



Options in education

The Newsletter of the Washington Association for Learning Alternatives

Defining Alternative Education

Cathy Hammersberg, WALA President

For most of us it's a time of renewed enthusiasm and optimism. We've had some time off and the challenges that we faced last year are behind us. To be an educator implies that we have boundless energy and the ability to be resilient and pleasant despite numerous reasons not to be. And as I typed the previous sentence a probation officer, the school's social worker and a student sent for discipline interrupted me. Sometimes it's darn hard to remain enthusiastic! It is especially hard when you work in programs that are "outside the box" (a term I am beginning to hate but does aptly describe what we do). Traditional education teachers and administrators, community members and our own families often question why we aren't working in easier more accepted situations. Often our peers don't respect the work we do either thinking it's easier than the traditional program or that we're wasting our time working with students who don't understand that what their programs offer is valuable and that without attendance in a traditional program the rest of the student's life is in jeopardy. We have pressure to justify the existence of our program/school on a regular basis.

Often I am asked to define Alternative Ed. It is difficult to do, but as Martha would say, "that is a good thing." My children, all college graduates, each did a type of alternative. My son did a job shadow at a Soil Conservation Office for half a day his entire Senior year. Both my daughters did Running Start. I work in an At-risk program. My nieces both attended a PPP program in Olympia. So I should be able to give a quick definition of what we do. I can't. What I can do is give the following generalities. Each alternative program reflects the needs of the communities they are located in and especially the needs of the under-served student. We provide accommodations and modifications to the traditional program while following the state guidelines, WACs and RCWs. We

accommodate the differences in each student's learning styles, life styles, economic situation, abilities, interests, and so on. In other words, we treat each student as an individual. In traditional ed the student modifies their wants, needs and behaviors to match the system that's in place. One system is not better than the other (although after 24 years in alternative I do have an opinion) they simply meet the needs of different students.

It is also true that one alternative program, or type of program, is not "better" than another. WALA is made-up of many different types and styles of schools/programs. Our students look and behave differently from each other. Some of our buildings are new, some are old, some are programs within other buildings. But whether our programs are at-risk, PPP, gifted, Second Language Learners, GED prep, homeless, adjudicated or a combination of many programs we have more in common as alternative educators

than we don't have in common. We do a difficult job with students who often "march to the beat of their own drummer." In fact, each one of us probably is marching to some unusual or unique tune or we wouldn't choose to do what we're doing. We do a job that not everyone can do and not everyone understands why we would want to do it. That's where WALA comes in. This is our professional organization. WALA is the organization that will support

"We accommodate the differences in each student's learning styles, life styles, economic situation, abilities, interests and so on..."

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The Inside Scoop

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"To love one's children is to be in complete communication with them: it is to see that they have the right kind of education that will help them to be sensitive, intelligent and integrated."

J. Krishnamurti

"Education And The Significance Of Life"



Region I

Steve Hoffman and Rob Slater, Region Reps

As of this moment-no baby yet, but Region I rep Rob Slater and his wife Tanya are expecting any day now...stay tuned.

Region I will hold a business meeting on October 25 at Options High School in Bellingham, starting at 10:00 AM. On the agenda will be time to plan events for teachers and students for this year, a tour of downtown Bellingham and the historic Fairhaven District, and a region hosted lunch. Please RSVP to me at (360) 647-6871 by October 4th so I can provide directions and we can plan the lunches.

There is talk again about Friendship Games happening in the fall. Each region member school will soon be contacted and informed as to what their responsibility will be in hosting the games. If you have any suggestions or ideas for this year's games contact Rob or Steve. Watch your e-mail for further news about the first Whatcom County Alternative High School Invitational Basketball Tournament. What's happening at our Region I schools? Let Steve Hoffman or Rob Slater know about something happening at your school and we can share it the rest of WALA.

I hope you have all made plans to attend the Fall conference at Lake Chelan on Nov 6-8. Our region will have a dessert meeting with apples and lots of chocolate...don't miss it. If you have not yet made your reservations with Campbell's Resort, do so immediately. At last count there were only 60 rooms left available. The rate is an incredible \$65 and won't last. For information about the Conference go to our web site at www.walakids.com.

Watch your e-mail for further news about the first Whatcom County Alternative High School Invitational Basketball Tournament. Your Region I Representatives are Steve Hoffman shoffman@bham.wednet.edu and Rob Slater rslater@ferndale.wednet.edu. ♦

Region II

Cherie Exner and Martha Daman, Region Reps

This fall we will be sending out a survey to all members in our region requesting information. We would like to know what you are interested in discussing or learning more about during a workshop. As part of the survey, please include times and days for the workshops that are good for you.

There will be a Region II meeting at the Fall Conference in Lake Chelan. This meeting will provide a good opportunity to express your interests and needs to your Region Directors.

Also, as your Region Reps, we will contact schools in our region to obtain information about your programs. We will use this information to highlight programs in our region in OPTIONS articles. Our goal is to cover a variety of schools and programs throughout our region.

One of the programs in our region is a program called TRI Transition Program. It is currently in its sixth year, and serves students with daily counseling and academics. The program is located in Tacoma, and focuses on students on suspension or expulsion, behavior problems, no social skills, or just returning to a public education environment. There is an intake process, orientation, and an exit meeting

WALA Board Contacts

President:

Cathy Hammerberg (509) 877-6138
chammerberg@nwinfo.net

President-Elect:

Jim Sparks (253) 535-0211
jimsparks@fb.k12.wa.us

Past President:

Andy Wheeler (360) 855-3534
awheeler@swsd.k12.wa.us

Sec/Treasurer:

Darlene Quayle (360) 379-4251
dequayle@olympen.com

Region I:

Steve Hoffman (360) 647-6871
shoffman@bham.wednet.edu

Rob Slater (360) 383-9344
rslater@ferndale.wednet.edu

Region II:

Cherie Exner (253) 537-0211
exner@earthlink.net Ext. 2415

Martha Daman (425) 836-8348
madman@lkwash.wednet.edu

Region III:

Randy Hill (360) 582-3400
rhill@orca.esd114.wednet.edu

VACANT

Region IV:

Maureen Harkcom (360) 748-2163
mharkcom@centralia.wednet.edu

Tom Hays (360) 904-7824
tom.hays@washougal.k12.wa.us

Region V:

Melissa Petty (509) 354-6470
melissap@spokaneschools.org

Mark Brundage (509) 682-4061
brunm@lchelan.org

Region VI:

Mike Carlson (509) 942-2595
carlsonmik@hotmail.com

Allan Korvola (509) 786-2527
akorvola@bentonrea.com

Admin Rep:

Terry Smith (509) 877-3138
tnsmith@televar.com

Parent Partner:

Marianna Hanefeld (425) 702-3331
mhanefeld@lkwash.wednet.edu

Grants and Scholarships:

Billie Needham (360) 879-1218
billie_needham@eatonville.wednet.edu

Counselor's Rep:

Mary Schroeder (425) 670-7311
schroederm@edmonds.wednet.edu

Legislative Rep:

MaryAnne Campo (509) 354-6470
maryca@spokaneschools.org

Exec. Director:

Lile Holland (800) 455-WALA
walakids@gte.net

Fall Conference:

Gary Babcock (509) 836-8407
babcockg@sunnyside.wednet.edu

Newsletter:

Jim Sparks (253) 535-0211
jimsparks@fp.k12.wa.us



Regional News

as part of the program. If you would like more information, call Cherie Exner at (253) 537-0211, ext. 2415.

We are truly excited about our region! Please contact us with any ideas you have. Martha: (425) 828-3289, ext. 1-578#, madman@lkwash.wednet.edu; Cherie: (253) 537-0211, ext. 2415, exner@earthlink.net. ♦

Region IV

Tom Hays and Maureen Harkcom, Region Reps

Greetings from Region IV: My name is Tom Hays, I join Maureen Harkcom as the newly elected Region IV representative for the term beginning this fall, and ending in the fall of 2005. I have just returned from the WALA State Board Retreat at Leavenworth, where I met with and attempted to learn from the other region representatives, what we should be attempting to do for the members of our region.

Maureen and I have chosen to pursue a strategy employed in the past of splitting the region into an informal "North" and "South" in an effort to accommodate our members' participation, recognizing the geographic size of the region. A Region IV "South" meeting will be held on October 15th, and a Region IV "North" meeting on October 16th. The first combined Region IV meeting will be on January 24th in Centralia. Details on time and directions to locations, along with an agenda for each meeting will be forthcoming via e-mail to all region schools. ♦

Regions V and VI

Mark Brundage and Melissa Petty, Region V Reps
Allan Korvola and Mike Carlson, Region VI Reps

Our big fall event will be a combined Mini-Conference for both Regions V and VI. It will be held at Skilskin High School, Grand Coulee, from 9-12 on Saturday, October 25th. This is an excellent opportunity to hear about WALA updates, and changes in school practices such as the SIP (School Improvement Plan). A dinner for overnighters is being arranged at 7:00 pm on the 24th. Martin Mueller, OSPI will be the Keynoter at the Mini-Conference and will talk

We conceived of ourselves as an environment for growth, and accepted the relationships between the children and ourselves as being the very heart of the school.

George Dennison
"The Lives of Children"

about the "No Child Left Behind" legislation and its impact on alternative schools. Additional information including Agenda for Saturday, getting an official tour of Grand Coulee Dam, motel lodging, RV parks and directions are posted on the WALA website at www.walakids.com. This is the first time for such an undertaking, and we hope it will be graciously supported.

Region VI's Winter Mini-Conference is February 7, 2004 at Zilah Alternative Program (ZAP), Zilah. At the same time, ZAP will host a Full WALA Board meeting. Region VI's Spring Mini-Conference will be April 24, 2004 at Stanton Academy, Yakima. Details for both are being drafted and will be e-mailed to Region VI members and posted on the WALA website.

Mike Carlson, Rivers Edge High School, is contacting all schools in the Region for organizing some fun activities for students. He is seeking your input for activities, locations, and times. This could include softball and basketball round robins, multi-school field trips, school visitations, and whatever. This is an area where we have not done too much and we should. Mike needs to be supported as we know he will be.

Mark your calendars for the events noted and for the Fall Conference in Chelan. ♦



Pictured L to R: Mark Brundage, Region V Director; Mary Anne Campo, Legislative Liaison; Allan Korvola, Region VI Director; Mike Carlson, Region VI Director; and Melissa Petty, Region V Director.

WALA Board members from Regions V and VI encourage you to attend the combined Mini-Conference, October 25th at Skilskin High School, Grand Coulee. The agenda is on the WALA website, www.walakids.com.

School must represent life, life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground.

John Dewey
My Pedagogic Creed, 1897



"Instant Messaging" for Collaborative Teaching and Learning

Mary Anne Campo

Technology is an excellent tool for teacher-educators to use for communication. We can use the latest technologies to enhance and advance our classroom teaching and student learning. Teaching often keeps teachers isolated in their classroom and not able to communicate with other teachers or experts in the field in which they teach. Frequently we find ourselves calling or e-mailing to get answers to questions we have regarding our students, curriculum or school. Waiting to get answers is a problem we face, but if teachers learn to use Instant Messaging (IM) to get instant answers to these questions we would see how new technology can build a sense of community to online educators.

Instant Messaging software is widely available, easy to download on any computer and free instant messaging software is available through most major internet portals. For example, with AOL's Instant Messenger (AIM) you don't have to be a member of America Online to use it and there is no special hardware to install on your computer. While AIM remains the most popular Instant Messaging service on the web, other instant messaging downloads are also available from Microsoft (MSN Messenger), Yahoo (Yahoo! Messenger) and Apple (iChat). All these options allow users to send instant messages and instantly receive answers. That's the benefit of Instant Messaging, you don't have to wait for your answers. All that is needed to instant message is to download Instant Messaging and choose an online username. Instant Messaging (IM) is a viable method of communication teacher-educators should be using to collaborate with others to find answers to questions quickly and efficiently.

Once Instant Messenger (IM) is downloaded, teachers are able to set up a buddy list of other teachers and users. This buddy list allows users to see who is online at the same time and available to answer questions. Using Instant Messaging to collaborate with others builds community within the group of online users. Instant Messaging is a powerful communication tool that facilitates the exchange of dialogue and ideas. The physical isolation of teaching doesn't necessarily mean that teachers are not able to communicate with others. Realizing that others are available to answer questions and provide new ideas helps teachers to realize they aren't alone and have a large group of online buddies who they can rely on for support almost anytime the need arises. Once teachers have learned to use Instant Messaging (IM) to seek out others to find answers to their questions they will begin to realize that new technologies hold unlimited possibilities for communicating in ways we have never thought of before.

To get connected with a group of online learners and learn more about Instant Messaging, check out these sites:

<http://www.howstuffworks.com/instant-messaging.htm>

<http://www.aim.com/>

<http://messenger.yahoo.com/> ♦

Assessment Tools

That Work

Tom Hays

I thought it would be appropriate to share information on two successful programs used at Excelsior High School this past school year.

The first is an assessment tool from NW Evaluation Association called the Measure of Academic Progress (MAP). The MAP test is an "adaptive" test that responds to correct answers with more difficult questions, and incorrect answers with less difficult questions until it establishes a "range" of ability. It uses a RIT scale to standardize its scores so that it may be compared to other established reference tests. Local newspapers have reported these scores recently to establish the difficulty of the 7th grade WASL as compared to the 4th and 10th grade tests. These scores have also been used to compare apples with apples between other states' tests in order to establish their rank by difficulty. Excelsior uses this test to establish a baseline on entry for students that bring no real data with them. The data from periodic testing is used to measure growth in the program of study.

A second technical resource has become a more affordable choice through a cooperative agreement with the local ESD 112, and NCS Learn. NovaNet, a "Computer Based Education & Communications Network" has become a very important part of the performance based credit system at Excelsior. The "prescriptive" learning qualities of the curriculum have been used to great advantage. It cuts down on the "busy work" some learners have needed to do in the past because of attendance issues (they missed an entire course being AWOL, etc.). It has enabled a focus on skills learned vs. seat time put in.

If you would like more info on NovaNet, my contact at the ESD 112 is Debbie Tschirgi. You can reach her by e-mail at debbie.tschirgi@esd112.org. At NCS Learn it is Susan Wiley, Senior Marketing Manager susan.wiley@ncslearn.com. If you would like to know more about MAP, my contact has been Tim Blaine Tim@NWEA.org. ♦



The alternative to using control with children can be usefully described in terms of . . . the “three C’s”: content, collaboration, and choice . . .

Alfie Kohn
Punished by Rewards

Adapt, Persevere, and Overcome Motivating and Challenging Students Through a Leadership Class Jim Sparks

Motivating and challenging students in the classroom is probably one of the most difficult things a teacher does. One way to vary your curriculum and increase student participation, motivation and personal challenges is to develop a leadership course to mix with your math and science curriculum. A leadership course emphasizes problem solving, team building, social skills, and develops the individual confidence of students.

First, teach the students a simple problem solving process. In my class, we use a five step method; identify the problem, list everything you know about the problem, develop a plan, execute the plan, and check your results. Students are given simple initiative problems to solve as a group. A leader is designated, and the group works through the problem solving process, and presents their idea to teacher. Then, they do the problem, and review what they learned from the problem. Whatever process is used ensure that it is the same one you want them to use during math problem solving. The same process translates to science by changing terminology in steps three, four and five to develop your hypothesis, conduct the experiment, and examine your results.

Team building and social skills are developed at the end of the problem. Conduct a review of the problem after every exercise. Do not concentrate on the results. Have the students talk about the groups’ interaction, communication, and adaptability. This is an easy way to have students work on their social skills. They are doing something to make the team better, not something they need to do better.

The students develop confidence through the completion of increasingly difficult tasks. This is not a quick or easy process. At first, your groups will have extreme difficulty working together, or implementing the problem solving process. Repetition of the process and good reviews after the problems will eventually enable successes.

A good goal to set for your class is the WALA Leadership Games. The games will be held in late April or early May. Last year eight schools participated, and many more are expected to attend this year. Attendance at the games is free to WALA school members (not individual teacher members).

A good source of initiative problems are the following books all by Karl Rohnke; *Cowtails and Cobras*, *Quicksilver*, and *The Bottomless Bag*. There are numerous other books on initiative problems and teambuilding. If you want more information feel free to e-mail me at jimsparks3098@msn.com. I look forward to seeing a large group of teams at the 2004 Leadership Games. ♦

GEO Block: Integrated Standards-Based Curriculum Randy Hill



A three-hour block which focuses on the natural and human resources of the Pacific Rim, GEO incorporates Washington EALRs and/or Grade Level Expectations from geography, science, math, reading, writing, communications, and economics. Taught by vocationally-certified teachers, the course

also follows state CTE frameworks for Digital Communications, Applied Math, and Natural Resources. Each “theme” (lasting 3-4 weeks) covers skills (such as using Excel to create spreadsheets comparing Pacific Rim nations) as well as content (such as locating 30 Pacific Rim nations or cities), with Applied Math units correlated to the math needed to complete the theme's projects. Students begin the block with a group 5-minute quiz, followed by a 30-minute lesson or presentation, and then break into smaller groups for assignments.

A key component is GIS (Geographic Information Systems), with which students will be creating detailed maps of Peninsula natural resources, analyzing changes, hazards, and the natural and human history of their own neighborhoods. For example, they have been asked to map, using GPS, a new hike/bike trail and to create a project linking the map to photos, sensitive environmental areas, and historic locations. These projects will meet real local needs and will link students to government agencies and non-profits with the students taking the roles of consultants and businesspersons. By integrating subject areas around themes and projects, students can complete requirements quicker, while also contributing to their community. ♦



Time is running out: Register now for WALA’s Fall Conference!!!
Registration forms available on the website at www.walakids.com

Anxiety occurs primarily when teachers expect too much from students; boredom occurs when teachers expect too little . . . People who use their skills to the utmost . . . enjoy the hardships and the challenges of their task.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
*Talented Teenagers:
The Roots of Success and Failure*

Grants and Scholarships



Grants and Scholarships Available

Billie Needham, Grants and Scholarships Chair

grams and to individual members) and the funding of secondary student scholarships for post secondary training and education. The focus of many of the program grants is to help fund innovative projects aimed at program improvement, both at the elementary level and at the secondary level. These include the Bob Carpenter Grant for School Projects (aimed at elementary programs), the Harry Johnson Grant for School Projects (aimed at secondary programs), the Earl Grambau Elementary Service Grant, and the WALA Conference Follow Up Program Grant. Other grants are designed to assist individual members with professional growth and research. WALA Educational Growth Grants specifically assist individual members' professional growth as they pursue and disseminate knowledge in educational alternatives, such as attending conferences or workshops pertinent to alternative education and bringing information and insights back to the general WALA membership. The second grant for individual WALA members is the WALA Original Research Grant. The intent of this grant is to assist individual members wishing to undertake original research (not connected with an academic program for credit) pertinent to alternative education, to the individual, and to WALA. WALA Secondary Scholarships are also an important benefit of WALA school/program membership. Secondary students successfully completing an alternative secondary school program and having the sponsorship of their school or program are eligible to apply. These scholarships, which are competitive, are awarded each spring.

For further information on the specifics of each grant or scholarship, please look on the WALA web site at www.walakids.com or contact me at (360) 879-1218 or on-line at billie_needham@eatonville.wednet.edu. Take advantage of these great opportunities offered through your WALA membership. We are here to serve you, our members. ♦

WALA Scholarship Thanks

Dear Scholarship Committee,

I'm grateful to have been chosen for the WALA scholarship. I plan to attend Everett Beauty Academy in the fall to pursue a career in cosmetology. This scholarship will be a great help for me! Thank you so much for your generosity!
Sherry Gamble

Dear Mr. Holland,

I was this year's lucky recipient of the WALA scholarship. I was very excited to find out that I was awarded the scholarship; I worked my tail off on the portfolio. I can't thank you all enough. I have been accepted to attend Bellevue Community College, and I am looking forward to registering for fall classes... Again, I can not thank the WALA committee enough for what they have done for me. I can assure you that this scholarship will be put to good use, and becoming a great nurse is what I have to offer in return. I promise you and the entire committee that I will push my self to make the most of my college experience. Thank you!

Katrina Hennings ♦

Eastern Washington Scholarship Applicants: Where are You?

Billie Needham, Grants and Scholarships Chair

The WALA Secondary Scholarship is intended to assist students successfully exiting a WALA member school or program as the students pursue post secondary training and education. Each year students are selected for these competitive scholarships based on the information they submit. Last spring 18 applications were submitted to the WALA Secondary Scholarship Committee for review. Of those, only one application, a successful one, came from east of the mountains. This is typical. From year to year, the vast majority of scholarship applicants are from WALA schools located on the west side of the state. Granted, that is where most of our alternative programs are located; however, the low numbers of east-side applicants is a message that our Scholarship Committee needs to reach out more. As the committee chairperson, I urge ALL WALA schools and programs, especially those on the east side, to encourage your students to apply for this scholarship. Start now! This year's group of exiting students are eligible, but so are last year's. Scholarships are awarded only once to any one person; however, students may apply more than once if they are not funded for previous applications or did not apply before (within two calendar years of successful completion of their alternative program).

Applications are due the third Friday in April. Application forms are available on the WALA web site - www.walakids.com; click "Grants and Scholarships" then "WALA Secondary Scholarships" or from me, Billie Needham. Please call (360) 879-1218 or zip me an e-mail at billie_needham@eatonville.wednet.edu. Start today, don't delay! ♦



What's New at WALA

Keeping Up With the Times

Lile Holland, WALA Executive Director

When WALA was conceived in 1975, the duties and responsibilities of the corporation's officers were based on a membership of 75-100. Volunteers arranged conferences, wrote and published newsletters, held meetings throughout Washington, and worked to help alternative schools meet their students' needs. Then in 1995 the package changed. Junior high and elementary programs appeared almost over night. This growth was just the beginning, advances in technology made even more instruction models possible. As alternative education changed, the typical alternative student also changed. Alternative education's umbrella sheltered not only the "at risk" student, but also the gifted, the talented, and those wanting to be educated at home by parents.

The changes were happening faster than many of us anticipated. Programs to address a certain issue would begin, and then a new hot button issue surfaced. In some cases efforts were diverted from projects began by a past president to address the situations supported by the present president. As more and more issues surfaced, the corporation's resources were stretched very thin. The volunteers that we have relied on for so many years became extremely busy with local issues and responsibilities and were not able to devote necessary amount of time without sacrificing performance in their own positions.

Leadership at WALA has always been strong. The Board of Directors, led by a President work hand-in-hand to implement programs that meet the ever-changing needs of alternative education. But, in recent years, the numbers of alternative students and programs have expanded to over 33,000 students and 300 programs. The issues and their solutions are more complex and time consuming. The consistency needed to initiate new programs and help them achieve maximum impact is jeopardized because the President's one-year term is expired. This point is not new. Many Past-Presidents have voiced the opinion that they were just learning how to do the job and be an effective leader when their term expired.

To address these issues, the WALA Board of Directors are proposing two changes to the by-laws. First, the term of service will be changed to allow incoming officers and board members to assume their positions in June so they can begin planning and working prior to the beginning of the school year. Second, the Board proposes a two-year presidency, an increase from the current one-year. This will allow directors time to grow; time to see projects through to a defined end, and the consistency in leadership WALA needs during these rapidly changing times. At the Annual conference in March, you will be asked to vote on these changes to the by-laws. If you have questions, contact your Region Rep or the WALA office. ♦

WALA Board Retreat Minutes * Sept. 12-13, 2003

Submitted by Darlene Quayle, WALA Board Secretary/Treasurer

Present: Cathy Hammerberg, Darlene Quayle, Cherie Exner, Terry Smith, Allan Korvola, Mike Carlson, Tom Hays, Gary Babcock, Randy Hill, Steve Hoffman, Marianna Hanefeld, Andy Wheeler, Mary Ann Campo, Martha Damon, Melissa Petty, Billie Needham, Maureen Harkcom, Lile Holland, Jim Sparks, Mark Brundage, Martin Mueller.

The following Presidential Appointments were made: Terry Smith, Administrative Representative, Billie Needham Scholarship Chair, Mary Ann Campo, Legislative Liaison, Steve Freibel, AWASSP Liaison, Marianna Hanefeld, Parent-Partner Liaison.

Employee Contracts for Executive Director (L. Holland), Clerk/Bookkeeper (B. Bennett), Conference Coordinator (G. Babcock) and Production Editor (I. Gates) were

National and state and district standards harm teachers as well as children . . . Trusting books, trusting children, trusting teachers, is revolutionary.

Susan Ohanian

One Size Fits Few: The Folly of Educational Standards

approved unanimously, as was a contract for redesign of the Options Newsletter (I. Gates).

After much discussion, proposed changes to the by-laws were approved by the board to present the following changes to the general membership meeting in March: 1) the term of executive officers will run June 1 through May 31 effective 2003; 2) effective June, 2005, the President-elect will be elected every 2 years and the President will serve 2 years, then serve as Past-President for one year. The President-elect and Past-President will perform the same duties, alternating years. The Secretary/Treasurer will be elected on alternate years from the election of the President-elect.

A motion to keep presidential terms as they are currently written failed 6-8. The by-law changes detailed above were approved to send to the general membership by a vote of 8-5. An additional motion to add beginning and ending dates to the general board member terms failed 1-13. Instead, a motion passed unanimously to make Board term dates coincide with officers' date of service.

The Board also approved Policy Manual Changes affecting dispersement of used equipment, and mileage reimbursement rates for board members.

The budget was passed, showing a planned ending balance for 2003-2004 of \$2,781.11.

Martin Mueller and Brian Jefferies from OSPI gave a presentation on Annual Yearly Performance (AYP) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Committees gave reports on scholarships, administrative meeting, awards, Puyallup Fair, IALA status, Options Newsletter, the Legislature, and accreditation.

Further detailed minutes will be available at the November Conference.

The school must represent life, life as real and vital to the child as that which he carries on in the home, in the neighborhood, or on the playground.

John Dewey
My Pedagogic Creed, 1897

Conference Corner



Parent Partnership Mini-Conferences Coming

Marianna Hanefeld, Parent Partnerships Liaison



It is hard to believe fall is already upon us, but I know it is genuinely here because my e-mail is full of requests for information about options in education. We have such a rich variety of options, in our state, don't we? Parent Partnerships are growing by leaps and bounds. This past summer, WALA Executive Director Lile Holland compiled a somewhat exhaustive list of all the PPPs across the state. We now number over 70, with new districts investigating the possibility almost weekly. On that note, I would like to welcome the Kennewick, Walla Walla, and Lopez Island school districts to the PPP fold and offer them all our best wishes and support in their first year.

In light of the sheer number of programs out there, I am happy to announce we will be sponsoring three PPP mini-conferences around the state, the first being held Friday, Dec. 5th or 6th (tent. date) from 10-1 at the Stillaguamish School House (Arlington S.D.). Our guest speaker will be WALA past-President Andy Wheeler, speaking on student learning plans and 45 day reviews. We will also have a site visit of the Arlington program, hosted by Barbara Hemmann, principal and her engaging staff. There will be plenty of time for networking and discussion. Please bring your key staff members, administrators, and teachers. This is a terrific way to be introduced to others doing the same thing you are doing. Other mini-conferences will be forthcoming, with one scheduled for the Eastern part of the state, and one in the South. Until then, I wish you great success as you start another year. ♦

Defining Alternative Ed

Continued from page 1

you as an individual and will know how to help your program if there is a need. WALA is made-up of people who will understand without a lot of explanation what each of us is about. We, the members of WALA, have the ability to support each other, and maybe most importantly, understand without question that what we do is valuable and necessary.

Alternative education has certainly changed in the last twenty-four years. But the foundations laid in the beginning were strong and the programs that are starting today benefit from the work that WALA has done for nearly thirty years. We face the same rules and regulations as mainstream education. Accountability, testing, NCLB, WASL, AYP, and other legislation affect alternative just like everyone else. This year we have seen the closure of alternative schools. Where do we turn for help? The answer is WALA.

For too long we have emphasized our differences. We can no longer afford that luxury. It's simple: if you aren't traditional, you're alternative. We need to stand together to help the students we serve. This is the organization that states in its mission statement that we will meet the needs of diverse students. We're not about helping one "type" of program over another. WALA means: Washington Alternative Learners Association. It's the organization that provides assistance to those of us who choose to work "outside the box". WALA is the place to get questions answered, support when needed and understanding without question. If you need something from us please don't hesitate to let us know. ♦

Fall Conference Update

Nov. 6-8, Lake Chelan, WA

Gary Babcock,
Conference Coordinator

By now you should have received the flyer advertising the Fall Conference, entitled "Diverse Needs, Diverse Programs." If you haven't, check our web site at www.walakids.com and go to "Conference Information" for a complete description of the program. It is the hope of the conference committee that your needs and interests will be met through the energizing and stress relieving message of keynoter **Dr. Rhonda Hull**, the variety of breakout sessions offered, a relaxing evening cruise on Lake Chelan, and the opportunities provided to network with colleagues.

Be sure your principal or district has paid your WALA school membership dues and take advantage of the group rate reduction offered to member schools. Also, register by October 6th to get the early bird rate. When making your reservations at Campbell's, be sure and let them know you are attending the WALA Conference. I am looking forward to seeing you at the conference and sharing in another professionally enhancing and personally refreshing WALA experience. ♦

Think About Your WALA Auction Donations Now

Dianne Korvola

It is not too early to start collecting items for the Auction to be held at the Annual Conference. Let people know that the proceeds will go toward scholarships. You might be pleasantly surprised by how generous people are this time of the year, especially between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Also, now is the time to contact firms who give at the corporate level. Many of these plan their donations six months to a year in advance. ♦



Revising My Priorities

Andy Wheeler

Anybody else feel like the new year is catching them like a slap upside the head?

This year I took the position of half time assistant principal. (A friend remarked that the only more ambiguous title he could think of was Governor of California.) This has brought a new load of tasks and responsibilities. Although I welcome the challenge and can honestly say I'm enjoying it so far, I have my share of stress. So many people want me to do so many things! I've been working longer hours as a way to get more done.

Yesterday I had one of those days where several people got angry with me about something I had done, and other tasks just didn't get completed. I drove home thinking that I was letting so many people down. The teachers couldn't count on me to manage the computer lab, my supervisor couldn't count on my help with the budget, etc. On the home front, I haven't had a 'date' with my wife in about three weeks, my kids are growing up too fast and I'm not having enough quality time with them. This agonized me almost all the way home!

Almost.

A few miles short of my house I realized that my main priorities in this internal dialog were backwards. If my values include family at the top, then why wasn't I doing more to be able to count on myself? Although I AM an exceptional educator (oh yeah) there are limits to my powers and abilities. I concluded my first priority is to myself before being responsible to others. That means I can get to the gym, take that bike ride, or do what I want to do, but I have to be true to my self. I'd like to finish by telling you that my life is in perfect order now and that I have enough time for everything, but that would be a lie. I'll have to settle for a weaker finish and say that I'm trying on a revised list of priorities.

So to all those of you out there doing the difficult work of educating, my wish for you all is to take care of yourself, and accept your limitations. Best wishes to all on a new year. ♦

Alternative Education Day at the Fair A Great Experience For All

Cherie Exner, Fair Chairman

The Puyallup Fair is over for another year and Alternative Education Day is a thing of the past. But, boy, did we have fun.

This year West Auburn, A-I, Eatonville, GATES High School, I-School and TRI Transition had displays showing off their school or program, during Alternative Education Day. The booths looked great and all the staff as well as the students were good ambassadors for alternative education and for WALA.

Several schools had activities for students. A-I students did face painting, the TRI Transition made edible jewelry, GATES made bookmarks, and West Auburn created embossed cards and bookmarks.

In addition, WALA had a booth with information about schools around the state and alternative education in Washington. Many thanks to Lile and Virginia Holland for manning the booth and answering questions.

This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your program. Many people stop and ask questions about alternative education. This is a great opportunity for students to be seen in a positive manner. If you would like to attend next year, it is not too early to sign up. Please call me at (253) 537-0211, ext. 2415, and come join the fun! ♦

If you study to remember, you will forget, but, if you study to understand, you will remember.

Unknown

Changes in Cooperative Work-Based Learning (WBL)

Mike Carlson

Changes in requirements for Cooperative Work-based Learning (WBL) are affecting Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs across the state both in and out of Alternative Education. The changes in requirements affect programs that submit a student count to the state for enhanced vocational funding. Specifically, this is the CTE Preparatory course for students who are submitting hours from an employer for either paid or unpaid work experience. Beginning with the 03-04 School Year, qualifying WBL programs must meet the following requirements:

- Students must take a qualifying class that relates the Worksite Learning experience. It must be taken either in the same school term as the WBL hours or in the term just before.
- Training sites must be visited by a certified WBL Coordinator a minimum of twice per semester.
- A learning plan with specific objectives must be recorded for every 180 hours of work. These objectives must fit into the student's educational goals career pathway.
- 360 hours of documented hours = a 1.0 credit.

If you have questions about whether your program meets current state requirements, please contact Rob Fieldman at OSPI. There is also a work-based learning coordination manual that is available as a download from OSPI at www.k12.wa.us. ♦

WALA
P.O. Box 4596
Bremerton, WA 98312-0403

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Wealth of Info Available on WALA Web Site

Lile Holland, Executive Director

The WALA web site is growing to provide even more information. For starters, the site contains a listing of all known alternative schools and programs in Washington. Plus, the web site has information on meetings, scholarships and grants, membership, conference registration, hotels, the names and contact information for all of the officers and board members, and copies of past and current *OPTIONS*.

Please check out the site and see if your school information is up to date and accurate. If not, please notify the WALA office so changes can be made. If you have not completed a School Survey Form, download it from the site, fill it in and send it to the office. This is the best way to keep everyone informed.

If you have a copy of your program handbook, school board policy and procedures, and examples of your daily paperwork, please send them to the WALA office (electronic format please). We are building a file containing sample documents and examples to include on the web site. Your help is very much appreciated.

OPTIONS has a Whole New Look

Jim Sparks, Editor

With the new school year upon us, we thought it might be time for our newsletter to take on a fresh new look. As your President-Elect this year, I will be taking over the reins as your *OPTIONS* editor, and Isabel Gates is staying on for her fifth year as *OPTIONS* production editor. Many many thanks to Cathy Hammerberg, last year's editor, for the wonderful job she did.

Our next issue will be published in early December, with the deadline for submitting materials being November 17th. Submit all materials directly to me (Jim Sparks) at the e-mail address listed below. *OPTIONS* welcomes and encourages articles and news relating to the WALA Mission and Vision.

Volume 15, Number 1

A quarterly newsletter of WALA,
a not-for-profit organization.

Editor: Jim Sparks
(253) 535-0211

jimsparks@fp.k12.wa.us

Production Editor: Isabel Gates
(360) 638-0240

gatesi@silverlink.net

Calendar Items

OCTOBER

- 6 Last Day for Reduced Conference Rates
- 10-11 OAAE Conference, Seaside, Oregon
- 15 Region IV "South" Meeting
- 16 Region IV "North" Meeting
- 18 Executive Board Meeting, Lake Chelan Prep HS
- 25 Region V/Region VI Mini-Conference, Skilskin H.S., Grand Coulee
- 25 Region I Meeting, Options H.S., Bellingham, 10 a.m.

NOVEMBER

- 6-8 Fall Conference "Diverse Needs, Diverse Programs, Campbell's Resort, Lake Chelan, WA
- 7 WALA Board Meeting, Lake Chelan, WA
- 16-22 American Education Week
- 17 *OPTIONS* deadline for December issue

DECEMBER

- 5 PPP Mini-Conference, Stillaguamish School House, Arlington School District