

Greater Albany Public School District 8J
718 Seventh Avenue SW
Albany, Oregon 97321-2399



REGULAR BOARD MEETING

April 28, 2014 7:00 p.m.

Minutes

Maria Delapoer, Superintendent

CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair Bricker called the regular meeting of the School Board to order at 7:00 p.m.

Frank Bricker	Board Chair
Jerry Boehme	Board Vice Chair
Sandi Gordon	gave advance notice of her absence
Lyle Utt	Director
Micah Smith	Director
Nate Burman	Student Board Member
Jessica Dilbone	Student Board Member
Maria Delapoer	Superintendent
Frank Caropelo	Assistant Superintendent
Randy Lary	Human Resources Director
Russell Allen	Business and Operations Director

A list of others present at the meeting is filed with the original minutes. It was noted that a quorum of the Board was present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Board Chair Bricker led participants in the Pledge of Allegiance.

CORE PURPOSE/GOALS

Board Chair Bricker began the meeting with a review of the district's Core Purpose and Strategic Goals:

Core Purpose: Educate and inspire all students to reach their full potential, equipped to be positive, contributing members of society.

Strategic Goals:

- We provide every student with challenging and motivating learning experiences that lead to continuous growth.
- We instill in every student the character traits that enable them to understand and interact in the world, appreciating and valuing differences.
- Our students thrive because every community member is a stakeholder and takes responsibility for the success of every student.

SUPERINTENDENT COMMENTS AND INTRODUCTIONS

SONYA HART, SPECIAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR

Superintendent Maria Delapoer said that she was presenting for the Board's consideration a candidate for the Special Programs Coordinator position. She said that Sonya Hart has been an employee of the district since 2006. She said that Ms. Hart was a school support specialist and has also been a resource teacher. She also has experience in other districts.

She said that Ms. Hart is highly regarded across the district and she understands that to be a successful leader one needs to have flexibility, and that decisions should be based upon information. She said that communication is key, both listening and being able to make decisions. She said that leaders need to be both present and available to help people as needed. She said that Ms. Hart was looking forward to working with regular education teachers as well as special education teachers.

Ms. Delapoer asked the Board to approve Ms. Hart's nomination on the Consent Agenda.

MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT REPORTERS

Executive Assistant Jim Haggart said that Chase Laperle is an eighth grader at Memorial Middle School. He said that Chase is taking Advanced Science, Language arts, Social Studies, leadership, Math, technology and PE. His favorite subject is Language Arts.

He said that Chase participates in Leadership, Track where he competes in the 100 meter, 400 meter, long jump and 4x100 relay events, club level basketball, and church youth group. His brother Gabe is a fifth grader at Liberty Elementary School. His parents are Heide and Jeremy Laperle.

Mr. Haggart said that Quinn Walters is also an eighth grader at Memorial Middle School. He said that she is taking Advanced Math, Advanced Science, Language Arts, Social studies, Technology and PE. Her favorite subject is Language Arts.

He said that Quinn participates in tumbling at an area gym. Her brother Hayden Walters is a seventh grader at Memorial Middle School. Her parents are Cossandra and Brian Walters.

Board Chair Bricker welcomed both students.

ART IN THE BOARDROOM

Superintendent Maria Delapoer said that the art and math work in the Weatherford Room to the left of the Board was from Mrs. Lange's kindergarten class at Takena Elementary School. The children were learning to make hexagons with triangles, diamonds and tetrahedrons.

Ms. Delapoer said that the art and math work in the Monteith Room to the left of the Board was from Mrs. Sawyer's second grade class at Takena School. The children were learning about fractions: thirds and quarters.

STUDENT REPORTERS

Memorial Middle School Student Reporters Chase Laperle and Quinn Walters Andrews addressed the Board. [A copy of their presentation will be a part of the permanent record of this meeting.](#)

STUDENT ALL-STARS

Hannah Stadstad and Andrew Liles of North Albany Elementary, Roy Mehan and Tristan Vosburg of Oak Grove Elementary and Ava Cordle and Brianna Benham of Periwinkle Elementary School were recognized for school and community service. Dakota Biggs, Tyra Perrone, Kenzie Jensen and Taryn Osborne of Sunrise Elementary and Jordan Neville and Andrew Hyde of Waverly Elementary School were also recognized.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

- 1) Minutes from April 14, 2014 Regular Board Meeting
- 2) Personnel (with Addendum)
- 3) Financial
- 4) Elementary Lunch Price Increase
- 5) *KG, Community Use of District Facilities*
- 6) *KK, Visitors to District Facilities*
- 7) *KN, Relations with Law Enforcement Agencies*
- 8) *ECAA, Employee Identification Badge System*
- 9) *ECAC, Electronic Surveillance*

Board Chair Bricker stated that if there were no objections the Board would approve the Consent Agenda. There were no objections. Board Chair Bricker DECLARED THE ACTION DECIDED by UNANIMOUS CONSENT.

Board Chair Bricker welcomed Ms. Hart to the district.

BOARD REPORTS

LEGISLATIVE LIAISON REPORT

Superintendent Maria Delapoer said that a recent article in the newspaper spoke of former House Bill 2220 which became House Bill 4150 concerning standards-based grading. She said that an email from the Oregon Department of Education said that House Bill 4150 made it clear that school districts were in charge of determining the form and content of their grading and reporting system. She said that districts using standards-based report cards that include more than three indicators may continue to use them. She estimated that the Board was well ahead of the curve in identifying the grading system that the district would use through the eighth grade.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

None

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS

Director Utt said that he went to the PACE, Safe and Secure Schools conference. He said that he returned with a packet of information for Superintendent Delapoer.

Director Boehme said that he went to the middle school track meet. He said that it was great fun and the students enjoyed themselves.

Board Chair Bricker said that because the Superintendent had indicated her intention to retire at the end of the 2014-15 school year, the Board would need to go through the superintendent search process. He said that Business and Operations Director Russ Allen was gathering information on consultant firms to help lead the search. Mr. Allen said that some sort of process would be necessary. He said that the directors would be able to select the search consultant in a manner decided by the Board.

Director Boehme asked if a search firm was required. Board Chair Bricker said that it was not necessary to use a search firm but it would make the job of the school board easier.

STUDENT REPORTS

West Albany High School Student Board Member Nate Burman reported that the prom was held on April 26 at the CH2M Hill Alumni building on the campus of Oregon State University. He said that a staff and student only performance of the school play "Beauty and the Beast" would be held on May 1. He said that the graduation ceremony would be June 5.

South Albany High School Student Reporter Jessica Dilbone said that track was winding down as were all spring sports. She said that the national honor society inductions were held recently and quite a few people were invited. She said that choir and band were getting ready for performances. She said that dance and cheer tryouts would be that week. She said that the Speech team earned a fourth place trophy in their competition. She announced that Ms. Angel was named the Leadership Advisor of the Year for the State of Oregon.

Board Chair Bricker thanked both students for their reports.

REPORTS

ACHIEVEMENT COMPACTS, 2014-15 DRAFT TARGETS

Assistant Superintendent Frank Caropelo presented a draft target for the 2014-15 Achievement Compact. He said that the document would come back to the Board in August or September, 2014. He said that the document would be populated with the 2013-14 data and provided to the Oregon Education Investment Board in mid-October.

He explained that there was a statutory requirement that the document come before the Board in draft form by mid-May even though the timeline for submitting the final document was changed. He said that staff was tasked with consulting all parties and setting goals for next year based upon last year's data. He said that everything printed in red was a target based upon consultations with both associations as represented by their presidents and the district administrative teams.

Director Boehme referred to the goal of "9th Grade not Chronically Absent." He noted that in 2012-13 the goal was 83.8% and 78.5% for all students and disadvantaged students respectively. He asked why the goals for 2014-15 were 83.0% and 77.0%. Mr. Caropelo said that it might be a typo.

Director Boehme referred to the goal of "3rd Grade Reading Proficiency." He said that the 2014-15 goals of 76.0% for all students and 70.0% for disadvantaged students appeared to be a large jump from the 2012-13 percentages. Mr. Caropelo replied that the target was set by elementary principals for the current year. He said that since the previous target was not met, principals decided to keep the same targets for the 2014-15 school year.

Director Boehme referred to the Goal of "Earning 9+ College Credits." He asked how many students earn college credits. He estimated that a significant number of students earn some credits, although less than nine. Mr. Caropelo replied that he did not have that information, but he agreed that many students earn seven or eight credits. He said that the report in the Board packets included revised definitions provided by the state including guidance as to what qualified as a college course. He added that research indicates that students earning a credits before entering college have a higher rate of continuation and graduation from college.

Director Smith noted that the Achievement Compact indicated two Priority and Focus schools during the 2013-14 school year but none for the 2014-15 school year. Mr. Caropelo said that he would make the adjustment. He said that both schools were expected to come out of those statuses in 2015-16.

DISTRICT ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN

GOAL 1, PLC PROGRESS

Assistant Superintendent Frank Caropelo said that he would introduce several school administrators who would reflect on the work of Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) in their schools. He introduced South Shore Elementary School principal Michael Ann McIlvenny, Memorial Middle School principal Ken Gilbert and Albany Options School principal Dan Knight.

Mr. Gilbert said that at Memorial School, he was directing the work of the PLC groups to yield certain outcomes. He said that academic departments were given certain tasks each week which required deep thinking and conversations about standards. He said that the tasks were leading teachers to build fully developed backwards-designed, standards-based units.

He said that he did not start that way, telling teachers what they were creating, because it could be overwhelming, but he led the teachers forward, step-by-step, over a period of four weeks. He said that when finished, the teachers would have a clear understanding of the standards for their subjects. He said that teachers would be familiar with the learning objectives for each day, the assessments that they would be using, and most importantly, the criteria for what "meets" or "exceeds" looked like in student work.

Mr. Gilbert said that it was a lot of work for one unit and teachers were realizing how much work that was, but it was good for them to develop the deep understanding necessary to identify the standards that their students would be asked to meet. He said that teachers would begin the new school year with a unit ready to go and more than that as the program continued.

He said that it was exciting to hear the Superintendent say earlier that evening that schools would be permitted to continue with standards-based grading at the middle school level. He said that the middle schools were continuing to move forward not doing it because the state said to do it, but because it was the right thing to do.

Mr. Gilbert said that his observation of PLC work at his school was that there was more true collaboration between teachers. He said that they trust each other more and are increasingly likely to open-up to each other with their ideas and their mistakes.

South Shore Elementary School principal Michael Ann McIlvenny said that at South Shore, everything the school does stems from the PLC teams in examining student work. She said that PLC sessions were an opportunity to look deeply at the data. She said that English language development specialists, special education instructors, and reading teachers were all assigned to grade level teams, one for each grade. She said that the teachers meet in PLC on Wednesdays and the following morning they meet in grade level teams. They invite different specialists to join their teams in collaboration. She said that the teams report every six weeks to the data team. She explained that the grade level teams primarily focus upon mathematics, where the rest of the school focuses upon English language arts and language development. She said that all of the student learning and growth goals were written as team objectives.

She said that through the data teams, the staff was also examining attendance. She said that they were seeking to change monthly attendance behaviors. She said that the teams were examining reading progress, mathematics, and language development. She said that next year the school would add writing to the focus.

Ms. McIlvenny said that there was also monthly professional development at the district level. She said that was immensely helpful in gaining ideas and suggestions. She said that several weeks ago, participants examined mathematical practices. She said that each grade level team, and each PLC has committed to attending two of those between now and the end of the year.

She said that there was a need for vertical alignment. She said that teachers instructing Spanish need to have conversations across grades K-5.

Albany Options School principal Dan Knight said that his school has been told many times that it is little different. He said that his school does things differently than other secondary campuses within the district. He said that he developed a leadership team that would help identify needs within the schools and be the liaison the leadership and the teaching staff.

He said that his staff examined its goals and then as part of his school improvement grant, had to meet those goals. He said that he charged the group with improving its attendance rate, graduation rate, and test scores. He said that the leadership team helped define different things for the PLC groups to do to meet those goals.

Mr. Knight said that the teams examine data monthly. He said that a teacher assistance team identified interventions for students to help meet their needs. He said that he worked with district literacy teams to expand literacy within his school. He said that the data team examined scores from OAKS and math assessments. He said that the team examined summative test scores, final grades, behavior, attendance, and graduation data. He said that through that data, the team identified necessary interventions.

He said that the school developed essential skills classes in the mornings for students who have not been successful in taking the OAKS exam. He said that students were developing work samples and the teachers were helping students become successful and meet their graduation requirements. He said that so far, the school has not had a student unable to graduate because they were unable to meet the essential skills.

Mr. Knight said that Albany Options School had increased its graduation rate last year and he projected a further increase this year.

He said that the school's teacher assistance team examines student needs and identifies how to assist students in receiving the help that they needed. He said that the school uses the Special Programs Department and the FACT office to help students who's needs may be different from their counterparts at the other high schools.

Mr. Knight said that a member of his staff was on the district literacy team and she brings information back to Albany Options School. He estimated that the work at his school was ahead of what was being done at the district level.

He said that his peer observation team was developed from the high school work with consultant Kevin Feldman. He said that each teacher had nine opportunities to visit other teachers' classrooms. He said that the teachers discussed those observations during the PLC sessions and shared ideas and techniques.

Director Smith said that he appreciated the reflections. He asked if the schools had enough time to do the work of the Professional Learning Communities. Mr. Knight said that the teachers were volunteering part of their prep team to participate in the observations. He said that he covered classrooms while the teachers debriefed those observations.

Ms. McIlvenny said that her school uses student teachers to cover classrooms while the teachers are debriefing their observations. She said that her school is larger and she is not able to observe as many classrooms as she would wish.

Director Smith asked Mr. Gilbert what percentage would equal "meets" in achieving instructional objectives. Mr. Gilbert said that there was no percentage in "meets." He said that his staff was grappling with, given a set of problems, what a student would have to show to indicate that they understand the standard.

Mr. Caropelo said that math review was a specific part of the math program where concepts that were taught earlier were reviewed. He said that the goal was to not move on from a set of concepts until 80 percent of the class demonstrates proficiency. He said that it was not the same thing as one student achieving a grade of 80 percent on a quiz.

Director Smith asked the principals what they needed to continue to make sustainable gains in standards-based report cards and proficiency based grading that they do not have now. The principals replied that they needed more time. Mr. Gilbert said that teachers were finding how

much time was necessary to fully prepare just one unit, and they would have several units throughout a year. He said that additional money alone would not be much of a help as it would not change practices. He explained that teachers prefer to be working in their classrooms. He said that despite the value of observations, teachers want to be in their classrooms instructing.

Ms. McIlvenny said that Elementary Curriculum Director Tonja Everest created four modules to help teachers move from traditional to standards-based grading. She said that she had a staff that was already there, partly because when one is looking at standards and how to report that, the old grading method does not make sense anymore. She said that there would always be concerns when speaking to parents.

Director Smith asked Mr. Gilbert about time. He asked if the standards his team was creating for a particular unit would be applicable for other middle schools. Mr. Gilbert said that it would.

Director Smith asked how that information was shared. Mr. Gilbert said that the schools could use more time for PLC teams to get together. He said that teachers were finding that what they thought a standard meant may not have been correct. He said that just sharing that information would not have the same meaning if the teachers developed that information themselves.

Ms. McIlvenny said that one had to take into consideration that no two groups of students are the same.

Director Boehme asked if the work of the PLC's was usable year after year. Mr. Gilbert said that he hoped that it was. He said that he thought that the work could be improved upon over time.

Director Boehme asked how changes in staff would impact the process. Mr. Gilbert said that he and other district staff attended a job fair in Portland. He said that graduates coming out of college now are way ahead of current teachers in their familiarity with standards-based grading and the work of the Professional Learning Communities. He said that every person he spoke to at the job fair was on target and knew what he was talking about.

Director Boehme spoke of the PLC program and asked when the district would get there. Mr. Gilbert said that schools would always be somewhere on that path. He noted that two years ago Memorial School was just beginning, and now the school was much more advanced. He said that there would still be room for improvement.

Director Boehme asked when all schools would be at the same level. Mr. Gilbert said that each of the schools was doing the same kind of work. He said that in terms of standards, the schools should match up because each of the campuses had the same pacing guides, and were teaching the same standards at about the same time of the year.

Director Boehme asked if children were performing better in the classroom. Ms. McIlvenny said that she could point to documented improvement in South Shore students. The children are getting better, she said.

Director Utt said that he appreciated the work. He said that as the parent of a middle schooler, he can see the difference. He estimated that the middle schools would always be seeking improvement.

Mr. Caropelo said that much of the work in the schools was around building rubrics. He said that all the standards do not yet exist, but the teachers were creating them. He said that work would create horizontal alignment across the schools.

Superintendent Delapoer said that she observed teachers struggling to really understand the standards so they knew how to design the assessments. She said that was where the value was. She said that teachers were developing a deep understanding of what it all meant.

Director Smith asked if the Student Board Members were familiar with the concepts of the Professional Learning Communities. Both students replied that they were not familiar with the PLC concepts. Miss Dilbone said that she has been in classes where other educators came into her classroom to observe instruction.

Mr. Gilbert said that teachers were working toward a standards-based system and each of the schools was helping prepare teachers to fully make that transition next year. He said that he would have an open house for the families of current fifth graders on April 29 and would tell parents what to expect on the grading system. He estimated, however, that there would still be challenges next year.

Director Utt said that his middle schooler struggled last year but he did not know why. He said that this year, the grading system helps him better understand his child's progress.

Mr. Caropelo said that he wished to comment on an earlier statement of schools being at different levels. He said that he could go into any school and see a common language, a common vocabulary, and a common structure of teachers working together. He said that he was happy to see the progress in developing a common culture in looking at student data. He said that looking at yesterday's student work was the best way to prepare tomorrow's instruction.

Director Boehme commented about student mobility. He estimated that the ultimate objective would be to have consistency so that a student moving from one elementary school to another might find himself on the same page as his previous school, but he would be on the same section.

Ms. McIlvenny said that the elementary schools already have that in reading, math and writing.

Student Board Member Nate Burman noted that schools were moving from the OAKS testing to the Smarter Balanced exams which were different. He said that it would be difficult to compare results of the two tests.

Board Chair Bricker thanked the presenters. He said that the discussion took a lot of time but the Board Members needed that kind of detail.

GOAL 1, COMMON ASSESSMENTS

Assistant Superintendent Frank Caropelo said that the Board packets included a written update as to the progress toward Strategic Goal 1, Measure 7, Common Assessments. He said that when the objective was written, the intention was to develop a plan that would include common assessments in core areas. He said that the district has made tremendous progress in that area. He said that the work now was to developing common rubrics that can be used to score daily work. He said that the summative assessments, three or four times a year, would be the same across all schools and grade levels. He said that the work of the PLC's would be to develop the short term assessments.

Board Chair Bricker asked about Algebra at the middle school level. He said that in the past, middle school students taking Algebra did not receive high school credit for that instruction even though they were taking the same class. He said that he was told by the high schools that high school teachers were unsure if the middle school students were really learning at the high school level. He asked that with a common assessment, could teachers be assured that the middle school student taking Algebra was really learning the same material.

Mr. Caropelo said that it was matter that needed to be re-visited. He estimated that several years ago, the decision was made because high school principals at the time felt that students not taking math during their junior and senior years were more likely to end up in remedial math courses in college. He said that by not awarding credit for middle school work, the students would be forced to take math later into their high school years and potentially do better in college. He said that he could certainly reexamine the issue with the principals.

Board Chair Bricker suggested that a student with the math ability to complete algebra in the eighth grade and Geometry and Algebra II in the ninth and tenth grades might move on to more advance math classes.

Director Smith said that the district should not dictate a student's schedule. He said that a student might wish to take a math course in eighth grade so that he or she could have that credit slot for another course, or so that they could graduate half a year early.

He said that a gifted math student might want to take additional math instruction at Oregon State.

Student Board member Nate Burman said that he took algebra as an eighth grader at Santiam Christian School. He said that he received high school credit for that course.

North Albany Middle School assistant principal Jon Dilbone said that students at his school who complete Honors Algebra and Geometry at the middle school level receive credit for that instruction after the first semester of their freshman year. He said that middle school teachers must have the certification to teach math at the high school level.

Director Boehme said that the district was getting closer to awarding credit based upon ability and not the student's age.

Director Utt said that that if the district was requesting college credit for high school work, it would seem inconsistent to deny high school credit for middle school work.

Superintendent Delapoer said that community colleges varied but many wanted the high school instructor to have a master's degree in their subject area. Mr. Caropelo said that what the Eastern Promise Grant did was create a rubric to be used by the high school teachers to assess and award credit for college courses taught by high school instructors. He said that traditionally, in order to grant college credit, the high school teacher needed to have a master's degree in that subject area. He said that what the Eastern Promise Grant did was develop a model where there were proficiencies designed for each course. He said that any student who met those proficiencies would receive the credit, regardless of the teacher's certification. He said that over time, teachers were earning master's degrees not in their subject area, but in teaching.

He said that the Board's interest in setting a common standard for demonstrating proficiency and then receiving credit was what a standards-based model was.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Business and Operations Director Russ Allen stated that the terms of Budget Committee members Chris Norman and William Summers would complete on June 30, 2014. He said that both individuals expressed interest in continuing their service. He asked how the Board wished to fill those vacancies.

Director Utt said that part of the issue for Budget Committee Members was getting them up to speed. He said that Mr. Summers has done a great job for the committee. He had no objection to reappointing both committee members. Directors Smith and Boehme agreed.

Board Chair Bricker requested the matter be returned to the Board on the Consent Agenda of the next meeting.

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION, SAFETY AND SECURITY

Superintendent Maria Delapoer stated that the district's transition to the "I Love You Guys" emergency response procedures required new Administrative Regulation *EBCB-AR(4), Reunification Plan*. She said that the document was prepared with the input of several school office managers.

She called the Directors' attention to page 4 of the document and noted that the evacuation procedures were primarily focused upon elementary school students. She said that the procedures for middle and high school students might look a little different as the older students might be able to self-evacuate themselves and then communicate to a family member that they got home safely.

Ms. Delapoer said that the information at the bottom of page 5 detailed re-unification procedures for persons authorized to pick up students. She said that students would be kept in a holding area,

parents would check in, a runner would go and get the child, and the student would be re-unified with an adult authorized to pick them up.

Student Board Member Jessica Dilbone said that some of her classrooms do not have blinds on the windows of the entrance doors. Ms. Delapoer said that schools have developed different methods of obscuring the windows such as having a piece of paper taped next to the window and the paper could be quickly moved.

Director Smith suggested that part of the orientation on the first day of each class would be a review of the emergency procedures. He said that the procedures would eventually become second nature to everyone.

Director Boehme asked if during registration, the schools request cell phone numbers for family members. Director Smith said that "School Messenger" allows the school to contact those numbers. Ms. Delapoer said that the Student Information System, which can be accessed from the district office, has multiple contact numbers as well as a listing of persons who are authorized to pick up those students.

OTHER BUSINESS

FACILITIES DEPARTMENT

Business and Operations Director Russ Allen delivered a written report from the Facilities Department.

FOOD SERVICE DEPARTMENT

Business and Operations Director Russ Allen delivered a written report from the Food Service Department.

Mr. Allen said that the metric indicated that the account was in the deficit. He said that it was certainly something that the district had noticed and staff was working with the Food Service Department drill down on those numbers. He said that Controller Ashley Netzel and Food Service Director Sharon Short were continuing to meet concerning where the issues were and where the department expected to end the year. He cautioned that the metric may be under reporting.

He said that the district missed seven days of school due to snow and many of those days would be made up at the end of the year. He said that he was unsure of the impact of the days added to the end of the school year. He said that he would be meeting with Food Service Director Sharon Short and Sodexo Manager John Stone later in the week.

Director Boehme asked for an additional column on the metric. Mr. Allen said that he would consider the possibility.

ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Bricker said that the next meeting of the Budget Committee would be May 5, 2014 at 7:00 p.m. at the District Office. He said that the next Regular Board Meeting would be May 12, 2014.

Board Chair Bricker adjourned the Board meeting at 9:00 p.m.

Frank Bricker, Board Chair

Maria Delapoer, Superintendent

(Recorded by Jim Haggart)

Business and Report Items - Document Reference (filed with original minutes)

Student Report
Chase Laperle and Quinn Walters
Memorial Middle School
April 28, 2014

Chase: Good evening Mr. Chairman and other Board members. I would like to thank Mr. Gilbert and the School Board for letting me give an overview of Memorial Middle School and what the year has been like for myself and the rest of the students.

As the year comes to an end, I cannot help but think of my past three amazing years at Memorial. There were plenty of good times that I will cherish forever, and many character traits that I will pass on as I grow older.

Last Friday, Memorial concluded its second track meet against the other Albany middle schools. Memorial, overall, did very well and everyone had great team spirit. I would like to thank all of the coaches along with Mr. Gilbert and Ms. Hollenberg for their support as the season has gone on and we prepare for the next meet on May 8.

To conclude the school year, the sixth, seventh and eighth classes will each be going on their own separate field trips. The sixth graders will be touring Portland and the seventh graders will be visiting the Portland zoo. The eighth graders will be going to the Pix Theater in downtown Albany to watch a movie and then take a bus to Millersburg Park and hang out for the day. These field trips were all paid for through school fundraisers, without which none of these field trips could have happened.

At the end of the year, participating eighth grade students will be going on a Washington DC field trip. They will tour parts of New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and of course, Washington D.C. there will also be many parent chaperones as well. There will be meetings and fundraisers throughout the year and many donations to raise money as well. All of the students who are going are very excited and ready to tour the east coast.

This past Saturday, April 26, 2014, Memorial Middle School had its fiftieth anniversary. There was a school-wide open house for all current students and alumni to take tours of the school, look at exhibits, reconnect with past friends, and contribute to a time capsule. It was a big success that could not have happened without many volunteers and the Memorial Leadership class.

As the eighth graders get ready for their commencement at Memorial, tests are being prepared for. Last week, three West Albany counselors came to talk about forecasting and what to expect for our freshman year. We received our forecasting package to pick out classes. Also, students who will be attending South Albany High School went to forecast at South and tour the school for the day.

One other event coming up in May is the eighth grade dance, from 8:00 – 10:00 p.m. students are allowed to dress up and get ready for a “Night in Paris.” This is something we have been looking forward to since we arrived in middle school.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you and share my opinions about Memorial Middle School. Go Bears!

Quinn: A Mr. Haggart introduced, I am Quinn Walters, a current eighth grader at Memorial Middle School.

So, today, April 28, 2014 there are 50 days until the end of the year. It's crazy to think how fast time has flown by. It was like a week ago that I was sitting in class not having a care in the world. Oh Wait. That's because it was a week ago. But, seriously, middle school was just a transfer from playing house, to figuring out what to do when we actually own one.

We have time, though, to enjoy ourselves while the year is coming to an end. That includes end of the year activities which is where we'll have fun playing on inflatable bounce houses and failing miserably trying to follow along to "Just Dance."

The eighth grade promotion is also in the end of the year category. The eighth grade class of 2014 will walk across a stage in front of family, friends, and everyone else's family and friends. If that doesn't sound intimidating, congratulations, you are braver than I am!

Speaking of end of the year activities, the Leadership class is the ringleader of all the events that take place. They help keep our school in check and they set up for certain events like the fiftieth anniversary which we just celebrated on Saturday. Leadership is busier than ever trying to make sure everything is perfect for everything else Memorial has going on. So props for them, they do not get enough credit.

Fundraisers! Where can I begin with them? We have had two recently and one is rapidly approaching. We recently had Krispy Kreme and chocolate sales. We have a Burgerville one coming up so if anyone is in the mood for a burger, make sure you stop by. As things could not get any more hectic in eighth grade life, West Albany High School is holding multiple tryouts, such as cheerleading, dance team, football, basketball and many more. It is time for all of the Memorial kids to show them what we got!

As much as everyone would like to listen to me to continue talking about eighth graders, I would just like to say that the sixth graders have had an amazing year. They have all told me that they love their teachers and they absolutely adore having their own lockers.

So while Chase and I, along with the rest of the eighth grade class is counting the slow moving days and minutes (And trust me we are) until we leave for high school, I think we all need to appreciate these slow moving days with our friends, because when we get into high school later, we are all going to wish we could go back to those small moments with our closest friends.

Thank you all again so much for listening to us speak about Memorial Middle School, and the rest of the 2014 school year.