

2002-2003 Local History Project

Interview with Mrs. Katia Kennedy (5/17/2003)

Interviewer: Maricruz Serrato Interviewee: Katia Kennedy

Q: What is your background regarding Century, and what has been your involvement or role during this school year?

A: I started working at Century in 1997. I was hired to teach French and German.

Q: In general, how does this school year compare with others you've experienced?

A: It's been the most uneasy school year. It's hurt the teachers' morale. Our hands are tied.

Q: How would you describe morale among the faculty, students, administration and other staff this year?

A: At its lowest, since I've been at Century. There is a division between teachers. It seems to...the insinuation is that teachers should buckle up, be professional and only adjust. And teachers are asked to put their needs aside; your job comes before your family. Especially when you have children who are in the school system. And I don't agree with putting my job before my family.

Q: What have been the factors most directly affecting morale?

A: Information control. Teachers receiving limited information, or selected information. And administration not taking responsibility.

Q: Ok so...there's really a budget crisis going on...what do you see as the impact of cutting seventeen days from school?

A: Personally, I'm exhausted. Professionally, I'm asked to do the impossible. Most students are unable to retain more information, in a shorter time, process the foreign language, I should say. Students are missing out. They're being cheated on their right to learn. Our community can no longer trust our school district.

Q: What were your feelings when Measure 28 failed?

A: Disappointed, that reality hadn't sunk in.

Q: And how do you feel about the cutback of programs and classes especially since next year German will be cut?

A: Speechless, it's not in my control. The bottom line is more important than learning about different cultures because some things are cut.

Q: How have current issues affected you directly?

-K- What current issues?

-M- Program cuts, school days cut, the block issue...

A: I haven't given up but I'm tired. And it's difficult not to internalize some of the decisions.

Q: What solutions do you think could lead us out of our current situation?

A: The people of Oregon valuing education at any cost. My father was forty-seven when I was born, lived through the Depression, in WWII and raised me to believe that we'd take care of each other. Oregonians seem to not value each other. In general, I've found Oregonians are short sighted and look at their immediate needs versus long term. Oregonians have done a great job environmentally but have failed in education.

Q: Whether you agree or not with the budget cuts, how do you think they should be done? Programs, days, personnel?

A: This is a difficult question and a simple answer doesn't do it justice. Our community needs to be more involved in the decision-making.

Q: Between programs and personnel, which one would you cut back on?

A: I believe the solution is not a simple one. But I've found as a business graduate, that money is always a deciding factor and I have found that programs that don't bring money are the first ones to be cut. I don't feel qualified to answer that. (the actual question)

Q: How do you feel about Century continuing on the block schedule for another year? Do you believe it's better for both teachers and students?

A: As a foreign language teacher I have found that the block is very hard on my students. Most of the time I don't see my students for a year and sometimes I don't see them up to a year and a half or two years because of scheduling problems. The block schedule works well for some academic classes but not for German. I spend three or four weeks reviewing. Thus I don't cover most of what I'd like. I feel fine about the schedule staying on. I believe the block schedule is better for students who are disciplined, organized and academically. Unfortunately too many students are failing at Century. And in my opinion Ds are not passing.

Q: How well informed were the teachers and students about the scheduling issue?

A: For German not very well. Students aren't made aware of the fact that German is not an honors program and only go for German and two. I personally feel although forty-nine students are interested in German one for the year 2003-2004, so I still believe money is the bottom line.

Q: The teachers were very divided, did that affect the workplace environment?

A: Yes. I have found myself avoiding angry, threatening teachers. I remember wanting to be at work now I choose to do most of my prep work and grading at home.

Administration has not helped breed harmony in our building. Parents and students were given incorrect information, which led to more anger.

Q: What has, in your opinion, been the worst problem for schools this year?

A: Controlled information. Several people knowing information but not passing it on to those who read it.

Q: Who has been affected the worst by the problems that have occurred this year?

A: The community of Hillsboro. The community is made up of students, parents and individuals. No one has been unaffected, simply because you don't have children in the school system doesn't mean you won't be unaffected.

Q: If you could change anything about this school year, what would it be?

A: I wish we would've not been finger pointing and blaming each other. Yes, I feel that for many months, teachers were asked to provide a solution for a problem they didn't create.

-M- Is there anything else you would like to say about any issues or do you have an opinion on something else?

-K- I hope this is as bad as it will get. I hope I've seen the worst in my teaching career. I love teaching but hate politics. And this school year has been politically incorrect.

Q: What do you think about student involvement? SAFFE, for example...

A: I believe student involvement is very important. It is unfortunate kids can't just be kids but that the times have made them play a role not meant for them. I remember going to school simply to learn and not worrying about classes disappearing. I had an opportunity to learn to be successful in life. Although my salary has been cut 9.5% I feel that I've still been successful in my life.