

Legislative Council Budget Questions February 24, 2017

I would rather get you questions as they come in so that I am not hammering you with a ton of questions all at once. There is at least one question here which is similar to a previous one but I think it asks the question differently—please justify pay-for-play reduction now is the gist (whereas the answer to the previous question seems to merely address how it happened).

1. Given the dire financial picture coming from the state regarding our decrease in revenue, what steps is the BOE taking to reevaluate its budget request to lessen the impact of the potential tax increase to our residents?

- The BOE's budget has been presented as a needs budget to maintain class size and programs. The approach the BOE has taken to date is a similar approach by local boards throughout the state (CASBO survey) which is to continue to present what is needed to maintain the existing level of student services.

2. Enrollment figures at the elementary school level indicate further teacher reductions are in order if the current student teacher ratio guidelines are consistently applied. Seems as though one FTE should be reduced in HAW 4th grade for a class size of 20 vs the proposed 15.

- Hawley grade 4 class size projection is 22-23 students. (Grade 2 has a class size projection of 15-16 students which is something we are keeping a close eye on.)

3. The Early Intervention position seems to be unevenly applied across schools. There is no FTEs at SHS, a request to increase from .5 to .8 FTE at HAW, .75 at MG, and .5 at HOM.

- SHS's early intervention services are included in the 2.0 reading FTE line item.

4. The lead teacher AP positions are also applied unevenly across elementary schools. AP at SHS, lead teachers the other schools. How low does enrollment have to drop before we make adjustments in those areas?

- There remain additional needs at SH; thus responsibilities are significantly different for the AP at SH compared to the role and responsibility of the lead teachers at the remaining three elementary schools.

5. Only one school has \$\$ for toner cartridges, hasn't the district moved to a centralized system?

- The district has moved to a managed print service program, however, all printers are not covered and will continue to be used and require supplies.

6. Given the declining enrollment, when will the elementary schools begin to share Math specialists?

- Each elementary school has 1 FTE serving in a dual role of the Math/Science Specialist. These specialists have responsibility for intervention of struggling students, coaching of staff, as well as ensuring the fidelity of implementation of the Math and the Science curriculum. This is an increasingly busy role, given the transition to the new science standards which the State recently has adopted. It is not feasible to share these specialists between buildings.

7. Please detail how many classes each PE teacher teaches at each school. Why is that still a full-time position at HOM for example?

- Elementary PE teachers currently at HAW, SHS, and MG are shared teachers – travel time impacts teaching schedules.
Hawley – 1.4 FTE responsible for 32 sections/week
Sandy Hook – 1.5 FTE responsible for 40 sections/week
Middle Gate – 1.6 FTE responsible for 38 sections/week
Head O’Meadow – 1.0 FTE responsible for 30 sections/week

8. Why are there still two clerical positions in each school?

- It is the strong belief within multiple levels of the organizational chart that there remains a need to maintain the present staffing levels that currently exist in all four elementary schools.

9. At RIS, average class size in 5th grade is proposed of 21 students, less than many elementary classes. Why not reduce on cluster to save 2 additional FTE positions?

- RIS clusters were built around the BOE’s guideline and the special needs that remain with students that are unique to Newtown schools.

10. Why with declining enrollment are 12.5 hours added at RIS for paraeducators to cover lunch?

- There has been an identified need throughout this year that additional adult eyes are needed in the RIS caf to maintain a safe and healthy student environment. This has been documented by both social and behavioral issues that have taken place in the caf during this school year.

11. Why at RIS are there 4.65 clerical positions given the declining enrollment?

- The school clerical support needs to continue especially around the student profile at RIS.

12. At RIS, how many classes do the 2 FTE art positions teach?

- RIS Art teachers: 1.0 FTE responsible for 60 sections/week.

13. Please justify 4.9 FTEs for music at RIS.

- RIS music: There are three district music lesson/class offerings; band, orchestra and chorus. Music lessons/classes are offered 3 times/week, versus twice per week for art and PE.

14. How many classes to 2 FTEs teach at RIS for PE?

- RIS PE teachers: 2.0 FTE responsible for 60 sections/week.

15. Page 107 of the RIS budget shows 4.65 clerical and page 108 shows 3.86, please explain?

- You need to add the .79 library clerical to 3.86 total on page 108 for the 4.65 FTE on page 107.

16. At the middle school class sizes in 7th and 8th are proposed at 22 and 22 respectively, again, higher than some elementary schools. Despite a drop of over 50 students, there is only a proposed reduction of one cluster. Why not an additional cluster in 7th to make the classes 24.3?

- Newtown Middle School clusters were built around the BOE's guideline and the special needs that remain with students that are unique to Newtown schools (25% of the NMS student body demonstrate special needs).

17. Please indicate specifically how many classes all specialists listed on page 129 at the middle school are responsible for. Why aren't we sharing staff between buildings as enrollment declines?

- At NMS, the teachers for Art, Music, Health and PE have schedules that keep them fully occupied in instructing students 23-25 periods per week with an additional 5 periods allocated for their duties and/or required meetings and 5 prep periods, as well as a Homeroom period. With this course load, it is not possible to share these full-time teachers between buildings. However, there is one Physical Education teacher allocated as .50 FTE (12 teaching periods) at NMS, and .50 FTE at Sandy Hook, as a "shared" assignment.

18. Please justify charging all taxpayers more to reduce pay to play for a selected group of students at the high school.

- The design of the reduction is to uphold the belief that all children should have equity in opportunity. Although there is a hardship opportunity for parents to apply for regarding

pay to play it is the belief of many that pride gets in the way of the ask; thus, a student athlete does not compete because of the families inability to pay the seasonal fee.

19. Please detail the actual staffing levels at the high school by classification as described on page 173 for the past 5 years compared to the drop in enrollment. Then, please justify the lack of adjustment to those numbers.

- 2013-2014 enrollment was 1,716 students. Present enrollment is 1,684 students. Projected 2017-18 enrollment is 1638 students indicating that the significant decline of high school enrollment will be in future years with minimal decline anticipated for the new school year. Numerous courses have been offered to meet the changing needs of students over the past few years (expanding the alternative program, Project Lead the Way, Unifies Arts, etc.)