

**FamilyLink**  
**State of the Program 2006-2008**

**Goal #1: Create a school climate that promotes inclusion and an expectation of excellence.**

- We expanded the number of classes taught by our certificated staff. Teacher Judi DeVere offered US History & Government for high school credit. The US History & Government class culminated in 10 students, two FamilyLink teachers and a few parent chaperones enjoying a field trip to Washington DC, colonial Williamsburg, Mt. Vernon, and the Jamestown Living Museum in May 2007.
- A monthly Biology Lab for high school students supported home study. Biology labs are a challenge for students to do at home. FamilyLink teacher Jim Gilmour set up a schedule of labs for the year. Students did the preparatory reading at home and then participated in the labs once a month. We were fortunate to be able to use the VHS lab for this class.
- We focused on math and science in many of our enrichment opportunities this year. Math workshops included Art & Geometry, Tessellations, and Problem Solving. A Vashon Artist in Schools grant allowed us to have labyrinth expert Betty Hawkins work with teacher Nan Hammett on a workshop that combined history, art and mathematics in the study of labyrinths. Science involved Biology Lab, Science Workshops for Kids and the Lorax Club.
- The Lorax Club, a multi-age class offered in the fall, combined classroom discovery with hands-on field experience in the study of four island eco-systems. Classroom experience included nature journaling, presentations, hands-on experience with specimens, and learning games. Field work included observations, measurement, journaling, and discussion with guest experts from the Vashon-Maury Island Audubon Society, Land Trust, Forest Stewards and People for Puget Sound.
- We conducted a year-end survey of our families in spring 2007. Almost 34% of our families responded to the survey. We learned that parents and students value the consulting teacher service, enrichment classes, curriculum support, the opportunity to earn a high school diploma and the community-building activities we offer.
- We added Health to our high school credit classes.
- Once again, the Lorax Club was sponsored by the Vashon-Maury Island Audubon. Students interacted with each of four different island ecosystems in scientific discovery and restoration work.
- We continued to look for opportunities to partner with island community organizations. This year, we collaborated with Vashon Community Care Center on a journaling project that included FamilyLink parents, students and elders at the community care center.

## **Goal #2 – Provide appropriately challenging curriculum for all students.**

- We received grant funds from PIE to create a series of inquiry-based science kits for students, grades 3-5 and 6-9, to use at home. Topics for the science kits include Sound, Oxidation, Kinetic Model, Magnetism, Rocks & Minerals, Light and Electricity. Each kit will contain activity cards, teacher notes, a list of materials to purchase or find at home, and harder-to-find science materials (safety goggles, petri dishes, test tubes, etc.) provided by FamilyLink.
- We also created sets of “Kids Discover” booklets with teacher guides. These sets of nonfiction titles for students in grades 3-7 focus on a single topic in the natural or social sciences. The teacher guides include various learning activities for parents to use.
- We continue to add curriculum and other materials to our resource library, with an emphasis on materials that are used and/or aligned with the other schools. PTSA provided funds for FamilyLink to purchase US History & Government books for our high school credit class.
- *Show What You Know* and other WASL prep materials were provided to students taking the test.
- We continued to offer a weekly writing lab for grades 8-10 in order to improve writing skills. We also introduced a writing lab for grades 5-7, and a math lab for select middle and high school students. It was at the request of parents and students that we initiated the additional writing and math labs.
- In September, we met with families personally to review the test results and discuss individual interventions, if needed.
- Once again, our 10<sup>th</sup> grade students excelled in the writing and reading sections of the WASL. We continue to work with those students who will need to retake math.
- Our on-time graduation rate is 100%.
- We received funding from PTSA to purchase high school science books in biology, chemistry and physical science. These are the same books used at Vashon High School. With those same funds, we also purchased a variety of middle school science books.
- PIE provided funding for a set of social studies DVD’s to be shared by FamilyLink and StudentLink.
- Providing the WASL practice booklets again this year, gave parents plenty of time to review test questions with their students and to get additional help from consulting teachers if necessary.
- We continue to encourage families to have their students tested. While all of our 10<sup>th</sup> graders test, participation drops off by grade level with no participation in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The majority of our homeschool population do not feel the WASL is a helpful tool for parent/teachers. Fortunately, the state in its wisdom has made it possible for families to opt out of the WASL with no penalty to the district. Families only need move to part-time status. While fully enrolled students are required to participate in the WASL, part-time homeschool students may choose to take the WASL or not.
- Continue to find ways to better prepare our students to succeed on the WASL, particularly in math and science.

### **Goal #3: Provide and enhance positive relationships with home and community.**

- Welcomed four new members to our advisory board. More diversity in our board makeup. New board members represented a good sample of the different homeschool philosophies among our families. This is important as we discuss program offerings and family needs.
- Created an email list of most of our families. Those who do not have access to a computer still receive most information by mail. Because we don't see our students every day, finding ways to improve communication is important. Using email, we were able to alert families about learning opportunities and other events quickly and cost effectively. Parents/students also use email to submit weekly progress reports to their consulting teachers.
- Teacher Jim Gilmour directed 10 high school students in a production of *Goode Vs. Badd, It's Melodrama* in order to raise funds for the US History & Government class field trip to Washington DC. Jim also taught a Skits & Scenes workshop for younger students (K-5) that culminated in a performance at our Spring Learning Celebration in the spring. Students performed *Goode Vs. Badd, It's Melodrama* over two weekends at McMurray, raising funds for the trip. Parents were involved as well in set design and production, and promotion of the play.
- We were pleased to receive funding support from PIE, PTSA, VAIS and Vashon-Maury Audubon for curriculum and learning opportunities.
- We introduced art and science activity stations at our Spring Learning Celebration and promoted student displays and performances more than we have in the past. We enjoyed one of the biggest turnouts in the last couple of years at our Spring Learning Celebration. More students presented displays of their work and performed after the potluck dinner.
- We continue to look for opportunities to build community within our homeschool population. This year, we invited families to help us weed the landscaping around our building. Seven families joined staff in cleaning up the garden and sharing a potluck dinner.
- On October 16, we hosted an "Adventures in Green Cleaning: A Workshop for Families". An educator from King County led families through two interactive lessons about how to keep groundwater/stream water clean and about safer household cleaning supplies.
- On April 24, The Lorax Club was recognized by King County Executive Ron Sims as an *Earth Hero at School for 2008* for their contributions toward environmental stewardship on Vashon.
- FamilyLink hosted author, storyteller and contributing writer to Home Education Magazine, David Albert on May 27. Mr. Albert addressed the homeschool experience with practical advice and humor in two talks to the homeschool community--Learning About Learning and The Curriculum of Abundance.

**Goal #4: Provide and promote effective instructional leadership.**

- Jim Gilmour and Nan Hammett attended Collection of Evidence training sponsored by OSPI. Jim Gilmour attended the math COE training and Nan Hammett did writing.
- Nan Hammett also attended the following classes: *Success Strategies for Struggling Math Students* and *The Neurobiology of Girls*. Nan Hammett's classes allow her to better support parents and students in her weekly meetings and enrichment classes and labs.
- Judi DeVere completed a class in *Chinese History & Culture* at Seattle Pacific University. Judi DeVere visited her daughter in China and sent daily emails and pictures of her travels to all her students. She will use both her classroom learning and travel experience in future World History classes for FamilyLink.
- Nadine Meeker participated in Vashon Island Community Emergency Team training and attended the Northwest Regional ESP Issues conference. She also participated in technology training through PSESD. Nadine Meeker learned how to respond to island emergencies during the 8-week CERT training. At the ESP Issues conference, she attended sessions dealing with autism, dealing with difficult people and cross cultural competency overview. Her tech training was in MS Excel and FileMaker Pro.
- Teachers Judi DeVere, Nan Hammett and administrative staff Julie Hanger attended the Washington Association for Learning Alternatives conference this year. Of special interest was the implementation of classroom-based assessments in health and fitness, the arts and social studies, and making professional learning communities work in alternative settings.
- Three of our staff participated in the Gender Issues Training hosted by Sarah Wright.
- Secretary Nadine Meeker attended the "Asperger's Syndrome: What Educators Need to Know" workshop.