



**BOARD OF TRUSTEES
SARATOGA UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
Special Board Workshop
May 15, 2007**

M I N U T E S

Present: Michael Gipe, Cindy Ruby, Pragati Grover, Shinku Sharma
Absent: Jack Chang

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 p.m. by Board President Michael Gipe.

2. Opportunity for Public Comment on Agenda Items

The Governing Board welcomes and encourages public comments. Members of the public were given the opportunity to comment on items not included on this agenda. (Education Code 35145.5, Government Code 54954.3)

There were no comments from the community.

3. Action/Consent

*Agenda

A motion was made by Pragati Grover and seconded by Cindy Ruby to approve the Action Consent Item.

AYES: Gipe, Ruby, Grover, Sharma

NOES: 0

ABSENT: Chang

4. Action/Discussion

4.1 Study and Discussion of Redwood Middle School Instructional Day

The board discussed possible future direction for the structure and content of the instructional day at Redwood Middle School.

The workshop included an interactive discussion with audience members, staff, and the board to explore and answer the following questions:

- Are the components of the Redwood Middle School program to remain intact?
- Which components are we willing to reconsider?
- If changes are proposed, what are the benefits to students? What are the challenges and opportunities of the proposed changes?

Introduction

- Redwood Middle School Principal Beth Polito, Assistant Principal Jason Robertson, and Dean Eric Witter gave a brief presentation, reviewing the information presented to the board on March 27, 2007, at their regularly scheduled meeting. Four sample schedules were reviewed including some minor changes (status quo, 6 out of 7, 2-day block and 4-day block).
- A handout, *The Master Schedule and the Organization of the School Day*, from the Redwood Middle School Task Force was distributed.
- We are looking at this now as a result of a board request last spring, administrative interest, single subject teachers' interest in longer instructional periods, and Saratoga High School's recent experience with the implementation of a block schedule.

- Staff is looking for a clear sense of direction from the board to begin their study.
- One year will be needed to study options, communicate with parents and mitigate concerns.

Discussion

Redwood Middle School teachers Elizabeth Belles, Jason Borgen, Amy Duren, Susan Germeraad, and Mary Thomas, joined the discussion with the board.

- Does the schedule match best practice?
- Breadth versus depth
- What is gained by longer periods but not more time overall?
- How would students adjust to an 85 minute block?
- Teachers would need additional support to teach longer instructional periods.
- The 2 block schedules would allow us to keep major components of our program and will provide a good starting point.
- How would this effect homework assignments?
- Longer periods would be better, 85 minutes may be too long, time should be enough to cover one lesson in depth not two lessons combined.
- A 6 period day would take away an elective choice and have staffing and budget implications.
- The number one motivation for going to a block schedule is that a 45 minute period is not enough time for single subject classes. Curriculum standards have expanded and an ideal lesson would take longer.

Board Discussion

- What is needed from the board to move forward?
- The district has prided itself on being rich in humanities, offering choices and now may be required to revisit some of our values.
- What programs are we holding steadfastly to? What do we value for our kids' success? Three Dimensional Success – what is it that we hope we have: academically successful student, a well balanced curriculum, and caring responsible citizens? How do we best accomplish this if this is what we want?
- How good is good enough? It is up to the governance team to set that direction.
- Now experiencing a surge to academic brilliance when before it was to the arts and social/emotional literacy. It may be necessary to modulate the pendulum between whole child and academic intensity.
- An incremental change may work best.
- What about increasing the length of the day? We already have the longest day – concerns would be around students having too long a day, hiring, and contract.

Next Steps

- Study how the schedule would look with one less core period for 6th grade and 7th grade and one less elective at 8th grade; see if unequal instructional periods would work for some classes.
- Gather feedback on homeroom.
- Involve parents, teachers and students throughout the review process.
- A new instructional day schedule would not be implemented until 2008-09 school year. Work on options in the fall of 2007-08 and prepare for implementation and professional development the remainder of the year.
- Redwood Middle School Site Leadership will review the information gathered at today's meeting and a timeline will be created and sent to the board and superintendent.

5. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Clerk of the Board