

Public Forum

January 18, 2010

Questions Needing Response

1. With fund reductions, are you aware if other local schools are also considering facility closures?
Montabella just closed two buildings last year. Grand Rapids Public Schools are in the process of closing school buildings. We know of 15 schools that are looking to close school buildings.
2. What are costs for alternative education programs? Do we have to have it? The in-house program 2008-2009 cost the district \$120,592. A budget of \$123,747 has been estimated for 2009-2010. We do not have to offer these programs; however, many of the students would choose to drop out of school. For every student that drops out of school it costs the district the student foundation allowance (current year \$7,151 per student). In addition, the drop out rate affects our Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). It only takes a couple of students to drop out for Lakeview, before we would be under State sanctions, which would cost the district more money. The State has changed the mandatory education age to 18, which may help, but if students are not in a learning environment where they can succeed, they can be disruptive in a regular classroom setting, which impacts other students' education.
3. Has Montcalm County looked at re-designating district boundary lines, consolidating school districts in the areas who are also struggling? To my knowledge, they have not. At this time, all schools in Montcalm County are looking at and developing a plan where districts can share services.
4. Realizing this is a meeting to cut programs, my concern is what is being done for the academically advanced students – Middle/High School?
5. AP Placement Programs: What can we do for our upper level students?
Answer to 4 & 5: Last year, the high school and middle school principals developed a plan where middle school students who were ready for advance math could go to the high school and take a higher level of math. At Lakeview, we offer high school students the opportunity to take college courses through dual enrollment. At Lakeview Elementary the district has a student going to an upper level class for an English course.
6. Transportation option details. Various options, include restructuring pick-ups and drop offs, morning only transportation, and contracting services. If the district goes to morning only pick-ups, we would have an after school day care program in place.
7. How did the board come to the decision that 5-8 building vs. 8-12 was more age appropriate? In the past, Lakeview had a 5-8 configuration prior to Bright Start being built and that configuration worked. It was changed because the student population increased and we needed more buildings for space. Currently our student enrollment has decreased substantially (354 students less since Fall 2000). This configuration would also support teacher team teaching and the middle school concept. We heard from a few parents that they would prefer their 8th graders be in the middle school and not the high school.
8. It is still an available option to segregate the 8th graders from the high schoolers? If the 8th graders would go to the high school, the district could segregate to some extent but not completely.
9. If they close Bright Start, what is the intent to do with the property? The intent is to keep the property in hopes that student enrollment will increase and there would be a need to use the building again. In the meantime, the District would look for leasers and programs to place in the building so that the building

would not stand idle. In order to lease, the revenues generated would have to cover the cost of utilities and expenses so there is not added cost to the District.

10. What building is being lost in Scenario II? How much money is saved in closing central office? There is no building being closed in Scenario II. As a result, the reductions to expenditures is not as much. Central Office would not be closed but relocated. The current offices at Lakeview Elementary run off the same utilities as Lakeview Elementary.
11. Discussed staff reductions, but does not explore taking either support or teaching staff to part-time and have budget savings in health care and 401K's. Is this option being explored? Many of our support staff are part-time. School employees do not have a 401K. The contribution made by the school to the retirement system (MPERS) on behalf of any employee is a percentage rate of their salary. The rate changes annually. The current rate is 16.94%. We are required by law to participate and we have no control over the contribution rate. We have some teaching staff that are part-time. Money is a concern, but when reductions are being made, the district considers the needs of the students. This Board and Administration feel that consistency of having the same teacher all day, especially for the younger students, is important. Working conditions including hours is a negotiable item. We are seeking concessions on the health care expenses.
12. How will you safely transport our youngest learners with less support staff? How busses are staffed will not change. Currently there are bus drivers and one bus has a bus aide.
13. How much money has the district spent in the last 5 years sending administration to school? Example: Paying for someone to get a masters or doctorate. The school district does not pay for someone to get a masters or doctorate degree. The school district has paid for contractual obligations outlined in the administrative contracts as well as outlined in the teachers and support staff contracts. Over the course of five years, sixteen non-union personnel the district spent \$23,071.37. The district also meets its contractual obligation of reimbursing teacher coursework as outlined in their contract. Between 2001 and 2006, the district has paid for coursework for both teachers and support staff to become Highly Qualified.
14. Have you considered a 4-day week and not cut teachers – if so, why or why not is it a good idea? Pros & Cons! The State requires that students attend 1098 hours. The State is currently in discussion in addition to the 1098 hours requiring a certain number of full days (170-180) that schools are in session. If we could reduce days, it would mean students go longer either each day or more weeks. But, reducing days, does not reduce teacher compensation as they are salaried and contracted for a service. It could reduce support staff compensation as they are hourly.
15. So will you be cutting any more teachers next year other than in the scenarios presented? If yes, what will be the class sizes? First, the scenarios were suggestions that we are asking for feedback from the community. The positions listed as suggestions for reductions are subject to change. Staff reductions will depend on the final building configurations. If more reductions are needed, the District will be looking at every area of the budget to reduce. The District will meet the contractual obligation of class size which is:

	Limitations	Maximums
K-2	24	27
3-5	27	30
6-8	30	33
9-12	30	33
16. Has the district saved any money by hiring Chartwells? If so, how much? Yes. In 2007-2008 the District's General Fund contributed \$160,000 to the Food Service Fund. In 2008-2009, General Fund did not make

any contribution to Food Service and the Food Service Fund ended with a \$75,483 fund balance. That equates to a \$235,483 swing. The reduction of the \$160,000 General Fund contribution, allowed for those funds to be spent on instruction. Please note that by statute General Fund is the only fund that can subsidize other school funds, i.e. Athletics, Food Service, Debt, etc. These other funds by statute cannot subsidize General Fund.

17. Does the Board really need to pay for administrators to attend conferences & training? **This is a board obligation as is paying for support staff and teachers to be trained. Some of the conferences and trainings that all staff goes to there are no cost. In many cases it makes more sense for the administrators to go the trainings and bring back information to their staff, otherwise, teachers would be out of the classroom more often.**
18. HS Office: Put business office at H.S. Mr. Pincumbe's office becomes Superintendent's; Mr. Herblet's office becomes Pam's; ISS Room becomes Sara's. There is already a computer and two extra desks in the HS office for Tricia. Move Mr. Pincumbe to the room that is a kitchen (that kitchen used to be Mr. Hondorp's office). Mr. Herblet can move to Health room. That used to be the Ass't Principal's Office.
19. Central Office back to high school.
Answer to 18 & 19: This option has been and will continue to be considered, depending on the final building configurations,
20. When closing a building, does it have to be inspected before re-opening? **All buildings have annual inspections.**
21. If we need to save money, why does the school pay cell phone and gas allowances for administration? Why do we pay association member fees for administrators? Support staff and teaching staff has been cut, but administration hasn't. **After cost analysis, it was found that it was less expensive to pay a gas allowance than to pay for actual mileage when a personal vehicle is used. The District reimburses all staff (excluding administration) at the IRS mileage rate if they use their personal vehicle for school business. The membership fees cover numerous meetings throughout the year. Administrator need to be at these meetings to get the latest updates, statutes, and requirements for instruction, finances, and human resources. The District does not pay for cell phones. The District gives each administrator a technology allowance, that is to cover school related calls, computer usage, and any other technological device needed to do their job. An administrator's position is 24/7 whereas the other staff have defined working hours. The District has reduced administrators. Director of Operations, Director of Transportation, Middle School Assistant Principal, Assistant Superintendent, Assistant to the Assistant Superintendent, Central Office Receptionist, and the Director of Finance duties have been absorbed by the other administrators.**
22. Would before & after daycare be provided (free) or available (for fee)? Grandchildren in Marietta, GA pay a nominal fee for Latch Key Program. **The administration is currently researching a day care program. We are in the process of making site visits to other schools. If we decide to have a program, an application would have to be made to and accepted by the State. The program would be available for a fee. We do not know the amount yet.**
23. Early Release Days: What happened to Early Release After School Program? **There was not enough student participation.**
24. Why do school districts receive differing amounts per student? There are districts in Gratiot County that receive over \$1,000 more per student.
25. Why doesn't our district get the same amount of money that other districts get from the state per student?

Answer to 24 & 25: The current foundation allowance is based on a formula put in place when the constitutional amendment, Proposal A, passed in 1994. The base calculation for each district was determined by their tax levy prior to Proposal A.

26. Cut top down. The District looks at all options.
27. Athletic drop (parents bring kids home). The district is currently doing this with some sports.
28. Keep bussing. No privatization – by letting it go privatized, you are destroying the core of the community where no one will ever go for a bond again. If the district chooses to sub-contract, current employees will have the opportunity to apply with the sub-contractor. We are trying to minimize the impact on academics, and this is one option to save money.
29. Could we have age appropriate bus stops if we have common stops to help with bus safety and child safety? #1 Bus for Older Children. #2 Bus for Younger Children. We live in Coral and feel that this would help our children. The District will consider this concern when making a final decision regarding transportation.
30. What are we doing to attract new students? We offer zero services for academically gifted students – many who elsewhere to find a better education for children. The District is continually looking to attract new students and currently is in the process of developing a new marketing strategy.
31. If more time is available for music and gym, can we add art as well? When developing programs for next year, the District will consider this request.
32. If busses idle from about 2:35 p.m. Why? Can't they just start and go? They also idle up to 10 minutes at Bright Start. Wouldn't eliminating the idling save money? We have diesel engines and it is best for diesel engines to be warmed up before they actually move. The bus drivers have to pre-trip their bus for safety inspections every time they make a trip. The practice of the bus drivers during cold weather is to start the buses while they are pre-tripping. This allows the busses to warm up for the students.
33. The state gives schools a certain # of snow days we don't have to make up. Why can't we simply eliminate that many days? The State statute is that school has to be in session for student 1,098 hours. 30 hours can be forgiving for inclement weather. We cannot use them for general shutdown to save money.
34. By eliminating 3 special education teachers, do we lose the ability to provide services hence lose those students and the funding provided for them? The reduction in the need for special education teachers is a result of our special education student number reducing from 263 students two years ago to 216 students this year. The Full Time Equivalency for students was 70.89 last year to 48.20 this year. There are student-teacher ratio requirements for special education and if the district has more special need students that will result in more teachers; we will comply with the regulations. At this time, the District has more special education teachers than are required by statute. Approximately 3 more.
35. LES Playground needs to be updated since equipment was removed for preschoolers. We would like to update the playground; however, that costs money. The District had the playground inspected as required and we are compliant.
36. Will playground equipment be transferred to whichever school remains open? The district's playground equipment is cemented into the ground, moving will damage the equipment.
37. The cost of moving/compared to closing a school? There will be one-time costs for moving compared to sustained and compounded costs of keeping a building open.
38. If you close Bright Start, what about the fields and keeping the building maintenance up? The District will continue to maintain the fields and building.
39. Busing only one way, you'll lost students from Trufant, Coral, Six Lakes, and outer areas. The District understands and hopes to find other viable transportation options.

40. Are you going to shut down the Upper El? **The Board of Education will make the final decision on which building is closed. At this time, it will be the recommendation to the Board from the Administration to close Bright Start. Lakeview Elementary has space for more students, has both a gym and cafeteria, and its utilities are less than Bright Starts.**
41. Eliminate any positions at Central Office? **All staffing positions are being reviewed.**
42. Should parents have to pay for students playing sports if sports are supported by coaches? Example: Cross Country – coach donates her time, no busing and parents provide uniforms. Should we have to pay?
43. Pay to play – have it be cost specific for sport.
Answer to 42 & 43: If a pay to participate option is enacted, the District will strive to make it as fair as possible to all sports.
44. Cost of maintenance for Bright Start after closing? **This answer depends on if the District is able to lease the building or not. If the building is idle, maintenance costs will be less.**
45. Any chance to open contract w/educators for insurance cost? **The District is in the process of negotiations with the teachers. The support staff contract does not expire until June 30, 2012.**
46. Scenario IV.
47. Go with Scenario 4.