

Andover School Committee
Minutes of Work Session Thursday, March 25, 2010
School Administration Building - School Committee Room

Members in Attendance: Chairman Dennis Forgue, Annie Gilbert-Secretary, Richard Collins, Paula Colby-Clements, and David Birnbach

Others in Attendance: Dr. Claudia Bach, Dr. Susan Nicholson, and Interim Business Manager Bernie Tuttle, Technology Director Ray Tode, AHS Math Program Advisor Donna Pappalardo and Principals Jonathan Harris, Theresa McGuinness-Darby, Patrick Bucco, and Steve Murray.

I. Call to Order

Chairman Dennis Forgue opened the Work Session at 3:36 P.M. in the School Committee Room and welcomed new School Committee member Paula Colby-Clements. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the School Department Budget for FY-2011 and for the School Committee members to ask questions about the budget and do due diligence. They will not be voting or deliberating on the budget until Tuesday, March 30th and it is possible that the decision voted on could change as they progress further in conversations and meetings with Team 470 and others to enter into an agreement for a balanced budget. Today's meeting will specifically discuss the middle and high school budget as well as School-3 (technology and new textbooks).

AHS Teacher Mary Robb asked when the teachers would have the opportunity to provide information. Chairman Forgue said they have not reached a decision when that will happen but he will let them know when that opportunity will be available.

AEA President Tom Meyers came forward and spoke about the block schedule. He reported that when the block schedule was originally introduced it was a work in progress until all parties were comfortable with the change to the new schedule. Mr. Meyers states that it would behoove the School Committee to listen to the comments from the professional staff and parents as they consider reverting to a 5 x 7 schedule. He also feels it is inappropriate to move forward without input from all stakeholders and a public hearing should be scheduled to give everyone an opportunity to speak.

Dr. Bach is glad the teachers are here this afternoon and hopes they stay to listen to the presentation on scheduling to be given by Principal Harris and Donna Pappalardo.

Mr. Harris provided a presentation on the pros and cons of changing from the Block Schedule by using a comparison of data of the traditional day schedule and a typical Block Schedule. The Block Schedule provides one year's worth of curriculum compacted into one semester affording students the opportunity to obtain eight credits vs the seven credits with a 5 x 7 schedule. Graduation requirements for 2010 are 26 credits and in 1996 with a 5 x 7 schedule it was 20 credits. The Block Schedule has allowed for more advance placement participants, realized higher SAT scores, and

shown a significant increase in students attending post-secondary education. The cost of moving to a seven period day would include the cost of textbooks and professional development for teachers to teach in a 5 x 7 schedule. By switching to a 5 x 7 schedule, ten to twelve teachers would be cut resulting in an increase in class size. Keep in mind that the reduction in teachers for FY-10 increased the average class sizes so class sizes would be even higher.

David Birnbach pointed out the \$2.8M budget gap and having teachers teach 3 x 2 (3 courses one semester and 2 the other) is more expensive than a 5 x 7 model unless teachers would agree to teach 3 x 3 (3 courses each semester).

Mr. Harris stated that in 2008-2009 teachers taught a total of 621 hours; 993 hours of time on learning for students. Teaching time for a 5 x 7 schedule is 619 hours or 948 hours of time on learning. The Department of Education requires 990 hours of time on learning; the traditional 5 x 7 schedule does not meet those requirements.

Students would be impacted by a change in schedule by a reduction of course offerings and the variety of courses offered.

Donna Pappalardo said at the end of a student's sophomore year using the Block Schedule, they have completed three math classes before taking the MCAS which helps them to have a better outcome on the MCAS test. Using the traditional 5 x 7 schedule they would only complete two math classes before taking the MCAS. Fewer class offerings in all subjects would be available to students with the 5 x 7 schedule.

If they reverted to a 5 x 7 schedule, classes could be double-blocked for math, science labs, etc., but additional teachers would need to be hired. David Birnbach said if high school teachers taught as many hours as elementary school teachers (3 x 3 not a 3 x 2) we could afford extra teachers.

The School Committee thanked Mr. Harris and Ms. Pappalardo for their presentation.

Middle School

Wood Hill Middle School Principal Patrick Bucco said the middle schools cannot afford any more cuts – additional cuts would destroy the middle school module. The Middle School Principals are not advocating for Foreign Language to be cut.

Annie Gilbert pointed out that by eliminating Foreign Language at the Middle School there would be no need for Advanced Placement in Foreign Language at the High School. Could students double-up on Foreign Language classes at the High School? She asks these questions because everyone needs to be aware of the implications of cutting Foreign Language at the middle school level.

The principals talked about the importance of Integrated Team Time stating it offers opportunities to extend the curriculum, provides opportunities for Special Education, Band, Chorus, and Orchestra. It also provides equal experience of courses allowing students to take courses they are interested in without trade-offs and no core teachers are involved. Reducing teams would reduce teachers and increase class size. Teachers need to be certified in two areas and it would create inequities if teams were reduced from 4 to 3 teachers. Principal Bucco asked what the vision of the School Committee is – the Daggett Model encourages the integration of subjects and by eliminating Foreign Language and reducing teams, we would be moving away from that model.

David Birnbach stated that the budget has increased by 6.7% while student population increased by only 1%. We need to find creative answers to help close the budget gap, move the middle school model forward in a more creative way, and think what else we can do differently. Would a cost savings be realized if all schools were moved to an expeditionary learning environment? Could some of what is being taught be done on-line?

Paula Colby-Clements stated on the impact to students and schools presented are not palatable solutions. She asked if other areas such as supervisory positions (assistant principals, guidance counselors) could be cut. Principal Murray reported that the guidance departments were cut last year and each middle school has only one counselor cover the work of two. Assistant Principals provide invaluable service that covers all areas of the middle school from meeting with parents to solving disciplinary concerns, etc.

School-3

Bernie Tuttle said the focus of School-3 is textbooks in the amount of \$255,000 and technology in the amount of \$300,000 for a total of \$550,000. Dr. Nicholson said after a preliminary meeting with the Program Advisors at AHS and the Principals the request for new textbooks would be \$135,850. Books are needed for Math Core Plus, Algebra II, Environmental Science I and II, and Physical Science I and II at AHS; and at the Middle School level CMP math units for grades 7 and grade 8 are needed. The Elementary Schools continue to work on the K-5 Writing and Scope and Sequence, with no recommendation at this time.

Ray Tode reported on the technology requests for School-3. He said the Technology Pinpoint Committee has been meeting to develop a strategic plan but has not yet determined the equipment that will be needed. The middle schools and high school is their priority for technology. They leased 180 laptops for Wood Hill/High Plain and updated the infrastructure and switches, installed 15 inter-active white boards at the middle schools (5 per school) and 33 LCD

projectors at Andover High. He proposes mounting the projectors at AHS in the ceilings and purchasing whiteboards. He is also proposing to purchase student response systems and 160 teacher laptops (40 WHMS, 40 HPE, and 80 for AHS) for a total of \$299,640. They are working with ATT and Verizon to provide Wifi hotspots within the schools. New laptops at AHS will offer more available resources and connectivity to the internet for teachers. This dovetails closely with the Technology Pinpoint Committee Strategic Plan and fills the gap at AHS for diverse, upgraded software. The mobile labs at the middle schools are two years old and would complete the program to provide a laptop to every teacher.

Mr. Birnbach would like the high school team come back with an accelerated plan vs the proposed plan proposal. He wants to more focus on enhancing the technology investment especially at Andover High.

The School Committee decided to revisit the request for School-3 on Tuesday.

Ross Esdale, a senior at AHS talked about his experience with Virtual On-line Courses and stated he found it difficult to access materials without a teacher. AHS Teacher Laura Hajdukiewicz beseeched the School Committee to go to the Town and tell them we are at bare bones and there is no where else to cut. She would like the Town to go back to the bucket model or use Town reserves to close the budget gap. DMS teacher Brian Stevens said the School Committee has to go to the community to get more resources for the schools.

II. Adjournment

On a motion by Annie Gilbert and a second by David Birnbach, the School Committee voted 5-0 to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 5:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Dee DeLorenzo

Dee DeLorenzo, Recorder