



## LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER REPORT

**Administrator:** Susan Hanson (Julie Hanger)

**Building/Program/Department:** FamilyLink & StudentLink

**Board Meeting Date:** 9/21/07

**Focus:** Opening Days/Orientation

### **HIGHLIGHTS and ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **FamilyLink**

- FamilyLink welcomed 66 fully enrolled students this fall including 17 new students. The first week of school is always busy meeting families, completing enrollment paperwork and getting started on written student learning plans, and this year was no exception.
- On the evening of September 11, FamilyLink invited families to join staff in weeding and doing general clean-up of our landscaping. Ten families participated. After an hour of hard work, we all enjoyed a potluck and outdoor play as the weather was beautiful.
- FamilyLink enrichment classes will begin the last week of September. More than 75 students (this number includes homeschool students who are not fully enrolled in FamilyLink) have signed up for classes including Pottery, Drawing & Painting, Sensational Scientists, Consumer Report Investigations, High School Health, Great Books Discussion Group, the Lorax Club, Tuesday Family Group, and Mentor Connection.
- Once again this year, the Lorax Club will be sponsored by the Vashon-Maury Island Audubon. Students will interact with each of four different island ecosystems in scientific discovery and/or restoration work.
- On October 16, at 6:30 p.m., we will host "Adventures in Green Cleaning: A Workshop for Families. An educator from King County Department of Natural Resources will lead families through two interactive lessons about how to keep groundwater/stream water clean and about safer household cleaning supplies. FamilyLink will receive a \$500 grant from King County for further educational efforts at sustainability for hosting this workshop.
- Jim Gilmour accepted a fulltime position teaching 6<sup>th</sup> grade math at McMurray. We were sorry to lose him, but happy he was able to stay in the district. Teachers Judi DeVere and Nan Hammett will continue to work with families this year. At this time, paraeducator, Laura Weston, is assisting teachers with families meetings and paperwork

#### **StudentLink**

- StudentLink welcomed back eight returning students and eight new ones at an orientation meeting held on September 4, 2007. Nan Hammett, who is teaching at StudentLink this year during Yve Susskind's leave of absence, led the students through a discussion of *Intensions for the Year*--having a positive experience, creating good learning, meeting expectations, allowing parent support, becoming more independent--and *Best Practices*--committing to learning, connecting to others, showing up even when times are tough, completing work, learning from others.
- Since orientation, students have been meeting one-on-one with Nan to develop their written student learning plans and get started on their courses. Some are doing courses online through Apex Learning and others are working on portfolios. A small computer lab in the StudentLink classroom allows students to do much of their work on campus.

## **WORK IN PROGRESS/CHALLENGES**

### **FamilyLink**

We continue to have families enrolling in the program this month. With one less teacher, we may have to hire a second paraeducator to assist with meetings and paperwork.

### **StudentLink**

Although teacher Nan Hammett is not new to alternative education, she is new to Apex Learning and ELPH, our electronic portfolio program. Therefore, she has to get up to speed quickly with the technology at the same time she is getting to know students and helping them get going on their courses.



## **LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER REPORT**

**Administrator:** Susan Hanson & Julie Hanger

**Building/Program/Department:** FamilyLink & StudentLink

**Board Meeting Date:** October 25, 2007

**Focus:** Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools

## **HIGHLIGHTS and ACHIEVEMENTS**

The nine characteristics of high-performing schools provide the framework for FamilyLink and StudentLink program development. While implementation may look a little different in an alternative education program, the core values these characteristics embody are integral to our school improvement planning.

### **Clear and Shared Focus**

FamilyLink and StudentLink share a similar focus: to support the educational goals of our students and their families; to respect the learning styles and abilities of each student; to provide for individualized learning activities and instruction; and to respect the teacher/student/family relationship that regular one-on-one contact provides.

### **High Standards and Expectations**

Educational expectations for FamilyLink and StudentLink students are set in their Written Student Learning Plan (WSLP). This document describes the subject areas to be studied, lists the essential instructional materials to be used, provides a timeline and method for evaluation of student progress, and identifies EALRs or other benchmarks (graduation requirements) to be met. We encourage high standards for learning in all our students and work with them and their families (in FamilyLink) to create a learning plan that best meets their needs.

### **Effective School Leadership**

Leadership in both FamilyLink and StudentLink is shared and distributive. From principal to staff to parents, we work as a team whose primary focus is our students. In FamilyLink we support and empower our parents; we lead by example, modeling good teaching practices and providing the tools to aid them in instructing their children. We also benefit from the involvement of the FamilyLink Advisory Board. These parents and community members are leaders in the homeschool community and provide valuable input to our program.

### **High Levels of Collaboration and Communication**

There is a high degree of collaboration and communication in our two programs. Our small size and the requirement for weekly contact with students, facilitates communication among staff, students and families. In addition to weekly all-staff meetings, FamilyLink and StudentLink teachers meet weekly to discuss student learning, review WASL scores and discuss remediation plans, evaluate curriculum, etc.

### **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with State Standards**

In FamilyLink, we guide parents in choosing curriculum that is aligned with state standards. And as mentioned above, each student's learning plan must identify the standards to be met. We also keep in mind that students may transition back to the regular classroom and we want to ensure a smooth process. At the high school level, in both FamilyLink and StudentLink, we use the same curriculum as VHS or something very similar.

### **Frequent Monitoring of Learning and Teaching**

Alternative learning requirements stipulate that certificated staff is responsible for supervising, monitoring, assessing and evaluating students. Teachers have weekly contact with students (and parents in FamilyLink). In StudentLink, we encourage more frequent contact with students; some have contracts that stipulate daily attendance in the classroom. All student progress is evaluated monthly. Fully enrolled students in both programs are expected to take the WASL. Students who do not pass one or more of the WASL have a remediation plan put in place. High school students are required to pass the WASL, complete a culminating project and meet other graduation requirements. Where appropriate, students take the COGAT or other assessments if they want to enroll in classes at McMurray or VHS.

### **Focused Professional Development**

Professional development for us has primarily centered on our affiliation with the Washington Association for Learning Alternatives. This organization hosts two conferences each year whose focus is student learning, staff support, and program enrichment and development.

### **Supportive Learning Environment**

Again, the small size of our programs allows for a focused and supportive learning environment. One-on-one contact enables personalized relationships between teacher and student. This is particularly important in StudentLink where many of our students benefit from having another caring adult in their lives. In FamilyLink, we acknowledge the parent as a valued and contributing partner in the education of their children.

### **High Levels of Family and Community Involvement**

FamilyLink involves the family in every aspect of student learning. We provide many opportunities for community involvement including parent support groups, workshops, learning celebrations. Parents even initiate some of our enrichment activities. Examples are The Lorax Club and Mentor Connection. Our advisory board is made up of parents and community members. In StudentLink, we are initiating new opportunities for parent involvement with more regularly communication and occasions for parents to attend student meetings. We also encourage students to be engaged in their community through volunteering and service learning projects.



## **LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER REPORT**

**Administrator:** Susan Hanson & Julie Hanger

**Building/Program/Department:** FamilyLink & StudentLink

**Board Meeting Date:** November 29, 2007

**Focus:** Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities for the Link programs include administrative, teaching and support staff. Our shared purpose is to provide students with the encouragement, support and resources needed to meet their educational goals.

- FamilyLink and StudentLink teachers meet together for one hour every week to share ideas, discuss strategies, review curriculum, and develop intervention plans that support student learning. These weekly meetings have been standard procedure in the Link programs for the last nine years.
- Recently, teacher Judi DeVere attended the Washington Association for Learning Alternatives (WALA) conference in Pasco, WA. WALA holds two conferences a year—one in the fall and another in the spring. This is an important professional community for the Link programs as it includes administrators, teachers, and support staff who work in parent partner programs, alternative schools, and digital learning programs. Topics for discussion at conferences include presenting core academic subjects in an alternative education program, technology, WASL preparation and CAA requirements, rules and regulations governing alternative education, and best practices.
- We also recognize parents and students as participants in our learning community. In FamilyLink, parents are our partners and allies. Teachers and parents work together to develop teaching strategies, choose appropriate curriculum, evaluate progress and assess learning—all tailored to the individual student's learning plan and in compliance with the GLE's and state standards. In StudentLink, students play an active role in their education and work closely with their teacher to choose curriculum that best suits their learning style, interests and educational goals, in addition to meeting graduation requirements and state standards.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS and ACHIEVEMENTS**

- On October 24, student scientists in FamilyLink's Lorax Club made a presentation to the Vashon Maury Island Ground Water Protection Committee. The students, ages 6-12, showed slides from their field trip to Judd Creek where they tested the water's health by measuring phosphate and nitrate levels and by counting aquatic macro invertebrates (a.k.a tiny water bugs). The Lorax Club is named for Dr. Seuss' well-known children's book on ecology.
- FamilyLink senior Lila Obrien was named a Commended Scholar by the 2007 National Merit Program.



#### **LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER REPORT**

**Administrator:** Susan Hanson & Julie Hanger

**Building/Program/Department:** FamilyLink & StudentLink

**Board Meeting Date:** January 16, 2008

**Focus:** Strategic Plan

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The mission of the district “to ensure our students are self-motivated constant learners with enduring knowledge, skills and values for leading responsible, productive lives” also is the outcome we strive for in the Link programs.

### **Objectives:**

Our practice of individualized student learning plans, one-on-one teacher contact and monthly evaluation of progress helps ensure that students stay on track to meet or exceed state and district learning goals. Intervention in the form of a modified learning plan follows if a student is not making progress.

Students are an integral part of the process of developing learning plans, even in FamilyLink. We work with them to make coursework meaningful, based on their interests and learning styles. Because of the more flexible schedule of the Link programs, students are encouraged to develop courses that are experiential in nature or involve community service. It is our hope that more responsibility for their learning will help our students develop the skills and discipline to become self-directed, life-long learners.

### **Strategies:**

- This year, our FamilyLink teachers will attend a training where they will study the principles of adult education and learn how to design staff development and use data to refine instruction programs. The purpose of this training is to help them create a series of educational workshops for our parent/teachers. In FamilyLink, parents are the primary instructors of their children. Our goal is to design meaningful and appropriate learning experiences for our parent partners that will provide them with the tools and skills needed to help their children meet their learning goals.
- Our teachers also are working more closely with others in the district to ensure that we incorporate district curriculum and assessment goals into our programs. Most recently, one of our teachers worked with VHS social studies teachers on the classroom based assessments planned for 2008-09.
- In StudentLink, we are requiring more classroom time and providing more instruction via online courses. We already are seeing some success with these strategies.
- FamilyLink has partnered with a number of island organizations this year in providing educational opportunities for our students. In the fall, we collaborated with Vashon-Maury Island Audubon, Land Trust, Forest Stewards, and Vashon Ground Water Committee on learning activities for the Lorax Club, our environmental science class. Currently, we are working with the Vashon Community Care Center on an intergenerational journaling project called ElderLink.
- In both Link programs, parents are an important part of their student's success. In FamilyLink, parents participate in their children's weekly meeting and are welcome to attend enrichment classes. In StudentLink, we invite parents to attend their student's weekly meetings and stay informed on progress.

## **HIGHLIGHTS and ACHIEVEMENTS**

### **FamilyLink**

- We were fortunate to receive funding from Vashon PTSA for high school and middle school science curriculum for our resource library. These books are the same as those used at VHS and McMurray.
- Partners In Education provided funding for a variety of social studies DVD's to enhance our Pacific NW History, American History & Government, and World History courses. The DVD's will be used in a small group or classroom setting. In addition, students can self-select a DVD or their consulting teacher can assign one to supplement independent studies. These materials are to be shared by both FamilyLink and StudentLink.
- FamilyLink is partnering with the Vashon Community Care Center to present Elder Link, an intergenerational journaling project for homeschool students of all ages. The project will consist of 8 weeks of writing and exchanging journal entries with a journal buddy. Students will develop writing skills as well as sharing milestones and memories with an elder in the community.
- Fifty-seven FamilyLink students and parents are attending the Pacific Northwest Ballet's 2008 “Eyes on Dance” student matinee of Romeo et Juliette on Feb. 8 at 11 a.m. in Seattle.

### **StudentLink**

- Vashon PTSA provided funding for the purchase of English, critical reading, writing and science curriculum needed to support our students doing online coursework through Digital Learning Commons.

- As mentioned above, StudentLink and FamilyLink will share a variety of social studies DVD's purchased with funds from Partners In Education.
- This trimester, we initiated a weekly math lab in StudentLink to support students who struggle with math and to prepare those planning to take or retake the WASL in March.



## LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER REPORT

**Administrator:** Susan Hanson & Julie Hanger

**Building/Program/Department:** FamilyLink & StudentLink

**Board Meeting Date:** March 13, 2008

**Focus:** February & March Highlights

### HIGHLIGHTS and ACHIEVEMENTS

#### **FamilyLink**

- Teacher Nan Hammett and administrative staff Julie Hanger attended the Washington Association for Learning Alternatives conference in Vancouver, WA at the end of February. Membership in this important organization and attendance at the conferences allows us to network with other alternative education programs throughout Washington State on matters that directly affect us. Of special interest at this conference was the implementation of classroom-based assessments in health and fitness, the arts and social studies, ideas for building and maintaining successful partnerships with our participating parents, and making professional learning communities work in alternative settings. Superintendent Terry Bergeson also addressed “the current state of alternative education” in her keynote speech.
- Four FamilyLink sophomores participated in the Reading and Writing WASL on March 11-13. Testing took place at the FamilyLink facility.
- Winter enrichment classes ended in February and spring classes begin the week of March 17. A highlight during the month of February was a mosaic workshop taught by island artist and FamilyLink parent Lisa Betz. Fifteen students, and almost an equal number of parents, learned how to create mosaic stepping stones for the garden. Classes like this one, where students and parents can work and learn together, are real community builders for our program.
- The Lorax Club continues this spring with on-site explorations of how humans impact Vashon Island ecosystems. Students will learn how early settlers lived off the land and how they influenced the environment at the Vashon Heritage History Museum. They will hear about recycling and water treatment at the Vashon Island Transfer Station and the Water Treatment Plant. Mark Yelken “the worm guy” will demonstrate what worms can do to garbage. Michael Laurie of Home Resource & Efficiency Restoration Projects will lead a tour of his energy efficient home including his green roof, rainwater collection systems, and landscaping. Finally, islander Cathy Fulton will demonstrate how she has introduced aquaculture, hydroponics, perm culture, and greenhouse management to her home.
- This month, teacher Judi DeVere will take her World History class to the Seattle Art Museum to see *Roman Art from the Louvre* and *The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece*.

## StudentLink

- Teacher Nan Hammett also represented StudentLink at the WALA conference and she already is applying information learned there on how to support teens with diagnosed and possible mental health issues. She also participated in sessions about academic and behavior plans for challenging students in the classroom and alternative settings.
- Teacher Nan Hammett and program secretary Janet Chapman attended the Stress and Depression Workshop, facilitated by Sue Eastguard, Executive Director of Youth Suicide Prevention program in Washington. At the workshop, they learned what skills students need to develop in order to cope with stress: problem solving, identifying and managing feelings, and how to tolerate stress. Parents are the primary models of good coping skills. Janet also will be participating in the 5-week 'Guiding Good Choices' workshop, presented by Yvonne Zick at McMurray. This workshop is designed to help parents of teenagers set limits and expectations with regard to drug and alcohol use.
- One student submitted art to the Puget Sound Educational Service District' Regional High School Art Show this month. The competition is open to students enrolled in grades 9-12 in any public or state-approved private school in the ESD region. Students enter their artwork at the regional level, with several pieces chosen to compete at the state level. Artwork is judged on creativity, composition, and technique.
- Another of our students, applying to Running Start, earned a nearly perfect score on the reading and writing admission test for South Seattle Community College.
- Finally, one of our seniors finished her graduation requirements early and graduates this month, although she plans to walk in the ceremony in June.
- Four StudentLink sophomores also participated in the Reading and Writing WASL at the FamilyLink facility on March 11-13.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

### FamilyLink

- We are working with our FamilyLink Advisory Board to develop a parent support program this spring that would include a speaker and parent workshops. We also plan a board retreat for the month of May.
- Teachers Judi DeVere and Nan Hammett plan to attend a PSESD workshop, *Mentor Professional Development: Planning and Designing Professional Development for Teachers*, in May. This workshop assists mentors in bringing teachers together for meaningful and appropriate learning experiences. One goal is to develop learning experiences for our parent-teachers in FamilyLink.

### StudentLink

- We are updating our program handbook and other informational materials for next year.
- Teacher Nan Hammett is working with students in preparation for the math and science portions of the WASL in April.
- StudentLink students are beginning to plan for the 2007-08 StudentLink Yearbook. This publication is designed and produced by our students.



## LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER REPORT

Administrator: Susan Hanson & Julie Hanger

Building/Program/Department: FamilyLink & StudentLink

Board Meeting Date: May 22, 2008

**Focus:** Arts

**FamilyLink**

- Like other core subjects, art, whether visual or performance, is part of each student's written student learning plan. Families decide, with input from their consulting teacher, what art looks like for their children. FamilyLink students take dance; learn to play piano, violin, or guitar. They participate in island theater. They take classes at Blue Heron or contract with individual island artists.
- FamilyLink also offers enrichment classes and workshops that focus on the arts. We have been fortunate to have Liz Lewis teach pottery to our students for the last 10 years. This year, artist William Forrester taught drawing and painting workshops. Mosaic artist and FamilyLink parent Lisa Betz instructed parents and students in creating mosaic stepping stones for the garden.
- Music Jam meets weekly on Fridays. This is a multi-age group of students (ages 6-17) that gets together to play their violins. Older, experienced students lead the younger ones in learning new pieces.

**StudentLink**

- Similar to FamilyLink, StudentLink learning plans detail how students will earn their art credit. They may take a class at VHS, or they may choose to pursue art through various other means.
- One student submitted an acrylic to the PSESD art show this year and received positive and helpful feedback from the jurors. Another is developing two portfolios this year; one in drawing and the other in photography with the goal of applying to art school when she graduates.
- Sometimes art is interdisciplinary. One student is sketching central themes to each chapter of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Another is studying and drawing the Mona Lisa as part of a study extension that started with reading *The DaVinci Code*.
- Photographers of Vashon met at StudentLink in March in order to include those students who are studying photography as part of their learning plan.
- One of our students, who studies dance, participated in a dance performance for the Dalai Lama during his visit to Seattle. Another student writes lyrics and composes music for three bands. He performs regularly both in Seattle and on Vashon. He has several recordings out.

**HIGHLIGHTS and ACHIEVEMENTS**

**FamilyLink**

- The Lorax Club was recognized as an Earth Hero at School for 2008, in a ceremony held on April 24, for their contributions of 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--Learning About Learning and The Curriculum of Abundance.