

## School Community Network Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 20, 2024, 11:30 AM

LRC

**Present:** Alicia Emanuel, Dr. Matt Adams, Laine Buck, Lisa Earles, Heidi Fahler, Gina Lewis, Tessa Martin, Cally Roehrick, Jaimie Hesterberg, Eddy Cisneros, Elli Gillotti, Sarah Willoughby

**Called to order** at 11:30

**Dr. Adams Budget Realignment Process:** Enrollment projections are down. Steady decline over 5-6 years. Empty nesters occupy housing. Open enrollment, especially from Des Moines and Waukee, has kept enrollment numbers steady until recently. Biggest outgoing enrollment is to Urbandale, often citing proximity for northern district families. Open enrollment laws and vouchers have made it easier to leave the district.

Reminder that budget cutting is not per the district's choices but the drop in enrollment coupled with years of low annual state increase in budgets for public schools - 2.5-3% a year isn't sustainable. Lost about 50 students to vouchers (\$300,000+). Showed the board 5 year projections based on where we're at. Will have to cut again in FY 27.

Proposed a less radical cut. Hope to have a job for everyone affected rather than having to cut staff. Started looking at two big pools of money - operations first. 80% of general fund goes to people. Tried to focus on where to streamline operations before looking at cutting staff. Bringing maintenance dept back from contracted is expected to save 1.3 million. Outsourcing makes sense for something like snow removal because the cost to own isn't justified. On-staff electrician and plumber reduces costs of hiring every time something is needed.

HR surveyed principals - where do you need support, where could we reduce. GT spending is outpacing categorical funding.

Considered looking at elementary - saw nothing to cut

Looking at junior high - removed librarian cuts as an option. 7th grade Spanish was a proposed cut - it used to bridge elementary and 8th grade Spanish and Spanish is no longer in elementary. Western Hills immersion students don't need it because they're so far beyond what was taught there.

High school - Looked at retirements for positions that could be left vacant (as opposed to letting staff go) - reviewed art, social studies, french, business, science - couldn't justify not hiring in most areas. Geology, astrology, meteorology expected to still be offered.

Looking at 3 million+ in cuts. If we cut closer 2 million than 3, it's going to make the 27 FY cuts that much harder, more staff position cuts.

DSM schools cut orchestra and band in elementary (they're making 14 million in budget cuts) which Dr. Adams suspects will increase open enrollment from there.

### **Dr. Adams Q&A:**

Clarify that Spanish 7 is still up for cuts - yes it is, but reminder that no cuts are decided yet.

Timing: plan for February 26 board vote to finalize budget cuts. There had been discussion on delaying but staff uncertainty and stress over cuts doesn't need to be dragged out, so still planning to finalize on 26th

Proposed staffing additions

- secretarial support at Indian Hills and Stilwell (12 months to include summer), Jordan Creek Westridge (received pushback on 12 month idea - changed to stipend to cover summer programming)
- Valley requested to trade an English Language Arts teacher position for another behavioral supports position.
- Increased ESOL support staff (using non general funds)
- Southwoods hall monitor for CTE building
- Spanish Family Engagement Specialist (outside general fund)

Comm Ed reduced about \$40,000 in staffing (shifting around positions)

Reducing overtime (save about \$125,000)

Concern that GT cuts will make the district look less attractive to students who might be interested in entering the district. Suggested if they wait a few years, GT staff members might retire and then re-hires would be lower salaried.

Appreciate how respectful the discourse has been on budget conversation.

Need to bring concerns to the state legislature, how budget cuts impact students/families/communities.

Can district provide information on how to contact state legislatures? Have to be very careful, as very difficult to make such a suggestion while maintaining nonpartisan; can look into it.

### **Family Engagement Specialists:**

Work with families in Title 1 schools who have barriers, hardships that make it harder to succeed in school. Focus on student and family success.

3 roles

- resources within the school
- connecting families to resources outside the school
- attendance. Attendance helps her assure the wellness and well-being of her students. She can use that information with suspected at-risk situations.

Areas of focus:

- Housing (only 3 family shelters in metro, always full; if living in car unhoused, will go to bottom of list because you have a roof over your head)
- Transportation
- attendance (gather weekly attendance data from each building, looks into chronic absenteeism for the why and how to improve)
- medical (appointments for families, especially new to America - only supported for two months as refugees)

- frequent West Des Moines Human Services and Clive Community Services to help people get services (food, clothes, free clinic, utilities assistance)
- counseling (connect with therapy services).

First point of contact/ambassador for all new-to-district families at Title 1 schools. Connect with resources within the school, give school tour, make sure they connect with transportation, help with registration in preschool/head start, whatever other internal services they need. Connect with Booster Pak, Sylvan Learning. Court cases - confidential info - safe point of contact. Student assistance programs. Ensuring basic needs are met so students are able to focus on learning. Help find students find holiday assistance, sign up for snap.

Foreign language support (4 for Spanish, 1 for Hakha Chin) - interpret/translate materials for teachers and staff. Outreach through the other FES staff. Encourage families to show up for conferences, PTA meetings, school events. Groups spearheading events need to notify the interpreters/ESOL teachers. If they don't know about it, the ESOL families aren't going to know about these things and won't be able to participate.

Adding new ESOL families to the district daily. Need to make greater efforts to include them. Important for staff and families to understand more about their cultures and backgrounds and value these families and what they bring to the classroom, to the district. Refer for resources. Advocate for the parents who don't speak English yet. Important for them to feel their voices are being heard. Hears regularly "How do I know my kids will be safe? How do I know I can trust the teachers/the district?" Brings these questions to the district so they know the concerns.

### **One in four of district families speak a language other than English.**

Use other resources to communicate in other languages, including Talking Points for translated texting. Use an app that can call in another language. Use Iowa International Center to help with communicating in other languages.

What should we use to help speak to people at events? The best thing is to bring in people who can speak the languages. Suggested talking to Natalie French about getting someone in. Be more intentional in how things are said in English, simplify the language.

Need to start helping the families become self sufficient. Example, FES ask the registration information verbally and enter into the computer themselves because so many families are not technologically literate. The families need the opportunity to learn how to use technology so they can do it themselves. Adults that are hungry to learn, but where and how? FES is reactionary, helping in immediate situations while trying to figure out how to help the families stand on their own.

FES are unique in that they get to know them as people/families and not just as students. Families trying to stay afloat before they can be brought in as parent mentors or expect more of them.

**FES Q&A:**

Is there a role for parents in the district to support FES families or is it too confidential?

Natalie French is dabbling with the idea of a parent mentor program within the schools to help with these families. Only happening within title buildings because that's where FES roles are.

Could be something that the parent organizations connect with.

Suggested if a family opts into allowing help from a third party, could remove liability concerns and allow a volunteer to step in and help, reduce load from FES staff.

District has a wealth of resources FES are grateful for.

What do families struggle with within the district, such as Canvas, infinite campus, finding lunch menus?

Attendance, academics, behavior are outcomes of other things going on. Student sleeping, misbehaving, not turning in work, not attending are outcomes of something else. Need to ask why this is going on. In conversations with FES families, grades have never come up. The families they help have so much more going on that grades aren't the priority. They're not at the point of building capacity with their families to the point where they're worried about helping them set up a canvas account or signing in to infinite campus.

Are teachers receptive to this idea? Mixed response. Some teachers may be more focused on content and grades but there's always principals, administrators in the building who they can work with. Acknowledge that not all staff are willing to learn/grow/adapt to needs of changing demographics or are willing to support students in the ways they need to be supported. Balance between opportunities for people (including staff) to grow and learn vs the needs of the students whose needs aren't being met. "You change people or you change people." Assurance that there is followup of documented incidents. "Do you coach them through or do you coach them out?"

FES knows who the advocates are in each building and focus on those people who will help.

How do you help students who are aging out of foster care? Community organizations/partnerships. Each case is so unique. Some faith based organizations provide financial support. Partner with counselors to help them with beginner life skills, like filling out job applications, making a resume.

Suggestion, potential partnership with community ed on that last piece.

**Meeting adjourned:** 1:13

**Next meetings:** April 16 and May 21