

Rick Burke Q&A – Hamilton PTSA Spring Membership Meeting, 3/29/16

Introduction: Rick Burke grew up 3 blocks from Hamilton and attended Latona Elem., Hamilton and Ballard HS. He holds a B.S. in mechanical engineering from the University of Washington and is president of a manufacturing firm in the Interbay. He is one of 7 Seattle School Board of Directors members. From the District 2 primary, he won a citywide election for the position. He and his wife have 3 children who have attended, or are currently attending, Hamilton, Eckstein and Ingraham. His wife taught middle school math, and he has a passion for math, science, technical, and hands-on vocational learning. He has a first-hand view of the District as a parent and husband of a teacher. School Board issues are complex and he wants to work to improve the system.

Q&A Introduction: Rick reviewed the questions that were sent in and did some background research. He hopes the conversation goes in both directions as he is learning on the job, and knows parents are very knowledgeable.

QUESTIONS THAT WERE ADDRESSED FOLLOW – RESPONSES FROM RICK BURKE INDICATED BY [RB]

Capacity Planning: [RB] Many factors go into deciding school capacity – enrollment, geographical regions, boundaries, demographics, analysis of boundary trajectories. The Board has been loath to move boundaries even though they were established a long time ago. They seek to keep them stable, but they need to be more nimble. HCC, language immersion, special education are all pathway programs within the Student Assignment Plan. Capacity is addressed by a Board approved document (not a policy). A draft is currently in discussion, and this gets updated after some interval. Not sure how often.

When Robert Eagle Staff Middle School opens will all HCC students at Hamilton move there?: [TIP BLISH] HCC distribution between Jane Addams, Hamilton and Eagle Staff will be at 1/3 each site. Hamilton capacity will go from around 1200 to 900 when Eagle Staff opens Fall of 2017.

[RB] After Eagle Staff opens there will be 5 HCC pathway schools assigned by geography: Washington, Madison, Hamilton, Eagle Staff, Jane Addams. Numbers will decide if Eagle Staff will open as a geo-split, with all grades moved, or as a roll-up. The Board is passionate about student stability and grandfathering is high on their request list. Students should stay at their current schools for continuity. If this is not possible, then partial grandfathering based on seniority is the next option. The Board talks a lot about how to not disrupt things. There are many unintended consequences of changes in assignments.

Current Whitman students will not have to move when Eagle Staff opens, but Hamilton HCC students will, doesn't this raise the question of fairness? Eagle Staff will be a small size and have less flexibility of funding: [RB] Eagle Staff will draw from multiple schools not only Hamilton. This includes HCC students in the Eagle Staff area, and Whitman students. But I can't answer the question of fairness. [TIP BLISH] Hamilton wants to hold on to its students, but Eagle Staff is better off opening with a full school. It takes a certain size to make that happen. [SAM BELL] Flip Herndon and Ashley Davies are the people in the District to address questions of capacity.

Current 5th graders could potentially be pulled from Hamilton or Whitman to Eagle Staff, then move to high school and get pulled from there to Lincoln. This is too many changes, especially for families who were previously pulled from Lowell Elem.: [RB] This is a challenge. I moved my own kids to multiple schools through choice or assignments and it is disruptive.

Eagle Staff will need to plan for training, hiring, seeking new teachers and staff. Will teachers be taken from Hamilton for Eagle Staff?: [RB] There is an early hiring initiative now in Seattle where previously jobs were posted after other districts which was a big problem for hiring. [Tip Blish] Seattle Public Schools is bureaucratic so this is a big change. Bellevue, Shoreline, Northshore school districts all hired sooner than Seattle so now we can catch up. Teachers at Hamilton will have the choice to move to Eagle Staff but we'll try to hold on to as many good teachers as possible. The new principal of Eagle Staff is being hired and will have one year to get the school ready to open in 2017.

How will continuity of programs be maintained between Hamilton and Eagle Staff so that long-term student plans can be supported? For example in music my student wants to be in Senior Jazz, will Eagle Staff offer that?: [RB] The Board's concern is with continuity in academic programs. Programs such as music grow locally and will be transplanted and built up in the new location. [FROM AUDIENCE] New principal for Eagle Staff is being hired and community engagement is planned. We can talk to the candidates and help the new principal create a vision for the school with offers of assistance and suggestions. Jon Halfaker is leading the hiring.

When Jane Addams opened and the HCC geo-split happened there how did Hamilton support that transition?: [FROM AUDIENCE] Hamilton did not have much of a role at Jane Addams besides prepping students and families who were moving there. Paula Montgomery, their principal created their program. Hamilton PTSA provided startup money for them, and our music department also gave money to the Jane Addams music department.

Is construction on Eagle Staff on time?: [RB] Yes, it is on schedule.

When HCC split from Lowell families were told in June after the school year ended. There is concern about having to move unexpectedly out of Hamilton because of reasons such as the fire code. Some HCC families would willingly switch to Jane Addams for the stability of not having to switch (they have capacity). Could this option be offered and publicized? Could a set number of spots be offered at Jane Addams for HCC families willing to move there?: [RB] This is a great idea. [TIP BLISH] I believe the Fire Marshall will allow us to have many more people in the building than we have from overcapacity, but I need to find out how true that is. [AUDIENCE RESPONSE] At Lowell, earthquake problems were cited for the split, then the fire code, then safety. There is concern because these reasons were not plausible and not trustworthy.

Is the plan to split the north-end HCC cohort among 3 middle schools temporary or permanent?: [RB] This plan is permanent based on all the information I have been provided.

When HCC split to Jane Addams there was an amendment made to establish a curriculum to have integrity across sites, what is happening with that? What is HCC?: [RB] The Board is reviewing instructional materials for the math and language arts programs. Due to lack of funding and distractions the materials are not current. A representative committee, including HCC members, are evaluating materials for different students, they are not one-size-fits-all. They tried to make K-5 language arts materials K-8 but couldn't because of the budget. Parents can participate in these committees. Rick is currently chair of Curriculum and Instruction Board Committee and has put a middle school math adoption planned to begin 2 months from now. Middle school math is currently suffering.

Flip Herndon said at a meeting at Ballard High School that the district is reconsidering how HCC in general is delivered. Why is there not HCC at Whitman when Whitman is under-enrolled?: [RB] There is ongoing discussion about Advanced Learning - ALO, Spectrum, HCC. There is a legal mandate under state law for HCC so the program can't go away. They are now deciding whether to allow private testing. Spectrum, ALO, self-contained or in clusters, does it exist? This is a hotly contested question. The Board doesn't oversee Spectrum, only HCC. [FROM AUDIENCE] At Whitman Spectrum is dissolved after 6th grade.

The HCC community is feeling raw, a lot of anger about having so many moves. Will students be able to stay at their future high schools or be moved to Lincoln? HCC has been asked to take on a lot: [RB] HCC has an amazing parent community. I hope they realize the Board works hard to do good things that from the outside might look wrong. They don't do well explaining themselves.

Will Eagle Staff be overcrowded when it opens like Cascadia currently is? Will the building open at capacity?: [RB] Licton Springs K-8 will take 150 spots, and the middle school will open with 700 out of 850 available so the building will be under its total capacity of 1000 (850 for both programs combined).

What about options for managing Hamilton capacity, including portables?: [RB] Portables will take up the playtop and isolate classes from the building. Hamilton is a landmarked site so approval is needed for portables. Teachers will also roam more and class sizes will be larger. [Tip Blish] We are mitigating size as much as

possible. Currently there are only 14 classrooms that aren't used every period of the day. Teachers do their planning during classes or have to move to other locations to plan. This is hard to sustain. 2 years ago Hamilton was almost as big as now so we have experience with it. PTSA can help by doing things to boost teacher and staff morale (coffee cart, etc.).

Other schools handle capacity problems by double up class periods. Can we be creative in our solutions? Copy ideas from elsewhere?: [NO RESPONSE]

Will Gen. Ed. Students also be grandfathered if boundaries shift?: [RB] Yes, grandfathering, if it's an option, applies to all students, not a specific program.

Will the language immersion pathway change?: [RB] Not heard that. The immersion pathway was reaffirmed in a multi-year document.

What is the plan for the new Lincoln High School? Will HCC students from Garfield go there? Will it become part of the immersion pathway?: [RB] In 2019 Ingraham will get 500 new seats. HCC will continue with Garfield as the default assignment and at Ingraham. Lincoln has potential consideration as an additional HCC path.

Would HCC kids be pulled into Lincoln based on geography if they live close by?: [RB] If there is no HCC pathway at Lincoln and HCC students were pulled into Lincoln anyways based on proximity to the school, it would be a huge tragedy unless done voluntarily. I would oppose that.

It seems a very real possibility that students from other high schools would be pulled into Lincoln because those schools are projected to be very full: [RB] We don't know who will go to Lincoln. Upper grades may be grandfathered, with younger grades pulled. Need to wait and see what happens with Lincoln.

We are choosing our neighborhood school over HCC so we won't have to move but will reference school kids also be pulled to Lincoln?: [RB] There is a guarantee for your geographical core school.

[Question from RB] Who wants to be at Lincoln?: [FEW HANDS RAISED AND AUDIENCE RESPONSES] We don't want to disrupt high school. Some

neighborhoods will be affected by the new Lincoln boundary, we don't trust the District, it's not predictable. Programs need great teachers, support, principals. We want the history and experience of established programs like Garfield. A lack of trust and transparency is the common denominator. Starting a new high school is an enormous task. Planning needs to happen more than a year before. Families can't make good decisions now about the future. Lincoln needs a budget to start a quality program. Board should set this policy for District staff to follow.

Where will current 6th graders who start high school in 2018 go? Where is there room?: [RB] Ballard is full, Hale has room, Garfield is land-locked, Ingraham can grow.

What is the timing for a new math curriculum?: [RB] In the fall of 2017 we expect new materials for math and Language Arts.

How can we get a more robust language immersion program at Hamilton? Third year immersion students have had to repeat a class: [TIP BLISH] Numbers drive choices. For the next 6 years there will now be 3 levels of advanced Spanish and Japanese for immersion students from John Stanford and McDonald. Next year McDonald will bring its first cohort to Hamilton. I believe students **should** take 3 years of a language even though it's a tough choice, Japanese in particular. That struggle is of value. The problem is next year we can't offer Spanish 1 to everyone who asks for it. [RB] Funding drives decisions. They are formula-based so they don't adequately represent language immersion programs because some classes aren't full (same for HCC) so the ratios are broken. You can apply to be on the Immersion Learning Task Force to adjust formulas to better serve these pathways. We can't sustain the current model.

Has the Board talked about Language Immersion?: [RB] I have visited McDonald, Hamilton and am going to visit John Stanford. There are no negative vibes about language immersion.

How can we improve the hiring of foreign language teachers? Last fall a Spanish teacher could not be hired at Garfield and they lost 2 teachers because they

couldn't match salaries. It is hard to get good language teachers: [RB] I'll look into that. The Board doesn't set salaries.

Conclusion from Rick Burke: What should I take back to the Board from you? Email Rick.Burke@seattleschools.org and resend your email if there isn't a response because I get so many. There is an April 4 meeting at Ballard HS on boundary changes you can attend, check newsletter for details.