

Mrs. Koellmann

Erica: The following interview was conducted on behalf of the oral history program of the Century High School.

Jennie: how and when did you become activities advisor?

Koellmann: Three years ago, I was working at Mc Kay High School in Salem. Our school had already gone through three activities directors- Mr. (Guy Takahashi and Nancy Haake, and they were looking to refill the position. Mr. Takahashi was going on to full time math and p.e. Teacher, as well as all his other coaching jobs. So they were in fact looking to re-fill the position. Dave, who you used to be a social studies teacher at our school used to be the activities director at Hill Hi. Before he got here, he and I had worked together at leadership camps for state. He asked me if I was interested, and I at that time, I was happy teaching, but not happy teaching at the school where I worked. So, I came in and was interviewed that Friday of Jag Fest that our school had ever had with Dawn Montgomery and Lynn Scheller was, and Ron Web and got the job that day.

Jennie: What was the program like when you first took over?

Koellmann: I think the program was lacking consistency. Nancy Haake had established a student council her first year and it had gone through some changes the second year. The first year there was an excc. Board and they were senators and they were officers. Because the first year the students, and Mr. Takahashi felt that some students didn't have enough to do, so they got rid of one of the offices, the executive board. They interviewed students for senators, and they had class officers, but I think what indeed happened was that they turned the senators into an exec board. But the problem with that is that you do need an exec board, you know you need a president, you need a Vice president. The hard part was that the people who fit into the exec. Board jobs were people from all grades so I had seniors through sophomores on exec. Board. It was great for the diversity, but what the underclass mates were lacking was not experience but with the culture of the school, experience with several Jag Fests with several homecoming's, whether or not in a leaderships position or not. So I think when I came on board, the leadership program lacked a lot of organization and a lot of kids who were frustrated because there wasn't a whole lot of consistency. Many of the kids who were juniors that first year had gone through three different activities directors so, that was very frustrating for them. A lot of frustration was based on inconsistency in the program.

Erica: How would you describe the evolution of the activities program since you took over?

Koellmann: I think our goal was to build the consistency, I think that one of our first goals three years ago was to create some sort of school identity. When we, our school first opened we had some students from Glencoe and Hill Hi and we just really hadn't created what Century High School was all about, we hadn't created any traditions,

everything that we weren't doing was adopted from the other two high schools so we really didn't have anything that we were doing that was really ours. We were getting it because it was what the other high schools did, not because it was ours. So, I think what we tried to do is that we tried to re build the activities program and we brought in most of our exec board members as well as senators, all of them back on student government. I think we talked a lot about why we do things. One of our first challenges that school year was the stadium. When we looked at homecoming which our staff will tell you we didn't really have one the first two years. When we looked at homecoming and talked about if we should have a parade, that was something we couldn't do because we didn't have tracks around the stadium. So we had to come up with some new ideas, that would not only, where our school was and the where the other pieces of our school was and what not. We also had to look at who our students were, something that teachers on the planning team have said, teachers from Hill hi and teachers from Glencoe come together and created century in terms of the planning team and created what they thought they wanted to have but the student body didn't exactly fit the mold they had in mind that they wanted to have. Our socioeconomic level was lower than they had planned. We have a lot of single parent families, we have a lot of students who live in apartments, which isn't a bad thing and so I think in terms of building activities and looking for traditions and building involvement in student body and building school culture, we had to look at all those things. What we wanted to do with it, so I think in terms of the evolution we had to look at who we are, we had to create goals we had to create a vision, we had to create some sort of consistency

E: What do you think are the highlights or strong points of our activities program?

J: I think one of the strongest things that did not exist when I took over the program was, a lot of really strong seniors to set the tone for the way the year would be, and set the tone what students do or do not do in our school. So they really kind of created what is expectable and is what is not expectable. I think again that its consistency. I think that one of my goals is to give the students a lot more leadership training not only at our school, but at state organizations, um, every year since I've been here we have students go to the national conference. Every year we have students presenting at our state spring conference or fall conference, or the national conference. You know, so I think I talked about consistency and about building traditions but I think the biggest strong point in our program is we're doing much more than pep assemblies and dances. There are a lot of things that the kids do that the student body does not see. For example: the presentation I have them do, going to conferences, and going to camp. So, I think they're leadership training outside of the school, so I think we've focused a lot on building better relationships with the our staff, in a building that is so spread out, and in a building where you have so many staff members and so many students, I think the students have really reached out well to the staff, and created especially with our certified staff and our teachers, some really good relationships. I think a weakness is that the student council needs to reach out more to the students and get out of that up stairs room reach out and find out what they want. What was really important when I came on board as well as the two previous years when we opened the school was deciding what we want deciding what the school needs. But now, I think the student council needs to reach out to students

and find out what we can do and what students continually want to participate in. So I don't know, leadership experience, building bonds with teaching staff, because of that experience I think that the kids tried to adopt new idea and I think something that's really strong about our program is partially because its my philosophy, our program is ever changing you know next year everyone on student government will have a school improvement project because what I don't like is that everyone gets in office and they do what is expected in their office whether its class officer, or an exec. Board member. They need to become more community involved, and make a real difference.

Jennie: do you have any plans for student government next year?

Julie: Um, part of the reason why we took so many senators for next year was that we'll have a system similar to that of the newspaper staff and kids in journalism where students will go on a beat. So we'll use that as an evaluation tool after an assembly after a dance and what not. Um, we'll use that in terms of gathering ideas, looking for a theme, or looking for a new activity to add to homecoming, whatever, so students will go on a beat and kind of gather information. So that's one idea, several times especially if it's on a day of a big event right before an assembly is about to start, we'll have a team of people that will be assigned to talk to five people they don't know and go downstairs and talk about what's going on in our school. That's another way to do a kind of a beat, and get the pulse on what's going on with the student body. \\\

Erica: What are some of things that aren't so successful, and what causes these problems?

Julie: with our student council or school? Again I think that working in a large school and being a representative of so many students especially looking at next year when our school will be bigger, is that so many students, is that students will get lost really easily. And so in terms of representing everybody from our student body, that's a huge challenge. I think it's also frustrating because we do so much that it's hard for kids to be involved in other athletics, other activities that they do on top of classes, it's hard for students to go beyond, you know if I'm director of assemblies it's hard to go beyond that one job and try to be something else. So that's frustrating, the block schedule is frustrating because I only meet with the kids every other day, and so I try to make it clear that the students do work outside of class in order to perform a task. And that's always hard, because I'm working with the best of the best, or at least in my opinion. Students who are already very over-programmed, students who work outside of school, students who are involved in other activities or athletics. So I think the biggest challenge for student government is trying to get things done. I think that another thing is that, again, how spread out our building is, because in terms of trying to get teacher involvement, and creating that bond and continually getting them to become interested and participating. For example: the teachers who are in Jag Fest, that can be a struggle, because we are so spread and because teachers are very used to either being on the North end or the south end, and they're very comfortable with those people and so trying to mix that up, it's difficult I think. Another problem with our school is that it's very technology based, that should sound like a strength, but everyone is so e-mail dependent we've lost a lot of communication, and a thing I constantly remind kids in student government is that you have to get off the e-mail. If T.J. and Jen are planning pep assemblies, they need to face it with coaches and remind them that they're in it, talk to them about what we're going to do. So I think that's a weakness too, just the technology and something we try to focus on, successful communication, and face-to-face with people, because it's so hard for staff members to say no to students when you face to face it with them as opposed to over an e-mail.

Jennie: Do you think it would be easier to accomplish things with a less population of students?

Julie: Yes uh-huh, definitely. And that's another thing we have such a big population of students that it's really hard to please everyone. I think another problem is that we have such a huge

discrepancy in the philosophy, in each teachers philosophy in our school. And you will always have that, but there are a lot of neg. of on the staff, and there are a lot of teachers who say, why are we doing this? This is worthless. Even teachers who are involved with Jag Fest court, have said this week that Java Lava is a waste of time, so you know they're are involved teachers who like this thing, but not the other thing. And so i think that that's another big frustration that the kids battle just in terms of philosophy, some teachers believe that they are only here to teach and to teach only, and when you have things like pep assemblies it is taking away they're teaching time. And part again, that's from the block schedule, part of the philosophy is that teachers only get to meet with students every other day. So i think thats something we come head to head with a lot, is just the kids are trying to do what they're supposed to be doing in terms of planning events, and planning events for student body, and yet, we come up with situation where we can't have like the talent show jag fest preview for this year because you know that would be another time that Bill and Janet would have to give up the auditorium and with everything else that's going on they just can't give up they're classroom. I think another weekness is again, we're still so young the culture of our school is a weekness, we still haven't gotten to a point where its ok, or our culture to stand up and yell really loud at our pep assemblies , and those kinds of things need to be taught, and will be taught over time. And thats another weekness with our school, our identity has not been formed and so because of that kids battle it.

Erica: What are the biggest challenges you face now and in the future?

Julie: Um in the immediate future, next year, that we're going to be bigger. We're losing another teacher office, and when you mess with teachers space, and kind of their area, that creates unhappiness. And when that occurs, it kind of flows over to my program, in terms of whether teachers want to participate or not. But just size, and getting everyone to feel like they belong in our school and getting everyone involved in our activities. But I think again in two years, the challenge will then be the down sizing, when we loose students, regardless of who they are, we're still losing part of that culture that we're trying to build at our school. So i think that's a good thing because we'll be smaller, but, we'll lose a lot when the school opens as well. I think it will be nice because we won't be the new kids on the block in Hillsboro anymore, they're will be another school. Something thats challenging for me personally, is that in terms of the size of student government we're space challenged. My room is so small, like in an ideal situation, we have exec board and class officers, and I would love to take everyone who applies for asb senate. I think that that's a crucial part of student government, because there are kids who for whatever reason, aren't every going to be elected to be on exec board or class officers, so after those two set of elections are over, I get to look and see what kind of kid do i not have? And then i try to put them on student government, what population of kid isn't represented? And I think a certain challenge that I face is having to say to a certain set of kids, you know I would love to take them all, but my space does not allow for that. But on the other side that is a strength of our student government, you know its growing and they're becoming more successful, and its becoming more of the thing to do in our school.