

Superintendent's Meetings with Instructional Staff Representatives

Region V – February 16, 2009

Human Resources

Q: Do you anticipate layoffs? Will teachers on annual contracts be considered for continuing contract if they are completing their third year this year?

A: The district is working collaboratively with all of our employee groups to find ways to avoid layoffs. Last year, the district needed to cut 512 positions as part of a \$26.8-million budget reduction and we were able to accommodate everyone impacted. Next year, the potential cut exceeds \$68-million which will make the process much more complicated. We hope that we will not need to affect annual contract teachers. By contract with PCTA, we will be holding out those teachers who are long term substitutes, temporaries and second semester contracts; which is normal prior to the transfer period.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Will teachers be offered a continuing contract if they have not met all of the requirements of the teacher appraisal?

A: Continuing Contract no longer exists. Professional Services Contracts (PSC), which replaced the old Continuing Contract, requires that the employee be recommended for reappointment after completion of the third year of probationary status. If for some reason a teacher does not meet expectations, including ESOL, NCLB/certification requirements, and have a satisfactory performance appraisal, the principal has the right to non-renew the employee from probation or request a fourth year annual contract.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: For those teachers in the third year of teaching who would have been given the professional contract at the end of the year, has anyone considered the fact that to earn a three on an evaluation is a very difficult thing, especially for those just beginning careers, and that the process for receiving the number grade is very subjective, therefore this requirement might well cause the county to lose good teachers?

A: There is no requirement that a teacher have a three on the performance appraisal. Teachers must meet expectations and have an overall satisfactory performance appraisal in order for a principal to recommend PSC status.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: When will teachers have an actual contract?

A: Teachers already have a contract in place. The labor agreement between the school board and PCTA expired in June of 2008. However, under Florida law, the old contract maintains “status quo” until a new contract is negotiated. Many districts in Florida have not yet completed negotiations due to the downturn in the economy and its impact on public education. The board’s bargaining teams continue to meet to wrap up just a few outstanding issues still on the bargaining table. Most of those issues are financial.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: What is the risk for non-tenured teachers to lose their job? If we are still on a continuing contract do we need to worry?

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. When a decision of this kind was made in the past (early 1990’s) only first year teachers were considered. We hope conditions will not require us to consider first year teachers in our discussions for next year.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: With all the school closings, what is the plan for displaced teachers? Will current teachers of less seniority be displaced in their current schools by teachers with more seniority but no school at which to teach next year?

A: A protocol for school closings and mergers has been developed jointly between the administration and the labor organizations that represent affected employees. A schedule of school visits is currently being developed that will assign a team from Human Resources and the organizations involved to come to the schools and discuss the process directly with the faculty and staff. We think the protocol has been well designed and has even been reviewed and approved by the district’s Employee Work Systems Committee through the collaborative bargaining process.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Regarding closing schools, are teachers without professional contracts being given the same rights/assurances of job placement as those that do hold the professional contract?

A: All teachers will be considered based on their qualifications and seniority. Consequently those who have PSC or CC status will typically have greater seniority and qualifications than those who do not. Our hope is to find a placement for everyone impacted by the school closings as well as those displaced for other budgetary reasons.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Why is seniority not being used as a basis for placement, as it is with involuntary transfers, which basically these are?

A: Seniority will be a factor in making assignments for next year.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Will any teachers without professional contracts be given positions prior to all teachers with the contracts being placed?

A: Contract status will not be a variable in the placement process except as it might relate to seniority in the district and overall qualifications. That is, PSC teachers will have greater seniority than those with annual contract status. However, in some circumstances, certification, endorsements and specialized skills may become criteria for placement as well.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Are first year teachers secure in their job or could they possibly lose it to veteran teachers from other schools?

A: Pinellas County does not use any form of “bumping” between and among schools. Unless the district elects to withhold reappointment from all first year teachers (with the exception of long term substitutes and second semester teachers) this should not be an issue.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: When will teachers know if their contract will be renewed?

A: Normally the board reviews reappointment in April or May of each year. However the law requires that all appointments must be made no later than three weeks after receipt of the district’s FCAT scores or June 30, whichever is later.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Pay cut rumors?

A: As unfortunate as it may seem, districts throughout the state are looking at the potential of employee salary “freezes” or even reductions in pay. If this becomes a reality, all employees may be impacted to some degree. While we are viewing this as a “last resort” measure, the possibility remains that we may not be able to balance the district budget without some form of pay reduction for 2009-10. Such a decision will be bargained with our respective employee organizations this spring.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: What year do we think we'll actually get a raise?

A: My crystal ball is in the shop for repairs but 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 Schools 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

Q: Considering the fact that teachers have not been afforded even step raises, are members of the school board and people in administrative positions also going without any raises?

A: No employee in Pinellas County Schools received a general salary increase for this year.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: How are contract negotiations going? Will we get our steps this year?

Q: Could I get a raise after two years and a little more than the two percent since my electric bill alone went up 25 percent?

A: It is highly unlikely that teachers will receive step increases for this year. The district cannot justify providing one group of employees a general wage increase without considering all employees. Most of our employee organizations right now are focusing on keeping all of our employees working even if salaries have to be reduced to save the positions. We understand the impact this has on teachers, especially those getting close to the larger steps at the top of the schedule. Unless the financial picture improves dramatically, we may be facing this issue again for 2009-10.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: If the district intends to cut teacher days in order to help balance the budget, does it intend to cut days for all the people at the administration building as well? Does this mean we lose money for those days?

A: If salaries are reduced for next year, all employees will be impacted not just teachers and administrators. There has been discussion regarding "furloughs" which are days an employee is scheduled to work in the calendar but those days are eliminated. This would mean an employee would not work on that day and would not be paid for the time. While the concept has been discussed, no decisions have been made at this time to reduce the number of days worked.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Due to the budget cuts; will there be any changes to the DROP program or any early retirement packages offered?

A: DROP extensions may be significantly reduced for next year at all levels. The bargaining teams are looking at proposals that would limit the salary of any employee who completed DROP and returned to work. This language is directed toward employees who may be eligible

to return to duty while at the same time drawing their retirement distributions from Florida Retirement System. There are no early retirement packages being considered right now, but the bargaining team is discussing the use of our potential unemployment compensation liability. The thought is to use money that would normally be paid to employees losing their jobs as an incentive to other employees to voluntarily leave the district and create a vacancy that would eliminate the need to lay off other employees. We are still in the talking stage on this one.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Is the county or state considering discontinuing the DROP program? How will that affect people already in DROP; will they have to retire immediately?

A: To my knowledge, there are no discussions regarding eliminating DROP at the state level. Pinellas County Schools is reviewing the extensions of DROP beyond five years or re-employment after DROP for administrators to reduce the cost of such extensions.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Is the drop program being revised to save money?

A: Yes. See answers above.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: The *St. Petersburg Times* listed how many supervisors there are and superintendents. They all make six figure salaries. What exactly do they do, I mean physically what do they do to warrant a six figure salary? They observe teachers? For what two minutes? Does that even accurately show what is going on in the classroom? So besides intimidating teachers what is their job description? I cannot believe this is a good use of money, when there are books, websites, and plenty of research telling us what is good practice (which, by the way, is often not what they want us to do). So what do they do?

A: I think this assessment of what administrators do is a biased generalization on the basis of the experience of the individual who is asking the question. The administrators identified in the *St. Petersburg Times* that may be making "six-figure salaries" are a limited number in a district of more than 17,000 employees and for the most part have worked their way up the career ladder over more than 30 years. Many of these administrators started as classroom teachers and were promoted to these positions as a result of their particular expertise in their assignments. During difficult financial times, it is easy to target subgroups in the organization out of frustration. This is counterproductive to solving the problems we need to address in the months ahead.

Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Q: Why does Pinellas pay all principals for 12 months when “most” do not have summer reading camp, math camp, writing camp, construction, etc. going on at their schools? If the Head Plant Operator is twelve months, isn’t that cheaper than paying an administrator for twelve months? The HPO has keys to everything.

A: Principals, by definition in Section 1011.60, Florida Statutes must receive 12 calendar months of employment. During the summer months, principals may be responsible for summer programs either in their schools or in other schools. They are also interviewing teachers for their schools to fill vacancies, making changes in the master schedule created by last minute retirements or leaves of teachers, supervising major construction or renovation projects on their campus, closing out the end of one school year and preparing for the opening of the next year. They are also working with parents during their selection process for schools under the Student Assignment Plan and may also be working on curriculum development teams as well.
Submitted by Dr. Ron Stone

Region Superintendent

Q: What I’m most curious about are the next steps for schools in restructuring. Will federal funds be withheld, including Title I funds?

A: Title I funds will not be withheld from schools in restructuring.

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Hires

Q: Questions about sanctions: NCLB (appears to) kicks out current administration, will we know this before the transfer period? Don’t we have a right to know who we are working for?

A: Any principal or assistant principal that will be replaced under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines will be notified before the end of the school year.

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Hires

Q: With the announced list of budget cuts, it was listed that each school will eliminate a position. How will this position be determined and will the staffing model be maintained for specialist including media specialists, music, art, etc.?

A: Should a unit(s) be eliminated at the school level, it will be a site-based decision. All staff members will give input with the principal being the final decision maker based on the needs of the students at the school.

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Hires

Q: How much control of a budget does a building principal have now, and will it be increased next year? How will you make sure that teachers and other employee groups have input?

A: Currently principals in conjunction with their School Advisory Council (SAC) have control of the discretionary, textbook, Title I, and School Improvement (SIP) funds. As we move toward

decentralization, all principals have received budget training. Each school has a process to gather input and share information. Additional information will be forthcoming.

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Hires

Q: In consideration of the budget restraints; will the Montessori Magnet program lose any of the integrity of the program – including supplies, teachers or Montessori assistants. The data shows that the program is working when taught properly.

A: No final decisions have been made at this point on any programs in the district.

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Hires

Q: We are a mandatory uniform school. Our dress code has to be approved by the school board. What happens if a family is zoned to our school that does not want to wear uniforms? Will they be allowed to remain at our school and be an exception? If so, then what is the point of being a mandatory uniform school?

A: Parents will have the option to transfer to another school under the open enrollment period.

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Hires

Q: Teachers do many activities to help create and foster a safe learning environment. Much of what is expected in the classroom is in direct contrast to what is taught at home. For example, families teach their children that if someone says a derogatory remark or put down the child should stand up and fight. In the community families demonstrate that if you don't get your way it is okay to get loud, cuss, threaten and throw a fit. These behaviors are in direct contrast to what we want in the classroom. I experienced a parent destroying the safety environment in the classroom in just minutes when she yelled and cussed at me in front of the students. The guidance counselor had to address the class. It took me weeks to build that environment of feeling safe. How are classroom teachers supposed to override family values to ensure all students are safe?

A: As educators it is our responsibility to build a school culture that is conducive to teaching and learning. Unfortunately, we cannot control what happens outside of school. We can only help students understand that home rules and school rules may differ.

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Hires

Q: What can be said or done about those students sent out on referral who are released back into the classroom right away. It seems we have some contractual verbiage that is supposed to keep this from happening.

A: It is important to establish and enforce a schoolwide discipline plan that has been developed collaboratively with the staff which delineates processes to handle referrals.

Submitted by Dr. Barbara Hires

Deputy Superintendent

Q: With budget cuts, do you envision any changes to the present guidance program?

A: The actual guidance program is not being changed since the need for delivery of full guidance services to students remains constant regardless of the budget picture of the district. The school district is exploring many ways to make major budget cuts, however, and is seeking the input of district employees and their representative unions. Although the major budget reductions are occurring outside of the school level, some reductions will still be needed at each school site. Each school is considering how the dollar equivalent of one teacher unit might be eliminated without increasing class size. Guidance staffing in some schools may be impacted if the school's decision is to deliver guidance services to students, conduct staffings, coordinate testing, etc. in alternative ways. For example, some schools may consider sharing a guidance counselor with another school and reassigning some of the guidance functions to others (AP, etc.) in order to maintain a full guidance program.

Submitted by Karalia Baldwin

Q: What is the direction that the district is taking in regards to inquiry-based Professional Learning Communities?

A: Inquiry-based PLCs are highly supported in our school district. Research has shown that inquiry/Action Research combined with coaching is a very effective professional development model for improving teaching and learning. This PLC model creates a laser like focus on what happens each day in a teacher's classroom. It deepens content knowledge and promotes professional collaboration among colleagues. Standard menu-driven professional development models (Inservice days) often lack a direct focus on a teacher's classroom and lack necessary follow-up that can actually change behavior.

As school leaders it is important for school principals to learn to skillfully support inquiry-based PLCs and to work with staff developers and master teachers in support of their School Improvement Plan. All elementary principals have now had the opportunity to interact with Nancy Dana, author of The Reflective Educator's Guide to Professional Development – Coaching Inquiry-Oriented Learning Communities. As the inquiry-based model of professional development grows, the district can better tap into the knowledge about teaching and learning that resides in the school itself.

Submitted by Cathy Fleeger

Budget

Q: What is the timeline for the 09-10 budget and what are your biggest concerns?

A: The normal timeline for the official budget approval process is to have a legally required "TRIM" (Truth in Millage Statute) initial budget hearing in July and a second hearing in

September. Of course, there have been many workshops with the school board throughout this school year which have involved detailed discussions of the budget outlook for next fiscal year. These past two years have been marked by unprecedented state budget reductions, including a special legislative session, which have significantly impacted the current year's operating budget and will continue to impact next year's budget. Our current operating budgeted revenues for fiscal 2008/09 are \$49.7 million below the level of last year's actual revenues. The outlook for next fiscal year (2009/10) could be \$61 million less than this year's level of reduced funding. Our targeted spending cuts for next year range somewhere between \$69 million and \$107 million, depending on the assumptions we are forced to make as to the level of state support for next year.

Our biggest concern is trying to zero in on a realistic amount to project for next year's funding level well in advance of when the State Legislature will meet (March 3 through May 1, 2009); when the 2009/10 budget will actually be determined. We have to make assumptions and decisions well in advance of the official legislative session in order to make the related spending cuts in order to live within our level of revenue support. At the present time, the financial stability and survival of all 67 school districts in the state of Florida are in serious jeopardy, given that the Florida system of funding public education has never been "fixed" and that we are now in a national and international global economic crisis of epic proportions. We are making all efforts to minimize the impact on our employees in terms of avoiding layoffs. However, it is quite clear that some form of significant salary reductions will have to come into play in order to balance next year's budget which is a non-negotiable state legal requirement. Our financial reserves have been seriously challenged and can only be utilized once to offset revenue declines which have unfortunately become recurring in nature.

Submitted by Lanse K. Johansen

Q: If the staff finds ways to save money, for instance by conserving electricity or reducing costs in other areas, does the school get to use the savings on something else? Will you please explain how a school's money is earmarked as to what we can spend it on?

A: There is an individual school budget line for electricity that the principal can view but does not have the authority to shift funds in or out. The budget amount is based on the previous year's actual expenditure with a percent added for potential rate increases. The philosophy of the energy program is that reducing consumption is both environmentally and fiscally responsible. Any reductions in consumption that result in cost avoidance (not having to spend money versus actually saving money) has a positive effect at the district level by freeing up dollars to be spent on other things in the operating budget. In the last several years there have been decreases (average 3.5 percent decrease annually) in consumption of electric but due to rising costs for electricity there were no net savings. Last school year was the first time in eight years of trend data that the district spent less (almost \$700,000) on electricity than the year

before. This amount was available for other uses in the operating budget. At this time there is no consideration for a “rebate” to schools that come under their budgeted amount for electricity.

Many line items for school budgets are allocated to schools with the principal having no authority to adjust. Salaries, for example, are negotiated at the district level and each school has a budgeted amount to cover the salaries of all staff assigned to that site. Principals do have what is called a discretionary budget that is controlled at the site. Many of the expenses covered by the discretionary budget are copy machine costs, paper, classroom supplies, teacher allocations, support to media programs, etc. The principal can choose how to divide up the discretionary budget, usually with a site- based budget committee and SAC input.

Submitted by Dr. Mike Tomalesky

Title I

Q: I would really like to know if there would be any consideration to letting schools that lose their Title 1 programs keep the document cameras, invention program materials, etc. purchased by Title 1, rather than sending it to school(s) which are keeping Title 1 programs. We will still have the students that we work with using these materials and technology, but we won't have resources to use with them. It will be hard enough to lose our teaching partners, let alone all of the materials and books that we have purchased over the past many years.

A: There are specific federal regulations that must be applied to equipment that is purchased with federal funds, so this decision is not left to the district's discretion. For schools that lose Title I eligibility, any equipment and/or materials that were purchased with Title I funds must first be offered to other Title I schools. Secondly, it must be offered to other federal programs. There must be clear documentation of offering equipment to federal programs and that there is not a need for the equipment and materials in any other federal program before it could be offered to non-Title I schools, including former Title I schools.

Submitted by Mary Conage

ESE

Q: This question concerns inclusion of students who have psychological problems. This is not working in the mainstream classroom. Too much time is lost dealing with these very needy students. Teachers can't teach because they have to tend to these children, therefore other students suffer. It is not logical to continue with this idea that regular classroom teachers are psychologists or mental health professionals. Teachers are held accountable for scores but we can't fulfill requirements when we have to deal with these children. The behaviors and psychological problems of these students are not the teacher's fault or the curriculum that we

teach. But yet we are told that their behaviors are our fault. When will this misplacement of blame be rerouted? We send them out, we have Rtl but still they return and return. We are not helping these students to learn or become productive citizens. They need to be taught skills to survive in society, not take the FCAT or common assessments. It is absurd to think they can sit and take a test when they can't sit for classroom instruction or work in small groups. When will these problems be addressed? Until it is, can something be done to help the classroom teacher? Don't say that something is being done because it isn't. These students need help now.

A: Some students experience very significant behavior problems. The Florida State Board rule that went into effect July 1, 2007, changed the requirements for Emotional/Behavioral Disability eligibility. LEAs (Local Education Agency) must prove they have implemented research-based interventions that meet the students need based on data. The development, monitoring, and amendment of the Problem-Solving Worksheet generally involves a series of meetings by the school-based intervention team over a period of several months. Additionally, to determine a child eligible for behavioral programs there must be evidence of internalizing factors that have been present for a minimum of a six month period. The behaviors are not the fault of the teacher. We are in the process of providing extensive behavior training to district staff and school based behavior specialists as to the "best practices" in advanced behavior management. We anticipate continued training and support in behavior management, will be an ongoing need for both general education and special education teachers.

Submitted by Cindy Bania-Carter

Q: Given the current budget cuts, what will be the status of the Crisis Prevention Intervention requirement? The cost of materials is rising and trying to get the materials for all staff to be trained is costly.

A: The requirement of CPI continues to be an expectation of the district leadership team. There are many district CPI trainers who are available to provide training to your staff and purchase the training materials for those enrolled. We are in the process of investigating renewal of school based trainers at no expense to schools.

Submitted by Cindy Bania-Carter

Q: This question is about Exceptional Student Education paperwork: We need more time to do the paperwork, and believe me there are more and more forms. Can they look at more planning time for us or, clerical help, something has got to give.

Q: Districtwide, paperwork has been increasing. Two years ago we were promised less paperwork. With the new Progress Monitoring Plan (PMP), the new Exceptional Student Education Individual Educational Plan (IEP) and several other asides, we are being inundated with more and more paperwork. Something has got to give. We are now in threat of losing copy

machines and other resources due to budget cuts, which is going to make this an even greater problem. How is the School Board helping with this?

A: Each school is allocated clerical hours each year based on the number of ESE students (non-gifted) enrolled. The amount of hours was increased this year, and we will continue to increase each year if IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act) funding allows. Additionally, TDE (temporary duty elsewhere) days are reserved to assist schools with managing the paperwork. Please contact your IDEA Team Leader for more information.

Submitted by Cindy Bania-Carter

Q: About our iii (triple i) students; I have six students who got out for iii with two different teachers during the 15 minutes allotted for science/social studies. It is virtually impossible to integrate science/social studies with the reading curriculum as, again, half of my kids are gone to ESOL/Read 180/SLD and Speech. These students are also the ones who need the hands on for science/social studies instruction. If they're not with me for a subject and are out receiving other services, what do I do for those subjects on their report cards? How can I ensure they are receiving instruction, preferably thematic in nature?

A: Please contact your IDEA Team Leader to assist with the master scheduling of these students.

Submitted by Cindy Bania-Carter

Curriculum:

Q: RtI (Response to Intervention) is implemented differently at each school. We need a streamlined district- wide process that better meets the needs of struggling students. What is your plan to make RtI more effective in our schools?

A: Since RtI is now state mandated, the Department of Education has given us this year to develop our district plan which would include the framework/processes that will allow for more consistency. The district will provide the framework from which school teams will determine appropriate interventions/processes to best meet the needs of their students. The RtI model requires us to examine our instructional practices using data that will guide this initiative. We have put together a large cross-functional District RtI Leadership Team which is devoting valuable time to put together a plan that will assist schools rather than hinder schools. We are relying heavily on the input from our six RtI Elementary Pilot Schools as we develop our district plan. As a team, we are visiting in many schools observing successful practices, and are collaborating with the many stakeholder groups (including Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association) as we progress through the building of our plan. As a district, our plan will provide an assessment system, an accessible data system, and a communication system to provide schools with appropriate training for the important step of analyzing and using the data that has been collected.

Submitted by Pam Moore

Q: As a cost cutting suggestion: there are too many trainers. Too many people are telling teachers what to do instead of helping students. Pinellas County Schools should stop paying people to “rewrite” curriculums when we spend money to buy “well tested” guides. Along these lines, the second grade Pinellas County Schools’ math curriculum does not align with the state test.

A: Our staff developers have been stretched so far this year in their attempts to provide professional development to all of our schools. There are some staff developers that are serving as many as twelve schools. We have fewer people in these positions than we have had in the past due to last year’s budget cuts. As a district, we are committed to providing quality professional development to our workforce, and our staff developers have been very instrumental in assisting us with this huge task.

Our district uses the Sunshine State Standards for determining the curriculum that is taught in elementary schools. Grades K-2 currently use the new standards, now called Next Generation Sunshine State Standards or NGSSS. Grades 3-5 are in transition from using the old standards, moving towards the NGSSS.

Submitted by Pam Moore

Q: Please explain the Differentiated Accountability Model or whatever it is we've heard about.

A: To fully answer this question, you can go onto the FLDOE website and review the full Differentiated Accountability Model. In a summary form, Florida was one of six states in the nation to participate in differentiated accountability to vary the intensity and type of interventions for a school in need of improvement under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). The four key principles of the Florida plan include accountability, differentiation, interventions for school, and schools in restructuring. The Differentiated Accountability Model integrates Florida’s School Grade System with the AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) system and provides one aligned accountability model. Through this model, the schools with comparatively few problem areas are separated from the schools with more widespread problems.

Schools are classified into five groups: Prevent I, Correct I, Prevent II, Correct II, and Intervene. Pinellas County has 14 elementary Title I schools which are classified as Prevent I. There are 15 elementary Title I schools which are classified as Correct I. There are two elementary Title I schools and six high schools which are classified as Prevent II. There are nine elementary Title I schools which are classified as Correct II. Pinellas County does not have any schools in the category of Intervene. Schools which qualify for these classifications are Title I schools and non-Title I schools which have a D or F grade.

This model provides the opportunity for resources and services to be directed toward the schools with the most need. There are specific requirements for each of the classifications organized around nine areas: School Improvement Planning, Leadership, Educator Quality,

Professional Development, Curriculum Aligned and Paced, Continuous Improvement Model, Choice with Transportation, Supplemental Educational Services, and Monitoring Plans and Processes.

Submitted by Pam Moore

Athletics:

Q: Suggestions for saving money were made at the end of last year. What happened to those ideas? For instance, a coaching staff suggested that the elimination of just one game on their schedule could save a significant amount of money and not have much of a negative impact on their sport (in fact might be a benefit by giving them more practice time).

A: Based on the example: to take one game out of the schedule-say-volleyball for all 16 high schools would save approximately \$2,582. All cost savings ideas are being explored.

Submitted by Nick Grasso

Q: After school athletic practice; will school transportation be taken away?

A: We only provided busing for athletic practice via the activity buses that were used at approximately seven high schools. As of January 5, 2009, the use of activity buses for athletic practice was discontinued.

Submitted by Rick McBride

Miscellaneous:

Q: What is the process of disbursement to get materials from the closing schools?

A: There is a committee called the Closing Schools Team that is finalizing processes related to closing schools, assessing what usable resources are available, and a process for schools to request items that can be transferred. Items such as furniture are easily transferred to other sites. Technology, for example, has to be processed and assessed before it can be transferred. Some receiving sites may need funding to install technology that comes from a closing school. Smart boards, as an example, require a specific hook-up infrastructure that may require additional funding. The goal is an orderly transfer of district resources to sites that have specific needs so there is an equitable redistribution of assets.

Submitted by Dr. Mike Tomalesky

Q: Will the district provide schools with low social economic status a Parent Community Liaison for upcoming school year?

A: If a school is designated as a Title I site, our PCS Title I Department will assign it a liaison at the discretion of the Title I Director and a qualified need having been advanced by the school administrator. Absent Title I designation, it is up to the discretion of individual school principals

whether or not to support a liaison in their school out of their general funds budget. As you might imagine, that makes these positions extremely vulnerable in budget-cutting times such as these.

Submitted by Dr. Eugene Givens

Q: Will the district continue to promote the quality of health insurance for employees?

A: Quality is one of the criteria we use to evaluate our health plan. It will be a consideration during our request for proposal process. We will be conducting a formal request for proposal (RFP) for health insurance this spring for coverage effective January 1, 2010. Carrier and plan selection will be done through the collaborative bargaining process and is subject to board approval.

Submitted by Ted Pafundi

Q: Why has the district not made any comment regarding the suicide of one of its teachers? Isn't there a concern that others could be feeling the same stress?

A: The district sent social workers, psychologists and other highly trained members of a crisis intervention team to help school-based staff and students most closely affected by this tragedy. The incident occurred while the school was closed and, accordingly, the crisis intervention team was at Largo Middle the day school reopened to help those at the school. With respect to work place stress generally, the school board offers the Employee Assistance Program as one of the benefits available to our employees.

Submitted by Jim Robinson

Q: Why are unhealthy snacks sold at lunch?

A: All snacks that are available to students through the school food service department meet these guidelines. All other foods available on campus should meet these guidelines also, but we do not do the purchasing or control the offerings in places such as school stores, fund raisers or non-food service vending machines.

Regarding the snacks that are sold by the food service department, in compliance with these guidelines the options made available to students were evaluated and changes made. All fried chips were eliminated, bakery items are no more than 3 ounces, an ice cream item is no more than 4 ounces, and a cookie has to be 2 ounces or less. Beverages are only made available if they have less than 30 grams of sugar per 8-ounce serving and all non-water beverages have to be a maximum of 12 ounces at the elementary and middle school level and a maximum of 16.9 ounces in high schools. We also have implemented a sequential elimination of ala carte fried French fries from the middle schools and established a set reasonable portion. Students continue to have a variety of healthier foods available to them in an environment that encourages moderation and portion control.

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 as released by the US Department of Health and Human Services and the USDA, "Special attention should be given to portion sizes, which have increased significantly over the past two decades. Though there are no empirical studies to show a causal relationship between increased portion sizes and obesity, there are studies showing that controlling portion sizes helps limit calorie intake, particularly when eating calorie-dense foods (foods that are high in calories for a given measure of food)." It is our goal to provide all students "Energy for Education" by having nourishing food options within our cafeterias.

The Federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 contained a local school wellness policy provision. In compliance with that regulation Pinellas County School District adopted a district wide Wellness Policy in August of 2006. One of the required components of that policy was that we develop "nutrition guidelines for all foods available on campus during the day". A committee of school board and community members drafted these guidelines.

They can be viewed at

<http://www.pinellas.k12.fl.us/CI/STEPS/files/1FB2406C52674AD0A9B283CBC3089DC0.pdf>.

Submitted by Gray Miller

Q: Will there be a legislature push to reword the definition of student year; from 180 days to hours instead? This would possibly allow for a 4-day work week.

A: Yes, Senator Evelyn Lynn and Representative Kurt Kelly have filed similar bills that would require 180 student days or the hourly equivalent (SB 530 and HB 765). No action has yet been taken on these bills but the 2009 Legislative Session does not begin until March, 3rd.

Submitted by Steve Swartzel