

Board of Education
January 25, 2010
Community Engagement Meetings
7–8:15 p.m.

Meeting notes from Winograd K-8 School

Board of Education member(s) at this meeting: Robert Stack

District leadership staff at this meeting: Roger Fiedler, Stacie Datteri, Brad Johnson, Joe Ronnenberg

Audience: 55 people (a mix of parents, community members, teachers, support staff and principals)

Topic of presentation and conversation:

- District 6 budget outlook for 2010-11 and impact of state reductions for K-12 education
- School consolidation study and proposal
- Proposal to change the district's graduation requirements

Budget

Major themes of participant discussion/comments *(please note that some comments may contradict or oppose others—participants had a wide variety of opinions):*

- Protect class sizes until the very last. It is a huge worry to increase class sizes, especially at younger grade levels. Keep class sizes reasonable for K-3. Establish some kind of “maximum cap” size for each grade level that will not be exceeded, no matter what.
- Suggestion: We should create a real estate profit donation system to generate money for schools in that area/neighborhood.
- Suggestion: We should remove the limits on the number of fundraisers that a school can do in one year.
- Suggestion: We should consider a four-day schoolweek. The idea of a four-day schoolweek has pros and cons. Pro is it would save some money. Con is that it would be hard on working parents and community in general.
- Suggestion: Increase the fee schedule at all levels, and include fees for elementary school students. Have parents pay for their children to attend preschool, as a revenue generator. Have all students at all levels pay a supply fee. Have a fee in order to get school bus service.
- Suggestion: Investigate cost savings of eliminating high school busing and have those students rely on public transportation.
- Protect the technology budget. Technology is so important in this day.

- Protect the fine arts budgets at all levels.
- Protect the textbook budget. There's already such a shortage.
- Protect electives.
- Protect high school magnets.
- Protect staff who directly impact student achievement.
- Protect after-school activities at the middle and high schools.
- Suggestion: Reduce food budgets for staff meetings
- Suggestion: Remove some lighting fixtures to save utility costs.
- Suggestion: Consider consolidating central office jobs and reducing administration.
- Retain highly-qualified teachers. But don't base this on tenure—it should be based on student success, not employee seniority.
- We should use the district's reserve fund to help ease the shortfall.
- I'm not 100% convinced we will have to cut \$16 million.
- These cuts will further weaken our local economy.
- Reduce school bus transportation—I'm willing to drive my child to school in order to save programs and services.
- Work more with local businesses and organizations to get school supplies donated to schools.

Questions:

- If we went to a four-day schoolweek, would the entire building have to shut down on the "closed" day? (no sports, no teacher prep, etc)
- Is cutting the number of teachers and also increasing class sizes the same thing, or are they two separate steps?
- How many other schools have a busing plan like Winograd's, and how much does this cost? How much could be saved by having parents bus kids for school-of-choice?
- How much does it cost to allow outside organizations to use our facilities? How much revenue is generated from the rental fees?

School consolidation

Major themes of discussion/comments *(please note that some comments may contradict or oppose others—participants had a wide variety of opinions):*

- Putting all the alternative kids together may cause more issues.
- If Cameron is consolidated, it should be leased in order to add income to the district.
- Having a stronger/deeper elective program at Franklin for all students is a definite "pro" for consolidation.
- Like the idea of expanding alternative school slots so that waiting list can be reduced.
- Agree that it is a more efficient use of facilities and will help the budget crisis.

- Concerned about the loss of jobs for some staff (principals and support staff).
- Concerned about the loss of a sense of community at the existing schools.
- Concerned that the consolidation will lead to larger classes at the combined schools.
- Concerned about the impact a large alternative school will have on the neighborhood around Jefferson Elementary.
- We might see an increase in charter schools, because some parents won't send their children to the combined school.
- Concern about distance to "new" school and families' not being able to be involved at school or even get their children to and from school.
- Concern about Title I dollars and programs, and how they would be consolidated—don't want to do anything that would lead to a loss of these funds for students.
- Concern about the number of classrooms at Franklin...don't see how more students could fit in there.

Questions:

- How much will it cost to bus children from Cameron and Jefferson neighborhoods to Maplewood?
- How do the number of schools/facilities in our district compare to others of similar student enrollment?
- What costs would be associated with consolidating schools?
- Can Maplewood be combined with Heath instead of Franklin?

Graduation requirements

Major themes of participant discussion/comments *(please note that some comments may contradict or oppose others—participants had a wide variety of opinions):*

- Do not like that Fine Arts is no longer a requirement for all students.
- Do not like that Social Studies credits were reduced. In today's world, students need more social studies classes, not fewer.
- Like the idea of giving kids a choice.
- This should help increase student engagement with their education.
- The proposed requirements are still rigorous enough for kids that are going to college
- Like the idea of basing grade-level classification on credits earned. Surprised that this wasn't already how it is done.
- Like the idea of partnering with Aims and UNC on concurrent courses
- Requiring 25 credits was too ambitious.
- Graduating early is not a concern—that's up to individual families and decisions by parents and students. This proposal actually opens up the

door for kids to stay in school and take college courses while in high school.

- Concern about making sure that students receive enough counseling and guidance from school staff to choose the right pathway and select the right courses for their future. Concern that we do not have enough counselors to do this, and concern that counselors will need more skills/knowledge.
- Concern that 9th and 10th graders be advised to take base, core academic classes early, and not wait until 11th or 12th grade.
- Concern that students who change pathways during high school will have to “start over” on a new path and won’t graduate on time.
- Concern that students will not be able/allowed to change pathways, they’ll be pigeon-holed into certain paths. Ninth-graders aren’t generally ready to decide what they want to do with their lives.
- The new requirements have potential to increase student learning.
- I like the focus on students having a comprehensive plan for their high school experience.
- I like the ability for students to earn PE credit through sports participation.
- Concern that making it “easier to graduate” is not always in the best interest of the student or community.
- Concern that this is simply lowering expectations for our students. Fewer credits will reduce quality of education. We need to keep the credit expectations high, and do more to help kids have success and stay in school.
- Concern that this will leave students with too much free/idle time. They won’t use the time wisely.
- The pathway model will be great, but only if our schools actually have all the classes needed by students to fully explore their chosen path.
- Suggestion: some of the college courses by Aims and UNC should be offered within the high school so that students don’t have to travel to Aims or UNC.
- Concern about the transition from the current structure/requirements to the new structure/requirements. Will this be all at once, or phased in?
- This proposal seems to benefit the top-end kids and the low-end kids, but doesn’t do much for the larger group of students in the middle.
- Concern about budget impact. If we need to create more classes to meet pathway plans, we will need to hire more teachers, and we won’t be able to because of the financial cutbacks.

Questions:

- Where are technology skills in the requirements?
- Will the new requirements end up eliminating honors classes, since more opportunities will be available at Aims?
- Will 12th-graders be required to take Senior World Studies?
- Will this proposal help the graduation rate? Is it being done just to increase the graduation rate?

- Is there a “general” pathway available for those students who really don’t know what they want to do?
- Will this complicate or exacerbate problems with “open campus,” as students may be coming and going throughout the day to Aims and UNC?
- Will parents have to pay any portion of concurrent classes at Aims/UNC?
- Can we keep the current credit requirements and yet still give kids more choice in their class selection/options?
- Will all three high schools offer all the classes needed in each pathway?