

# Frank talk about choosing a new superintendent

By Jana Alexander

Four blatantly honest citizens shared their concerns and visions Oct. 6 in the Snohomish High School library with Howard Coble and Bob Marshall in one of many public meetings used to craft a profile of the next Snohomish Schools' Superintendent.

Coble and Marshall used an informal round table discussion format to pose survey questions to the attendees. Surveys include six questions that help searchers gain perspective about the community and school district and the quali-

ties necessary in a new superintendent.

The results will provide Coble and Marshall with participant's views of Snohomish School District to give to candidates. Those views will let candidates know what challenges they will be expected to meet if chosen as superintendent, and what it must be like to be a Superintendent in Snohomish.

The good and the bad  
When asked to share the strengths of the district, the quality of education at Snohomish Schools and the attitudes of community

and students were given high marks by Marian Berge, who was Community Relations Director for the Snohomish School District from 1970 to 1993; Susan Esvelt, a former educator and member of Panther Parents; Doris Wentworth, a past teacher at Snohomish High School; and Bill Fulton, former Snohomish School Board member.

"On this campus, and I don't care what building I'm going in, somebody opens the door for me," Wentworth said. "The students are so well behaved; they're here to learn."

"The respect the kids show to the premises is incredible," Esvelt said, noting the lack of graffiti.

"The tradition of high quality education and adherence to standards," makes the district's motto into a symbol the school lives by, Fulton said.

The symbol, expressed with the passionate image of the Panther mascot, is "Commitment to Excellence." But, for the last five years,

adherence to those standards have been waning, he said. "The symbol is still there, but it's hollow," Fulton said.

He said the past superintendent expected excellence, and demanded excellence.

"I see that the staff is crying for that (kind of leadership), from the teachers' assistants, to the finance department, all the way up," Fulton said.

As far as what qualities are necessary in a superintendent, accessibility and accountability were high on the list.

Leadership means a superintendent is willing to face problems, Fulton said; instead of attempting to keep up appearances that say "there is no problem."

"We never hear about an emergency until it's already upon us," Wentworth agreed.

A superintendent should be able to make a decision and stick by it with logic and facts to back up the decision, Berge said.

## A matter of trust

A core problem the district has is the degradation of trust from the public, Esvelt said.

"When your public doesn't feel they're getting accurate or complete information, it causes that distrust...we have to acknowledge that exists," Esvelt said.

"We've heard that everywhere we go," Coble responded. "Is there something exacerbating that?"

Esvelt said Citizens for Snohomish Schools, the district's Steering Committee, is less open to the public than it used to be. That lack of openness adds to the distrust the public has for the school board.

The group used to have open meetings, Esvelt said. At that time, she was a member.

"We've got to rebuild this foundation of trust and confidence," Esvelt said.

Berge added that the board is not given ample time to study issues.

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