

AEA Viewpoint



Take the lead.

What's Best For Kids?

On Sunday, December 9, 2007, the Seattle Times printed an article in their "SE Living" section which reports news and activities in and around southeast King County. The article outlined parent concerns in regards to course changes at Cascade Middle School, specifically the new "block scheduling" system. The article states that "District officials said the new model was crafted to address a variety of district concerns, including rising teachers' salaries that kept the district from hiring more teachers." The complete text of the article can be found by going to the Seattle Times Homepage; then click on "Local"; "Southeast King County" and read the story from December 9 titled, "Course Changes Upset Auburn Parents".

The new middle school schedule was approved by the Auburn School Board in June 2007. The schedule called for 90 minute block scheduling of classes, re-assigned middle school librarians as half time elective teachers and half time librarians, reduced elective classes from approximately 45 minutes to 37 minutes and created a new course

called "Content Fundamentals" designed to provide students additional time for differentiating instruction in reading and/or mathematics.

Members had a strong reaction to the Seattle Times article. I received phone calls at home on Sunday afternoon and emails in my "In Box" on Monday morning. During our December 10, Rep Council meeting Building Representatives requested that the Association address the Auburn School Board about our concerns, which I did on Monday night. What follows are the essential remarks I made to the Auburn School Board.

To begin with, this is not a "Cascade Middle School" issue; this is an Auburn School District issue. The article states that students are receiving more classroom instruction time with the new schedule and that science teachers supported the change because lab time is now lengthened.

This is not accurate

I have visited every middle school and met personally with staff members. The concerns they have raised about the new schedule and its impact upon students have far outweighed the possible benefits of the schedule. The "block schedule" is not consistent among the four middle schools. Blocks schedules range from 80-115 minutes.

While it is correct that students are in one place for a longer amount of time, the cost of this extra time has come at the expense of science, social studies and elective classes.

Elective classes have been cut from 45 minutes to 37 minutes, which provides no substantial time to adequately teach. History and science are treated like electives and staff were told to teach the subject "if they can fit it in". At one school, there are "traveling teachers" who must move on a cart from classroom to classroom.

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December

20-Jan. 2 Winter Vacation

January

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Sometimes the students wait for 10 minutes in the hallway; staff have been told to use this as a teaching opportunity and were told to teach a mini lesson in the hallway while waiting for classrooms to open up and students to complete their passing in the hallway. This is extremely difficult to do with over 100 students in the hall during passing time.

The new schedule has created challenges in serving our Special Education and ELL students. There is not enough staff to meet the unique learning needs of these students.

This has created classroom situations where there are up to 15 Resource Room students in a 90 minute (plus or minus) block schedule.

While the Special Education classroom teachers strive to adapt curriculum to students and support regular education teachers in doing the same, there is not enough staff to meet the needs and not enough time within the schedule to work with students on their IEP goals and objectives.

Planning time was used to create a new course titled "Content Fundamentals". The goal of Content Fundamentals is to provide remediation for struggling students and enrichment for those students who need to move even further beyond the regular course content. The article mentions that staff received training to prepare for the new schedule.

That is not accurate

Training was not provided for staff to adjust to the new block

schedule nor the addition of Content Fundamentals. No curriculum was adopted or provided for remediation or enrichment. In addition, elective teachers were "teamed" with core content teachers during this time. Staff members create their own curriculum for their own students at each separate grade level at each individual middle school.

I met one wonderful PE teacher who is providing reading remediation for one of the lowest performing student groups. While this teacher absolutely believes that they can make a difference for kids, the staff member questions the wisdom of having staff who have not had experience or expertise in reading instruction, to provide such remediation.

When staff members were asked how Content Fundamentals would help move students to the state standards, many staff believe that while the fundamental principle of the program is sound, the lack of curriculum, lack of training and piecemeal approach to implementation will not help raise achievement scores.

Lastly, the article states that the new model was crafted to address a variety of concerns, including rising teacher's salaries that kept the district from hiring more teachers. The article states that "State mandated teacher pay raises have tied up district money that would have been used to hire teachers for reading, writing and math programs."

The Auburn Education Association respectfully submits that:

The salary increases are **cost of living adjustments**, not raises. We went many years without COLAs, and have yet to make up the lost ground.

Washington teachers are "dead last" in compensation among West Coast schools.

Inflation has outpaced per capita income among Washington educators by 27.9%.

We are in the bottom 10% of retirement benefits in the nation.

Washington teacher salary increases are almost 10% behind the average U.S. teacher.

Blaming educators for budgetary woes, rather than placing the blame on the state for failing to fully fund education, only serves to divide and to alienate those who daily complete the charge of educating Auburn's children.

Contrary to the article's implications, the educators are not the villains. We spend hundreds of uncompensated hours lesson planning, assessing, writing letters of recommendation, contacting parents, and spend hundreds of dollars out of our own pocket to supplement instruction. We complete tasks that benefit our students and community in innumerable ways. We do these things because we care about our students and about our district.



Cathy deJong is a 2nd grade teacher, currently on leave as the President of the Auburn Education Association

Help for Flood Victims

The recent flooding in Southwest Washington has devastated many members of our educational family. The Auburn Education Association is working with the Chinook UniServ Council to accept donations that will go directly to members to help rebuild their personal and professional lives. Kathie Axtell, Chinook Council President says what people really need are gift cards to buy groceries, gas, and home improvement items, and replace personal classroom items.



Due to the complications of IRS reporting and other accounting concerns, **Chinook is requesting that donations be in the form of gift cards only.**

Please consider helping our fellow educators who have lost so much. You may send your gift card donation directly to the AEA office. All gift card donations will be personally delivered to the president of the Chinook UniServ Council.

(Beth Stratton-You're a Winner!)

AEA Executive Board

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AEA Office/253-804-6010

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ESA Rep- Gary Jordan

Lakeland Hills/876-7711

Did You Find It?



We have secretly placed the name of an AEA member within the pages of the Viewpoint.

If this is your name, you have won a \$5.00 gift card to Starbucks!~

To redeem your prize, contact AEA office manager, Kimberly Greene at office@auburnea.org or by phone at 253-804-6010

Shared Sick Leave



Check out this space for requests from your colleagues for shared sick leave.



Andrea Hollister, Ad Building; Julie McKenzie, Alpac; Cathy Lorenz, Alpac; Nancy Beard, AMHS; Jill Waletzko, Chinook; Margaret Stevely, Gildo Rey; Ashlea Muxen, Ilalko; Carmella Duca, Mt. Baker; Bonnie Kallman, Olympic; Kim Detwiler, Olympic

If you have over 22 days of accumulated sick leave and would like to share extra days, please contact the office manager in your building for the shared sick leave form. You may donate up to 6 days each year.

THE AEA MARKETPLACE

Your source for goods and services from our membership community

FOR SALE

Wood Bassinet by Eddie Bauer in Light Oak in excellent condition! Converts to a rocking cradle and features underneath storage shelf, retractable canopy, plays 5 songs with automatic shutoff, locking casters, and includes liner, mattress pad and skirt. \$95.00. Email Tim (Dick Scobee) at t.pfab@juno.com



FOR RENT

Have an apartment or home that you are looking to rent? Why not try The AEA Marketplace! Send a brief description including location, rent price and availability date. Remember to include your contact name, phone number and work location.



GIFTS

Leaf Motif Card

If you have any questions please call Kimberly Greene at the AEA Office @ 253-804-6010

FOR SALE

Do you have an item for sale? Send a brief description of your item, (including price) along with your contact name, phone number and work location in the district. You can see your ad in this spot next month!

THE BODY STUDIO
www.TheBodyStudio.org
253-321-2181



15718 East Main Street, Sumner, 98390

**Kickboxing ~ Pilates ~ Yoga ~ Reformer Training
~ Step Spinning ~ Strength Training ~ Kid's Club
~ Core Conditioning ~ Nutrition Consulting**

Auburn School District

Employee Special

NO JOINING FEE on all monthly memberships (\$75 savings!)

FREE 15 minute training session on the Pilates Reformer.

5 Private Reformer Sessions (30 minutes each) for only \$120.00.

Come try any of the classes for 2 weeks **FREE**. Call or check the website for more information.



- Ads are run in the AEA Marketplace on a first come, first served basis pending available space.
- Ads are accepted only in written form.
- Direct ads to Kimberly Greene via e-mail at office@auburnea.org
- Ads are subject to approval from the Executive Board and content may be edited for length.