

**Notes from PUSD Green Initiative Meeting
February 25, 2010, 3:30-4:15 p.m.**

Attendees: John White (PMS parent and teacher), Debbie Pfeiffer (PHS parent), Terry Smith (Havens teacher), Diana Feiger (Wildwood teacher), Beth Gilbert (Millenium teacher), Jeanne Donovan (PMS Principal), Andrea Ruiz-Esquide (Wildwood parent), David Roth (Asst Superintendent), Jon Elliot (Havens parent), Sue Lin (Beach parent, APCP), Michael Brady (Asst Superintendent), Julie Valdez (Beach Principal), Margaret Ovenden (Beach parent)

Outline of notes:

1. Updates from Schools
2. Reports on 3-year Plans
 - a. Waste Reduction
 - b. Landscaping & Grounds
 - c. Environmental Education
3. Common themes

1. UPDATES FROM SCHOOLS:

Havens:

Last year (08-09), Havens implemented expanded recycling, including green waste. This involved establishing a 4-bin, color-coded system (black, blue, green, and “baggie blue” (a small blue bin for plastic bags, which need to be bundled for recycling), holding a “Slob Day” and Kickoff Assembly, doing garbage audits, frequent “commercials” during science classes about recycling issues (including finding the greenest pencils), a green-themed science fair, and a closing assembly, where it was reported that almost 2 tons of waste had been saved from the landfill in one year. In addition, in 08-09 the first grade garden program continued in the spring, as it has for the last 10 years. Kindergarten gardening was done by parent volunteers in the winter and spring. Containers and soil were moved to Havens Jr. for the garden program. Plans for the new school were reviewed from a garden perspective, and questions raised about adequacy of space.

This year (09-10), the recycling program was adapted for the Havens Jr. campus, in consultation with StopWaste and the City of Emeryville. To deal with bin color being different in Emeryville, symbols were introduced for bins. There was a refresher course with students, as well as review during the year. With other schools as well as Children’s Choice (hot lunch program), have established relationship with Richmond Sanitary Services (Piedmont’s waste collection company) and a group of teachers, parents, and others will tour their transfer station. Worm bins have been introduced in 4th grade. The garden has been managed in containers for the 1st and 2nd grade curriculum. Conversations have been continued with designers about the configuration of the garden at the new Havens.

Beach:

In the area of waste reduction, Beach's lunchtime collection system continues in 09-10 to be organized pretty much the same way it was in 08-09. The students are doing really well with sorting, thanks to the help of custodial staff, lunch supervisors, and occasional parent-led demonstrations about composting. The 3-way recycling station that was purchased with StopWaste import mitigation funds (through the City of Piedmont) was placed in the lunch yard, but it was found that the openings were too small and the bins filled up too quickly at lunchtime. It is being moved out into the main schoolyard, which was the original plan for it.

The Beach garden program is nearly 100% parent-organized and -driven. There is a parent coordinator and then "garden room parents" for each class. This year and last (08-09 and 09-10) every class has had a garden lesson every month. Lessons are hands-on, focusing on planting, tending to the plants, harvesting, etc., with discussion about topics such as how seeds grow, what makes for good soil, the weather, etc.

At the Back-to-School coffee there was a well-received display about how to pack No-Trash Lunches (or Less-Landfill Lunches), developed in coordination with WW, Havens and PMS green committees/teams. In 08-09, there was a push by parents out of BPO Green Committee for Walking/Biking/Carpooling to school. This has been on the back burner somewhat in 09-10, but is still a priority.

Wildwood:

There are color-coded bins for sorting waste on the lunch patio. Like at Beach, the 3-way bin hasn't worked for lunch sorting. WW has a green squad. X grade teacher(s) do a monthly green spotlight. The PMS green team came to visit. Last year there were some assemblies, but not this year. The garden was originally started by Diana Feiger (teacher), and then a parent took over. Gardening is not done with all grade levels. In the staff room, teachers and staff are very dedicated to recycling.

PMS:

Having dedicated class time for green issues this year has enabled PMS to make huge strides. These classes have been for all grade levels – i.e. both in the elective wheel that all 6th graders go through, and in the core classes. The focus of the Green Team is on learning through doing: restoration, building. Lots of people from the community have been involved – for example in building the garden. Taking a "schooling for sustainability" approach has really made a community of the school. The Center for Ecoliteracy training that Jeanne Donovan and John White participated in last summer was extremely helpful in showing broad and simplified ways of getting essential learning into the schools – via systems thinking and practical applications (for example, focusing on food as a first entry point into nature). Teachers are really on board – for example, e-mailing each other this week to see if anyone had rulers to share (vs. going out and buying new ones). PMS is looking at environmental connections in all three grades (6, 7, 8), and is trying to engage PHS.

Millenium:

Gave up plastic water cups that students use daily, and is looking at buying water bottles to keep on campus for students to use. Has revamped the paper/can/bottle recycling in all the classrooms and hallway, using new bins that the community service class purchased and new signs from maintenance. There is no green waste sorting.

A few years back the World Cultures Class worked on some sustainability projects in Costa Rica. The problem was where to take this (how to share with the community) once the students were back in Piedmont. There is a sustainability unit in the World Cultures Class. Are looking at establishing a connection with the Permaculture Institute.

Are very close to establishing two formal groups: 1) A MHS ASB class with representation to the PUSD Green Initiative, and 2) adding a green committee representative to the parent volunteer hours that will be asked from all MHS parents.

PHS:

Parent Debbie Pfeiffer has been heading up an effort of parents from all the parents clubs to develop “green event guidelines” that can be adopted by all the schools’ parents’ clubs, and will set a model for other school events. To this end, there is a tour next month of Richmond Sanitary’s waste transfer station, and plans to meet with representatives of the Jepson Prairie composting facilities to ascertain what is/isn’t getting recycled/composted. Andy Willats has met with John White about what PMS is doing and how ideas from this may be applicable at PHS.

District:

Havens Playfield update: Due to soil conditions and drainage issues, the cost of the field is coming in “6 figures” more than what was originally estimated. Other: The District is piloting printer cartridges made with soy at MHS. At Witter field, redwood trees’ roots were compromising the fields, so several trees had to be removed. They will be replaced with native, non-invasive species. Chevron has done an analysis re solar possibilities for the school district, finding that there is not enough space for panels to make solar financially feasible, except possibly on a gym roof. Algerian Ivy: If this were taken out, MHS could use that space for garden/green projects.

2. REPORTS ON 3-YEAR PLANS (in Waste Reduction, Landscaping & Grounds, Environmental Ed)

General note: The elementaries are taking a tri-school approach to green planning. In 2010-11, they will be documenting current practices in all three areas (waste reduction, landscaping & grounds, environmental education). In 2011-12, they will come to agreement about common activities – expectations for what students will be exposed to by the time they get to middle school. This will include defining the role of the gardens. In 2012-13 they will measure what they have done and determine what needs to be done next, and establish how to sustain the “green” effort.

a. WASTE REDUCTION

Havens:

In 2010-2011 the focus will be on the transition to the new site, and implementing the recycling program there. Other goals are to revisit the “What Goes Where” training with students, to have regular recycling check-ins and feedback to students, and to figure out how to sustain this training over time. Also, Havens will assist Wildwood with its transition to the Havens Jr. recycling and green waste system. For 2011-12 and on out, the goal would be to maintain and modify the system as needed, and to continue to educate/refresh student recycling skills.

Beach:

Wants to maintain what it is already doing in terms of waste sorting at lunchtime, and to have ongoing training with students in waste sorting (having 4th and 5th graders lead other students in this, as well as yearly reminders and ways of bringing new students into the loop). Is investigating and trying different ways to integrate rainy day lunches into waste sorting. There is interest in developing a paper policy, to reduce paper use in making copies and to increase paper recycling schoolwide. With the remodeling, there is interest in having a second dishwasher in the kitchen (to encourage the use of regular plates and silverware vs. disposable), as well as a small washer/dryer (for tablecloths, etc.). BPO will be considering developing a “cache” of compostable and recyclable disposable dishware (as part of the overall parent club effort to develop “green event policy” recommendations for parent-led events).

Wildwood:

Wants to be in line with what the other elementaries are doing with waste sorting. Rainy days are also an issue here, as is not giving the custodians more work.

PMS: The focus this year (2009-10) has been on getting compostable waste out of the waste stream. Next year would love to focus on recyclable materials that require dismantling to be truly recyclable, although there is concern about imposing more work on maintenance people. The general goal is reducing even more what goes to the landfill. This could also include teaching students about how products could be designed better so that they are better recyclable. By year 3, would like to have established all the possible ways for reducing non-compostable, non-recyclable waste, so that could say, for example, that no more plastic utensils are available at Food Services. All of this would be measured as it went along.

PHS:

There is a good level of consciousness about reducing paper use. There are blue bins for collecting paper in every classroom. There is currently no green waste collection.

Millenium:

Are moving to water bottles (vs. plastic cups).

b. LANDSCAPING & GROUNDS

Havens, Beach, Wildwood: As part of the tri-school green planning, will be looking at what is the role of gardens in a school district. K-5 wants to come into alignment about

what kids should experience. The garden curriculum will also come under review. Additional site-specific landscaping/garden plans:

Havens – Garden plans are dependent on what amount/type of garden space ends up being possible at the new site. Everyone is waiting and crossing their fingers.
Wildwood – The current garden will be wiped out by the seismic project. It's not clear what garden plans are when Wildwood moves back in.
Beach – The garden program will continue as is – parent-led, etc. -- for the next couple years. An immediate issue for 2010-11 is upcoming transition in parent leadership, with parent Lisa Joyce “graduating” from Beach. There are thoughts of an ASE class focusing on garden maintenance. Ideas for after the remodel (when and if this happens) include rethinking the size and function of the garden (could it be expanded if the Schoolmates portable is gone and/or that space reconfigured?), the role of teachers, the relationship of the garden program to the “regular” program/curriculum. Ideas that are being tossed around include how to make the garden into more of a teaching space (outdoor classroom) – perhaps by turning it into more of an amphitheater. For the playground, a vision is to add some shade trees along the front of the building, to give those classrooms some relief from sun reflecting off the blacktop and playground noise.

PMS – This year (2009-10), the Green Team is starting a native plant center and will be meeting with Bill Cwynar to discuss what it would be helpful for the students to do for next year (2010-11). For 2011-12, would like the back of the Science Center to be a permaculture demonstration site, getting certification for this in 2010-11. Stella Kennedy and Terry Smith have gotten a PAINTS grant for a workshop that will use natural materials (from the gardens) to make paint.

PHS – Debbie Pfeiffer has looked at PMS and Bishop O’Dowd gardens. Lisa Joyce and a group of students are looking into ideas for starting garden areas at PHS – starting out small, perhaps starting with planters outside the science building.

Millenium – If the ivy around the school were pulled up, MHS could be involved in sustainable designs and planting.

c. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Havens, Wildwood, Beach:

The elementaries will especially be taking a tri-school approach with regards to Environmental Education, with Terry Smith leading up an effort to develop a “matrix” for each school to inventory what different classrooms are already doing in environmental ed, and to start planning for how to augment or change this. Terry has already taken the social studies and science standards for several grades and pulled out everything that had a connection to environmental issues. She was “blown away” by how many things we’re already doing, or with some tweaking could be doing. There was a meeting with principals, with the idea of making things more collaborative. The goal for 2010-11 is to look at each standard and to set goals for the following two years. Can

get ideas from the new Education and the Environment Initiative curriculum, which is available on-line.

PMS – The focus this year is on the CYCLE center. In 2010-11, would like to expand CYCLE and get into environmental service learning. Applying for [or got?] a grant from PEF for growing, energy generation, aquaponics. The focus for 2012-13 would be on expanding community partnerships, reaching out and teaching in the community (including looking at issues of community building around transitioning to a society adapting itself to face issues of peak oil and climate change).

PHS – Debbie Pfeiffer reported that Andy Willats (who wasn't able to attend today) has met with John White re what is going on at PMS. There is AP Environmental Science, but an idea is to add something more applied and vocational.

Millenium – Since MHS is so close to PMS, it will work to build relationships between the PMS Green Team and a group of MHS volunteers. There is excitement about all the possibilities for bridging the schools and ages. The PMS class can come share ideas and its wealth of knowledge with MHS, and the two schools can work on various green projects together. The MHS World Cultures class looks at sustainability issues. MHS offers service learning opportunities (such as working on homes in Oakland that need painting, etc.), and it could add several service learning events that are around environmental opportunities. Beth Gilbert pointed out that students say that what is going on around green issues at the community level isn't clear to them. They want ways to be integrated in to what the community is doing.

3. Some of the Common Themes that are emerging:

- 21st century reality: preparing kids for a different future (where planning and acting for sustainability are important). Letting them experience doing/living it.
- Starting with the standards and integrating environmental education and green activities into the curriculum already teaching (there's no extra time)
- Sustainability – agriculture/food
- Waste reduction (RRRR) and energy conservation
- Community partnership

Ideas added after the meeting was over:

- Consumption issues: just not buying so much stuff (teaching students about this, and practicing it as a school district)
- Way to consolidate purchasing of class stuff, so that individual parents aren't always driving all over purchasing a stick of glue here, a set of paper plates there.