

Waite Park Elementary PTA

Meeting Minutes March 13th, 2024

Budget Update for the 2024/25 School Year: (Principal McGinness)

Note A recording of this portion of the meeting was made and is available to [watch here](#).

The district is closing a large budget shortfall for next school year and is making significant cuts to school budgets. Additionally, ESSR money is leaving. (COVID related funding approved by Congress.)

Highlighted Changes

- The Intervention Specialists Triad positions that were put in place this year were from ESSR money, and we won't have those positions next year. Only Title I schools will have the Triad positions.
 - (Intervention Specialists are teams made up of 1 teacher and 2 associate educators focused on helping students get their reading and math skills up to grade level.)
- High-5 will not be offered next year at Waite Park and 7 other sites
- There will be an additional split classroom next year in 2nd/3rd Grade. There will continue to be a 4th/5th Grade split classroom.
- 5th Grade Band is no longer offered district wide
- Ms. Beasley will be going down to part-time next year.
- Online Telescope Math, an advanced math program for 4th/5th grade, will not be available next year. Ms. Bauer will be teaching Telescope Math at Waite Park as well as advanced reading for 3/4/5th grades. Additionally, she will still be providing some interventions, focusing on the highest needs and highest risk kids.

2024/25 School Year Allocations	
High Five 0.0	
Kindergarten 2.0	Ms. Swentko Ms. Waz
First Grade 2.0	Ms. Turner Ms. F
2nd Grade 1.6	Ms. Rachuy
2nd/3rd Grade Split Classroom	Mr. Hecht
3rd Grade 1.5	Mr. Griesch
4th Grade 1.3	Ms. Harms
4/5th Grade Split Classroom	Ms. Monson
5th Grade 1.4	Mr. VandeBerg
Special Education Team (No changes for next year.)	
SERT 2.0	Ms. Colich Ms. Leisman

SEA-RIS 1.0	Ms. Dahmen
SEA-Program Support 2.0	Ms. Michelle Mr. Matt
English Language Learners (No changes for next year.)	
ELL 1.0	Ms. Ditter
Additional Allocations	
Secretary 1.0	Ms. Nicole
Specialists 2.0 (Art, Music, Phy Ed) Losing two classrooms reduces specialist allotments by .4 FTE. Losing 5th grade band removed an additional .3	Mr. Bonkoski - Phy Ed 0.6 Ms. Hubert - Art 0.8 Ms. Stotz - Music 0.6
Media Specialist 0.5	
Social Worker 1.0	Ms. Kelly
Speech 0.6	Nicole Root
Psychologist 0.3	Alan Tharldson
Nurse 0.4	Merrilee Sullivan
Health Services Assistant 0.78	Pam Cera
Associate Educator (determining FTE, maybe 0.6)	
Transportation Coordinator 0.2	Ms. Dahmen
Advanced Learner 0.5/Intervention Specialist 0.5	Ms. Bauer

March 13th, 2023 PTA Meeting Questions

Q: How will budget cuts affect SPED resources?

A: Our Team will stay the same.

Q: What happens to kids that need intervention not SPED?

A: 0.5 interventions this year, it will be less next year.

Q: Could Elementary Band be offered as an after school opportunity?

A: We have tried that in the past, it gets difficult with different instruments. But it is a possibility.

Q: What can parents do to effectively advocate for fewer cuts and increased school funding across the district?

A: Right now we are at where we are at. There are still 7 contracts up for negotiating, there may still be changes after those contracts are settled. You could email our associate superintendent.

Q: I am interested in the reasoning behind High-Five cuts, particularly because the parents supplement the cost and at WP it is very popular. Secondly, I wonder if there is an option to partner with the MPRB and offer it/something similar as an option as they do the Rec Pre-K.

A: There were 8 classes they were cutting, and we were one of them. There wasn't an explanation given. They are prioritizing title I schools.

Q: How does a 2nd/3rd class split look as far as classroom size? I ask because it seems like the class sizes are always brimming. How will the split class account for normal enrollment at WP? Secondly, I wonder about how successful a $\frac{2}{3}$ split is for learning at that age. I have heard good things about the $\frac{1}{2}$ split but unsure about the younger ages.

A: Mr. Hecht is a very skilled teacher. We will try to keep that class size lower. The caps for class sizes, 3rd grade is 34, 2nd grade is 28. $\frac{1}{2}$ is 36. Mr. Hecht is getting good tips from Ms. Monson who has been doing this for years.

Q: Are the budget cuts for 2024 basically set in stone, or is there still time to advocate for school funding increases for next year to reverse some of these decisions? If so, what are the best ways to do that?

A: As of right now, it seems to be set in stone, but it may change after the contracts are solidified. Principal is unsure of timelines for that at the district. April 8th is date for interview and select. Our budget is due Friday.

Q: What will specialists look like? Will they get jobs at other schools?

A: Not sure, they may choose to interview at another school. They need to do what they need to do. Despite the FTE for grade level teachers, they will still be here every day.

Q: What are the contracts that need to be settled?

A: Teachers, ESPS, principals, transportation

Q: Are you mandated to offer all three specialists?

A: Music, PE, and Art are required, but if you don't have the staff.

Q: What will specialist schedules look like?

A: Not sure at this time.

Q: What effect do you think losing Hi-5 will have on the school? Will it reduce enrollment?

A: I hope not. We just need to continue to market Waite Park. We do have preschool at Parks and Rec. Currently, about half of kids in K have participated in Hi-5 and half have not.

Q: I'm feeling sad about Hi-5. It was such an easy transition. I know it doesn't work for every family because of no before or after care. Could you imagine some partnership with the parks department filling that gap?

A: I'd have to discuss that with the parks department.

Q: Where are the nearest Hi-5 classrooms?

A: Las Estrellas, Pillsbury, Webster

Q: My son really benefits from the interventions team. Do you have a number of how many kids that are using interventions?

A: That is still in the works. We will focus on literacy interventions and the highest needs kids. We look at our test scores, and focus on the kids at high risk. Some kids may just go through one cycle of interventions. We may start concentrating on 1/2nd grade. Teachers do a lot in the classroom, too. Every kid is getting Tier 1 core instructions. Based on skills/data, teachers make their own small groups to do interventions. So every student is getting differentiated instruction in the classroom.

Q: Question about the split classes: Is there data that supports that the $\frac{1}{2}$ grade classroom has similar outcomes as the non-split classroom?

A: There's no data either way. We haven't seen a discrepancy on the day to day data dives. Splits scare people, but we have had splits for years. When you have a teacher that is very skilled, you can see it really work. Montessori has multi-grade classrooms, so some people seek it out.

Q: Is it true that you select the kids that may do better in split classrooms?

A: No, there are so many moving pieces. We don't look at kid's names, it's all data-based. You want to be mindful that you're balancing a classroom, special ed, ELL, and academically. After all of that, you look at personality dynamics and teaching styles. We weigh a whole lot of different factors.

Some chat comments:

Caryn Olsen

7:10 PM

Thank you. Appreciate this transparency.

Abbie Westra

7:11 PM

Thanks as always, Rochelle! My mom is a classroom volunteer and really adores it.

Amy Softich

7:12 PM

Thanks, Rochelle. You've really assembled an amazing team of teachers and staff. And we appreciate your dedication to the school and our kiddos.

My son has been in the 4/5 split for two years and is thriving. It's been great for Ben.

CasiAnna Myne

7:15 PM

I'm pretty sure River's going to be really excited that she could have Mr Hecht again next year

Nicole Carol Thorson Holt

7:15 PM

Nolde did a 2/5 split after covid and loved it. I was just talking to him about that this afternoon

Josie Riggall

7:16 PM

I had 4 years in split classes growing up myself and had a great experience

Dong Tam Le

7:16 PM

I remember Kiên loves that time with Mr..Nolde too!

Kathleen Keeseey

7:17 PM

My son Leo is in a split and likes it. :)

Katherine Ditter

7:17 PM

If there's a staff that can do it well, it's this one

Caryn Olsen

7:17 PM

We love Mr Hecht!

Abbie Westra

7:17 PM

I should add that my mom is able to come in every single Friday, which helps with consistency for the kids. I know that's important for volunteering.

Shauna Zotalis

7:17 PM

Thanks for sharing your split classroom experiences

Abbie Westra

7:17 PM

And she's a retired teacher :)

Amy Softich

7:18 PM

The 5th grade boys who have had Ms. Monson for 2 years have become really good friends, which has been another benefit for our kid!

Nicole Carol Thorson Holt

7:18 PM

We love Judy!

PTA Update: (Tyler S.)

Glow Run raised more than \$27,000. Supply budget was cut in half for next year, so this will really help! New t-shirts for every student. 28% came from Waite Park Families, 72% came from extended families, friends and community.

Mural is complete, check it out in the office entryway.

Family Service Night: (Anika S. and Amy S.)

We held our second Family Service Night on March 13th. Everyday Leaders ran the snack and donations table. Cat/dog food and \$60 in cash. 98 people came, about half students and half family members. There was a dog blanket making station, animal portraits, and cat toy making stations. We made over 20 dog blankets and 200 cat toys. This will all be donated to the [North Minneapolis Pet Resource Center](#) next week.

Traffic Safety Committee Update: (Bridget B.)

The Traffic Safety Committee has been meeting to look at ways to make walking/biking to school safer. We are focused on the crossings on Johnson Street at 33rd Avenue, 34th Avenue and 35th Avenue. We are trying to get a partnership with the city for traffic calming measures on Johnson Street. MPS's Safe Routes to School group has a meeting on March 14th. If we put in a couple of traffic calming applications in before that meeting, it will help out a lot! Click the link to apply for Johnson and 34th:

<https://cityoflakes.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/nearby/index.html?appid=49c2d016872849f99653fd0dbe9b9944&sliderDistance=20>

Grants Update: (Laura C.)

We have about \$4000 left in the budget. 3rd grade is going to the Arboretum. Keep those requests coming!

Yearbook Update: (Katy K.)

We are going to make the deadline in April. We have a parent who is going to take pictures in the classroom. Jill Hooten is leading the committee and designed the cover, thanks Jill!

Carnival Update: (CasiAnna O.)

Skunk Hollow will be back to perform. Two food trucks will be there, Philly Sandwich Truck with Italian Ice, and a Taco/Empanada/Churro truck.

Next PTA meeting will be Thursday, April 11th, in person in the Recreation Center. We will have a list of open PTA board positions. Voting will take place during the May meeting.

Waite Park Community Council Meeting tomorrow March 14th 6pm-9pm at Columbia Manor. The Waite Park PTA will be present. School board member, Council Member and lots of neighbors. Free food and drinks.