrator and formerly interim principal at West Mercer, will be filling the principal role at the high school through the end of the year. Pat is currently traveling in Guatemala, but returns on November 4 to take over her duties.
- Craig Olson is acting principal from October 14 – November 3.
- The search for a new principal will commence in early winter with involvement from staff, students, parents and the community. Gary Plano will be meeting with various representatives from those groups to develop a principal profile
- A change to Wednesday Early Release will begin next year. Moving the shortened day to a mid-week day was the optimal day for expanding periods on the shortened day in the high school's modified block schedule. Gary explained that the current seven-period schedule results in nearly one month less teaching time in class causing, in his mind, to add homework to students in order to get through the material. Students have asked Gary to talk to the high school staff about the homework load, in light of adding more instructional minutes back into the shortened day.
- Early-release Mondays results in 30-minute classes; the change to Wednesday means 50-minute periods.
- Some elementary teachers are not in favor of the change because Wednesdays are optimal teaching days, as opposed to Monday when students are tired from the weekend. Some elementary staff feel they have not been heard on the issue.
- Schools have to be on the same early release schedule because of bus transportation and the fact that many families depend on older students for childcare.
- 21st Century Facilities Planning Committee Report
The committee wants the board to re-build all schools including MIHS over a 50-year time period.
 - No dates have been set to initiate the rebuilding of every school, but we know we need to rebuild IMS and the elementary schools first.
 - Presently, these schools are over-capacity and not suitable for expansion; additionally some have expressed seismic concerns.

- The committee recognizes that a 4th school would be optimal, but at present, no land is available.
- “Beautiful buildings are still secondary to quality teachers.” To this, Dr. Plano said, “learning will be transformed in a transformational learning environment. It isn’t just facilities or great teachers; we must have both.”
- The 50-year plan includes extensive Mega-Block repurposing: a new multi-story high school, removed or renovated pool, removal of North Mercer, with plans to include Youth Theatre NW in the future “black box” theatre extension at the high school, and space for pre-school and before-care/after-care services currently housed on the North Mercer Campus.
- The planning committee engaged in much discussion about the North Mercer site. If the district puts a 4th school at North Mercer, a compromise of the plan for a new high school occurs.
- A 4th elementary school is a good option if property becomes available in the short-term.
- The ideal location would be on the north end of the island. North Mercer buildings will not be renovated. At some future point, they will be removed once their useful life has been reached.
- A single bond proposition is preferable, because the community knows that a yes vote means all schools will be affected, not one at a time.
- Bonds passed in the 1990’s are retiring in 2015 and these taxes will expire. Some posited that it will be much more difficult to pass a bond following the expiration of all bonds, because it will be viewed by many as a new tax.
- Our tax rates are low as compared to neighboring districts. The perception is that we pay more because of property taxes, but in fact we pay less for schools.
- November 3, 2011: Board study session, followed by a schedule for Focus Groups
- The Nutrition Committee is scheduled to report to the School Board on November 10, 2011.
- MISD is a Level One Green District, which means we have complied with state recycling and composting goals.
- Island Park, Lakeridge and IMS are Level Two, focusing on energy conservation. The Green Team at all of our schools has done a tremendous job of keeping the momentum going in the “green schools” movement.
- The Legislature will hold a special session on November 28, before the regular session.
 - They are proposing a levy equalization reduction, which does not affect Mercer Island, but is very bad news for other districts that

receive these funds as the finds help them achieve parity with property-rich districts.

- They also recommend reducing the school year by 1 day, which is unlikely given teacher contracts and the state duty to fund basic education. They propose a 4% salary reduction for staff, but it was noted that we have a three-year contract with our teachers.
- Enrollment numbers show we are slightly ahead of budget, with less than predicted at the elementary students and more in secondary.
 - 120 new students came from the downtown core; last year it was fewer at this time of year.