

Superintendent's Meeting with Instructional Staff Representatives

Region IV/ ESE/ pTEC – February 18, 2009

Human Resources:

Q: How will the furlough plan be implemented if it is considered a viable solution to saving the county money? Will it affect all employees, including administrators? Will contracts be renegotiated to reflect a reduction in pay? Will the schedule of pay be reworked?

A: A "furlough" is a day in the calendar that would be declared a "no work/no pay" day in the private sector. However, for instructional staff state law requires 10-month instructional employees to have a minimum contract of 196-days. This would mean that if furloughs are used, teachers would only be considered for two days. Any other reductions would have to be made through other means. Any reductions in salary for an employee group would need to be bargained with the appropriate labor organization for next year. While it is a last resort measure, all employees would be subject to "furloughs" or salary reductions if that becomes a necessity to balance the budget.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Since a furlough is being discussed as a possible cost-saving feature for next year, teachers will now be asked to take a cut in pay while increasing their work load by 20 percent. What will this do to morale? Of course, some will say, "You're lucky to have a job." And, while we certainly appreciate having a job, our response to this is: "Society is also lucky to have professional individuals who care about our youth and are willing to spend the time each day to educate them and help them become better members of society. Without us, society IS IN TROUBLE."

A: We are all in this together. Morale is just as important to our other employees as it is to teachers. The potential for job loss or loss of pay and months to work is greater for our support staff than it is for teachers. Consider their morale if you will.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Due to the budget cuts, are we looking at possible layoffs?

A: The district is working collaboratively with all of our employee groups to find ways to avoid layoffs.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Positions at the county administrative level need to be evaluated in relationship to what they provide for teachers or students in the classroom. While subject area supervisors in the past had a great deal of influence regarding textbook adoption, training, etc., many of those

decisions are left to individual schools to address. In addition to these supervisors, there are also individuals responsible for instructional staff development. According to a recent article in the *St. Petersburg Times*, our county is extremely top heavy. It appears as if the only people being asked to make sacrifices are teachers and students, not those who work on an administrative level.

A: This statement is totally incorrect. Administration at the central office level has been the primary target of budget reductions in the past in order to protect the classrooms and the schools. As a result, most central office administrators have had to absorb the responsibilities of administrators who left the district or whose positions were eliminated in previous rounds of budget cuts. There are only 108 administrators in the central office to cover all of the support functions (payroll, retirement/insurance, human resources, data processing, etc.) for 17,000 employees in the school system. Most of our administrative staff members are assigned to the schools (principals and assistant principals). Staff developers are instructional personnel paid on the teacher salary schedule. Most of these positions are funded through federal dollars.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: What is being done to address teacher morale? It appears as if the county does not care in the least about those who are in “the trenches?” All the cuts are being made in the schools, not at the administrative level, and the recent impasse with middle school teachers greatly damaged the confidence level between teachers, county administration and the School Board.

A: Most of the budget cuts have been made away from the schools in the past rounds of budget reductions. Because of the state class size amendment, schools systems are restricted from reducing instructional staff with financial penalties if we don't make class size requirements. A majority of the costs of the school system are in the schools, yet the district has had to reduce spending in a manner that would protect the classrooms.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: We need to know when a decision regarding the teacher schedule will be determined for next year. Schedulers need to know now, or soon.

A: Once negotiations have been completed for 2009-10, we will be able to provide better information. However, schools have been given the opportunity to look at a variety of alternative schedules that can work.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Why are high school teachers being compared to elementary teachers (app. 285 minutes teaching/contact time) to plan the teaching schedule? Elementary teachers have the same 20-25 students each day, all day long; to implement this in high school would require an additional 25 students, as well as adding an additional prep, bringing the student load to 150 students per teacher. This is an extra 25 papers each day, more added stress, and less time to work with

students. In addition, elementary schools do not have nearly as many night activities as high schools; teachers will simply not have the time to sponsor clubs (such as National Honor Society, Academic Team, etc.); coaches will suffer with the increased work load. Where does it end? We realize that elementary teachers work extremely hard, and we are grateful for the exemplary job they do. However, comparing the teaching schedule in elementary school to the teaching schedule in high school is not comparing “apples to apples”; it is a different work environment, with different responsibilities.

In our current schedule, teachers must report to work by 6:50 a.m. (although many arrive much earlier than this). Assuming the teacher meets with no students before school, but is required to stand by the classroom door and monitor students beginning at 6:59 a.m., the “contact time” with students looks like this:

6:59 – 7:05 6 minutes passing
7:05 – 7:59 54 minutes (Period 1)
7:59 – 8:05 6 minutes passing
8:05 – 9:05 60 minutes (Period 2)
9:05 – 10:05 Planning (Period 3)
10:05 – 10:11 6 minutes passing
10:11 – 11:05 54 minutes (Period 4)
11:05 – 11:35 Lunches
11:35 – 11:41 6 minutes passing
11:41 – 12:35 54 minutes (Period 5)
12:35 – 12:41 6 minutes passing
12:41 – 1:35 54 minutes (Period 6)

Since teachers are on duty during the 6 minutes of passing, this MUST be considered “contact” time; adding the following: $6 + 54 + 6 + 60 + 6 + 54 + 6 + 54 + 6 + 54 = \underline{306 \text{ minutes of “contact” time}}$. This already more than meets the “300 minutes” that is being requested.

A: I think your elementary colleagues would beg to differ with this analysis.
Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: How will the current economic situation and budget cuts affect School Resource Officers, librarians, and technology personnel?

A: Those decisions have not yet been made.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: How will the economic situation affect the job security for teachers on annual contract?

A: In the past, every effort has been made to retain all of our annual and CC/PSC teachers. While there can be no guarantees at this time until the State Legislature completes its work, the district is not anticipating the reduction of annual contract teachers.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Will teachers be getting raises this year?

A: Our current budget models developed by our finance team reflect the next three years without increases in salary for employees. This is partially based on our demographics which show that Pinellas County may lose an additional 10,000 students between now and 2013-14. We lost 10,000 unweighted FTE over the past five years and it looks as though that trend will continue.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Transportation:

Q: Are later start times still being considered for the 2009-10 school year at the high school level? Many teachers feel that a later start time, such as 8:00 a.m., would be more conducive toward attaining higher student achievement learning gains.

A: A later start time will probably be recommended for the high schools for the 09/10 school year. However, that will probably be about fifteen minutes later than the current time. An 8:00 a.m. start time for high schools would be difficult to implement due to many factors; numerous countywide programs, limited time frames and equipment needs to name a few. In order to even consider this, scheduling would have to be revised for the elementary and middle schools.

Submitted by Rick McBride

Q: How does the district justify putting high school students (with a history of sexually inappropriate behaviors) on buses with elementary students at EBD centers?

A: The EBD centers are multi-grade level schools and students are transported together. Transportation is not made aware of a student's history (sexually inappropriate behaviors) when assigning these students to a bus. However, Transportation tries to maintain a student load of no more than seventeen students per bus. The guideline for the school is to assign at least two assistants to each bus.

Submitted by Rick McBride

Q: What is the feasibility of making the following budgetary change?

Utilization of public transportation as a replacement for school board funded transportation for students in the middle and high schools. In cooperation with the Pinellas County Transit Authority, Pinellas County schools could develop a program to assist in the transport of students in middle and high schools (elementary school students would still be provided with school bus transportation). This could be a “win-win” situation because it could:

- 1) Save the school board millions of dollar a years that could be reinvested into classroom expenditures and curriculum needs.
- 2) Expand city/county-wide transportation service and socialize students to the merits of mass transportation.
- 3) Reduce pollution as more and more citizens avail themselves of the extended services provided by PCTA.

A: Transportation has met with PSTA several times to discuss possible partnerships in specific areas. PSTA has constraints in how they are able to establish routes, specifically in transporting students to and from school. Federal regulations will not allow a public transit authority to establish what is termed as “tripper” service specifically for schools. With that in mind, we have discussed with PSTA the possibilities of utilizing a hub type service where students could be transported by PSTA to various locations and then transportation could pick up the students and transport them to the schools. We will continue to explore these possibilities.

When the high school activity buses were discontinued in January, it was suggested to the schools using this service to contact PSTA as an alternate transportation source. Each school was provided with a PSTA contact if they wished to pursue using PSTA.

One thing to keep in mind about using public transportation is that it has to be an all or nothing issue. In other words if a school or program wished to use PSTA it would have to be for all the students eligible for transportation in order to make it economically feasible.

Submitted by Rick McBride

Director of Operations

Q: Is the possibility of scrambling student cell phone signals while on school campus to help alleviate the disruptions caused by cell phone use during school hours a viable concept?

A: Florida statute does not allow us to restrict students from having cell phones on campus however it does permit us to restrict its usage. As a result it would probably be illegal to scramble the signal for everyone on campus, which would include all staff, emergency personnel, and possibly the neighborhood surrounding the school. Our Code of Conduct currently stipulates that if a student does possess a cell phone it is to be powered off and

concealed from view while school is in session unless authorized to use it by the school's administration. If a student is in violation of that policy, or any other school rule, that student would be subject to school discipline as outlined in their school discipline plan.

Submitted by Alec Liem

Q: I am concerned about discipline issues at our schools, and wonder what is being done on a county level, to address the problems?

A: The schoolwide discipline committee and schoolwide discipline plan address these issues.

Submitted by Ward Kennedy

I also feel that publicity with regards to this issue, may lead to additional parental involvement, as well as community support. Please consider also, the following suggestions:

1. Ban cell phones: Since 9/11 it is against state law to ban students from being in possession of electronic communication devices while they attend school.
2. Make the dress code more stringent for the students and for the staff: Individual schools may have additional dress and grooming requirements, if recommended by administrators, faculty, and staff, and approved by a majority of SAC members.
3. Have zero tolerance for physical confrontations, with severe consequences such as immediate student reassignment or expulsion: Zero tolerance means that certain kinds of misconduct will always lead to a disciplinary consequence. Currently, physical confrontations are classified as misconduct that may result in suspension, reassignment or expulsion.

Submitted by Ward Kennedy

Exceptional Student Education

Q: In response to declining enrollment, Response to Intervention and federal guidelines, will the EBD centers remain open or be consolidated into one or two campuses?

A: Yes, all three EBD centers will remain open for next year.

Submitted by Cindy Bania-Carter

Facilities

Q: Since there is no longer summer school, can all schools be closed for a period of time during the summer? This would reduce money spent for salaries and operating expenses (on both the school and county level – only the bare minimum would be kept on during this “shut down” period to deal with day-to-day needs).

A: The Superintendent has mandated a four-day work schedule for this summer to reduce operating costs in light of the budget situation. There will be only a few summer sites open to meet district obligations to serve students. Other facilities will be closed. The goal in energy

reduction is to run a weekend air conditioning schedule on the closed day. This will ensure the buildings are properly conditioned as well as reducing electric consumption. Transportation services will be kept to a minimum this summer as another cost saving method. Necessary summer programs will be housed in fewer facilities thus cutting down on the number of routes needed to transport students. Salaries on the other hand will not be reduced due to a four-day schedule since there will be four 10-hour days instead of five 8-hour days, thus the salaries will be the same. Only in the case where a furlough plan was initiated making four 8-hour days would there be savings in reduced salaries. No decision on furloughs has been made to date.
Submitted by Dr. Mike Tomalesky

Q: The only way we are going to get any change from our lockstep politicians is to get the parents motivated politically. We should move to a four-day week, perhaps with a little longer hours, and shut everything down on the fifth. This will get the folks involved and create both dialogue and change, as well as save a bundle. Think out of the box. You're all so conservative!!

A: The state law for length of school gives a choice of numbers of hours in service for a year or number of days which is usually 180 days. It would be possible to have a four-day school week but to meet the required hours the day would have to be longer or the school year would have to be extended to fit in the necessary hours. Careful calculations of potential savings would need to be done to support any change in the current method.

Submitted by Dr. Mike Tomalesky

Q: Why is the district not seriously entertaining the idea of a four day work week all year? Mississippi and Louisiana are doing this; not raises but no layoffs either. Carol Cook, a member of the school board, believes closing the schools during the summer for the four day workweek is a no brainer (saving over \$500,000). Is providing day care on Fridays more important than the jobs and budget? (This was the biggest issue the boards in MS and LA had to argue.)

A: The four-day work week has been discussed but there are other considerations such as the length of the student day and the ability of children to remain attentive during the added hours that would be required for a four-day work week. Parents would also have to “weigh in” on the issues of student supervision on Fridays. The issue has not been totally rejected.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

A: The superintendent has mandated a four-day work schedule for this summer to reduce operating costs in light of the budget situation.

Submitted by Dr. Mike Tomalesky

Q: In an effort to curtail costs and recoup losses, would it be feasible to effectively “shut down” operations and buildings throughout the entire school district during the month of July? (Leaving only the absolutely necessary areas running with a “skeleton” crew?)

A: A month long closing of facilities is a feasible idea but there are many constraints to implementing the plan. Summer school is one factor as is maintenance of facilities with renovation/repair projects. In order to complete work by the opening of school, construction work needs to run at least every week day and sometimes on weekends. The closest thing right now to a closing for a month is the four-day summer work schedule.

Submitted by Dr. Mike Tomalesky

Region Superintendent

Q: What is the feasibility of making the following budgetary changes?

Require students to pay for extended learning and night school courses. Each student is provided with a free education the first time, and remedial courses are available for those who need extra assistance. No monetary value is put on public education, and subsequently students put no value in it either. Unfortunately, a huge amount of money is spent each year on both extended learning and night school, yet neither provides remediation. They are a band-aid on the problem of student failure and do not address the real issue. Students need to begin to appreciate the consequences for non-performance.

A: Our education system is a free and public education system which will always imply that we must meet the needs of all students, especially those who are economically or otherwise disadvantaged. It has always been my understanding that a school district in Florida may never charge a student if the student is earning a high school credit for a course. Charging a student would violate the provision of providing a "free public education." Most students participating in extended learning and all the students going to adult evening school are trying to earn credits toward graduation.

One of the reasons why NCLB legislation came into being was that as a nation we recognized that there were groups of children whose needs were not being met systemically across the country and those children are the children we continue to fail to make annual yearly progress with. Those are the students who would least have the economic resources to pay for their own remediation when the system fails them the first time. When we think about this then, it should be evident that the system needs to make changes. We need to ask ourselves what about the interaction of the instructional environment, the curriculum, the teaching strategies, and the learners should be altered so that the students will learn in that first opportunity.

Submitted by Cathy Fleeger and Rita Vasquez

Q: Could there be an exhaustive/objective overview of existing curriculum models throughout our high schools, with a mission in mind to eliminate programs/classes that are not meeting the needs or serving the students' at large and their best interests? (i.e. Freshmen Transition/Experience, etc.)

A: Needs of individual students differ in our large high schools. Although the question above lists the Freshman Experience course as "not meeting the needs or serving the students' best interests," that very course may be saving some of our 9th graders from becoming lost in high school and floundering. What is valuable to one student may not be as valuable to another, so any evaluation of curricular programs and courses would have to consider the unique needs of the many students our district serves.

Submitted by Cathy Fleegeer and Rita Vasquez

Q: What types of research shows how a 7-period schedule is beneficial to student achievement (or a safe learning environment and effective operations)? Everything we have researched and read on it is very negative. How could the district promote such a thing when it hinders student achievement, as well as teacher morale, operations, etc? If teachers are required to teach 6-out of-7 periods each day, and teachers are also required to teach 300 minutes per day, the schedule would look like this: (assuming a 7:05 a.m. start time and a 7.5 hour teacher day)

6:50 – 6:59 Teacher sign-in, prepare room, etc. (9 minutes)

6:59 – 7:05 Passing time (6 minutes) [This IS contact time; we are expected to stand in the halls & monitor]

7:05 – 7:55 Period 1 (50 minutes)

7:55-8:01 Passing time (6 minutes)

8:01 – 8:57 Period 2 (50 minutes of instruction, 6 minutes for morning announcements)

8:57 – 9:03 Passing time (6 minutes)

9:03 – 9:53 Period 3 (50 minutes)

9:53-9:59 Passing time (6 minutes)

9:59 – 10:49 Period 4 (50 minutes)

10:49 – 10:55 Passing time (6 minutes)

10:55-11:25 First Lunch (30 minutes) 11:25-11:31 Passing time (6 minutes) 11:31-12:19 Period 5 (50 min.)

10:55 – 11:45 Period 5 (50 min.) 11:45 – 11:51 Passing time (6 minutes) 11:51 – 12:19 2nd Lunch (30 min.)

12:19 – 12:25 Passing time (6 minutes)

12:25 – 1:15 Period 6 (50 min.)

1:15 – 1:21 Passing time (6 minutes)

1:21 – 2:11 Period 7 (50 min.)

2:11 – 2:20 Teacher closes room, helps students, attends parents' conferences, meetings, etc. (9 minutes) As you can see, this leaves 9 minutes after school.

Q: The buses cannot be filled and leave within nine minutes; this becomes a safety issue for students. How will this concern be dealt with? Also, how can teachers attend meetings, help students, organize clubs, attend parent conferences, and close their rooms in nine minutes?

Q: We realize economic times are extremely difficult right now. Adding an extra period to an already over-worked staff is not the answer. Please, let's work together to get through this. If kids are truly to succeed, teachers must be happy on their jobs and allowed to have the time to do their job correctly. Additional burdens will not make this possible.

Q: With the secondary schedule changing, in addition to other measures to reduce costs, what does the district suggest that teachers and administrators do to maintain the many programs/initiatives that are currently in place? For example, several of the 4X4s have built into the school day professional development via PLCs, etc. Will we be given the latitude to respond to these changes creatively, to reorganize in ways that will be good for students, teachers, and administrators? Morale may plummet if we are further stressed with less time to accomplish an increased work load.

A: (this response is for the four questions above) We have not suggested that high schools go to a 7-period day. On the contrary, we've encouraged the exploration of scheduling models that move away from that and instead put the needs of the students and courses first and incorporate blocking of courses and using A Day/B Day concepts so that students are not whisking into and out of seven classes each day. The variety evident in the scheduling models that have been given to schools to consider includes the flexibility schools really need to make decisions for their students based on the school's knowledge of their students' needs and of their program needs and strengths.

There appears to be no large body of research that shows that any particular schedule is better than another. A schedule is just a mechanism for the delivery of instruction. The schedule alone does not improve nor hurt instruction. It is what the school/teacher does within a certain schedule that makes the difference.

Submitted by Cathy Fleeger and Rita Vasquez