



SOUTH KITSAP SCHOOL DISTRICT

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INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES
DR. KURT WAGNER, ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

May 15, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

JD Sweet and Elizabeth Blandin presented to the South Kitsap School District's counseling staff on May 14, 2007. Their presentation, "Creating a School Culture that Embraces Students, Parents, Community" is part of our district's effort to close our achievement gap and to create a more inclusive culture. They were extremely professional, positive and very thought provoking with our staff. Most importantly, they provided practical new ideas of how we as individuals and as a district can reach out to our African American families. However, their suggestions would be effective will all less represented populations.

The plan they shared included a three step approach. First and foremost, it begins with the individual and self reflection to bring about positive change in how we interact with African American students. Second, they discussed the instructional/student contact level. It is about building trust and showing support to allow students to succeed in school. Finally, they outlined a plan for changing school culture. As a team they were able to present what can be a difficult topic in a way that encouraged the audience to participate and be open to the ideas of their plan.

JD and Elizabeth did an outstanding job with our counseling staff. They created an atmosphere of respect and openness that allowed the counselors to gain new perspectives on how to reach out to our students of color and their families in a productive way. Their style of presentation was engaging and well organized. I would highly recommend them to other districts and schools looking to improve how they interact with their African America community. We look forward to working with them again in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Whitford".

Dan Whitford
Director of Instructional Services