



Stillaguamish Valley
Parent Partnership Program

Arlington Public Schools

January 26, 2015

Dear Parents,

On the eve of second semester, I want to express my gratitude to all of you for working so positively with the staff and myself through the first half of the school year, particularly as we began implementing changes to our program. Please know our fundamental goal is to support you as the primary educators of your children. We seek to accomplish this by providing a wide variety of curriculum resources on campus, and by offering educational opportunities through our site-based, remote and on-line course offerings. Our program is truly a partnership, and your active participation in our learning community is critical to its success. Thank you!

Next on the horizon for us as a community is an important, and understandably sensitive topic: *state assessments*. Students in all public schools across our state take annual state assessments to provide parents and teachers with valuable information regarding individual academic student growth. The assessments are also a way for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to determine the effectiveness of each school in the state. Because our school is publicly funded through federal, state and local taxes, our full-time students (FTE>80%) are required to demonstrate their knowledge by participating in the state assessments.

Historically, our high school students perform well on the state mandated tests, and end of course exams. The elementary and middle level test scores, however, are well under state averages. Collectively, our school is in the bottom 5% of all public schools for performance on required state assessments. This fact has placed our program in Priority Status, and has forced us to look closely at our school leadership, the effectiveness of our instruction, and the long-term sustainability of our programs. We have excellent support from our superintendent, Dr. McDuffy, and from OSPI in the form of a significant grant, a proven strategic planning platform, and helpful coaching from an experienced school administrator, Carol Frodge. Even so, unless we can demonstrate that our students are learning and growing by way of state assessments, our program is in jeopardy.

The single change that could have an immediate impact on our scores is to have each student in grades three through eight take the new state assessment. When a family opts out of having their child take the required test, that student receives a 0% score. Traditionally, more students at our school in the elementary and middle school grades opt out of the test than take it. That means the 0% scores are counted, and even when those who take the test perform reasonably well, the non-show scores drop our overall performance tremendously.

Please think about this problem as we begin to look toward the state testing windows in April. In a follow up communication, I will announce the testing dates for each grade, provide a means to begin practicing for the new Smarter Balanced Assessments, and describe ways the staff is working to help prepare your children for the tests. Thank you again for all your support, and I hope you can understand the dilemma we face as a program.

In Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "J. Doucette".

Joseph Doucette
Principal