



**EDUCATION411**  
*is a volunteer, non-partisan citizen organization. Its mission is to celebrate Westwood's long tradition of educational excellence and to inform residents of key issues facing our public schools today and in the future.*

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## School Committee Meeting Notes

Meeting Date January 29, 2009

Submitted by Tracy Brown

## Superintendent's Report

Information on review of full day Kindergarten has been mailed out to prospective parents and is currently available on school website.

## Funding Thurston Middle School Modulars

Pam Dukeman presented an update on the funding for the Middle School expansion modulars, which were approved by voters last April. The current economic situation has delayed some of the Westwood Station money. While the delay presents a difficulty with funding the debt service within Prop 2 ½, the economic difficulty has presented opportunity in potentially reduced construction costs and favorable long term debt rates. There was some discussion on how to proceed in the short term, whether to issue a short term Bond Anticipation Note or a long term Bond, and whether we would be better served funding outside the Prop 2 ½ with a debt exclusion. Ms. Dukeman is currently apprising all town governing boards and will update as the situation develops.

## STAR Program

Audrey Seyffert, Director of Student Services and Mary Brown, Downey School Principal, presented a review of the STAR (Strategic Therapeutic Academic Response) program.

Review of program:

- Academic Support Instruction
  - Quality System Curriculum
  - Professional Development
- Social Emotional Support

- Counseling
  - Explicit social skills instruction
  - Community Support
  - Behavioral Support
  - Language Pragmatics
- Quality Support
- Meaningful training

- Meets all of the IDEA Mandates
- Behavior Intervention Plan
  - Leveled point system
  - Consistent vocabulary
- Star response Team
- Responsive behavioral intervention

**Challenges:**

- More complex student needs
- Requires staff accessibility (current model has teacher committed to academic teaching with little flexibility)

**Proposed Model:**

Two teachers, one academic and one behavioral

**Vision to Implementation through the budget process:**

- Add teacher and reduce instructional assistants
- Entry/exit criteria
- Team meetings

This proposed model results primarily in increased effectiveness and secondarily in a net savings of \$19k for proposed budget.

## Middle School Math and Science

Current 6<sup>th</sup> grade enrollment is putting pressure on class sizes. This problem will increase as the class moves to 7<sup>th</sup> grade and the students are leveled in math. The pressure will affect all 7<sup>th</sup> grade classes due to the unequal distribution of students in the leveled classes. Under a more positive budgeting environment, a request of two additional teachers would have been proposed.

Allison Borchers, Middle School Principal, presented a review and options for handling this challenge.

Currently we have two full time math teachers for grade 7 resulting in 10 sections of math instruction with a class of 261 students.

**Typical level rates:**

- Level 3 10%
- Level 2 40%
- Level 1 50%

**Typical placement:**

- 2 sections 13 per class
- 4 sections 26 per class
- 4 sections 33 per class

**Option 1**

Add .8 FTE Math/Science teacher resulting in one additional section in both level 1 & 2 and 2 additional sections in science. The reduction of class size in science will increase safety during labs. There will also be decreased pressure on the other classes in the building.

- Level 3 2 sections 13 per class
- Level 2 4 sections 21 per class
- Level 1 4 sections 26 per class

Option 2

Add .4 FTE Math/Science teacher resulting in one additional section in both level 1 & 2 see above.

Option 3

Use Qualified special educators to teach level 3 resulting in one additional section in both level 1 & 2 see above.

The disadvantage of this option is that there would be less individual instruction and support from the special educators and this option may not be sustainable. The current 4<sup>th</sup> grade also experiences high enrollment.

Other potential options:

Limit the students allowed into Level 1 Math.

Use 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers possible due to low enrollment in upcoming class.

Action will be discussed as the budget resources and decisions become available.

**Budget Resources**

Superintendent Antonucci updated the current information on variables in the budget resources.

The state aid proposed in the governor’s budget shows a net reduction in state and lottery funds at \$155k. JA believes this means the current government supports education and will decrease the need for a proposed 0% increase budget, as requested by the town. Westwood Station remains a huge variable for this and future years. There is potential for some benefit from the Economic Stimulus package currently under review. Also, potential benefit from IDEA Grant one time flow through. However, JA cautions too much reliance on one time benefits.

**Upcoming School Committee Meeting Dates**

Thursday February 26th 7:30PM, High School Little Theater

Wednesday March 18th 7:30PM, High School Little Theater

Wednesday April 15th 7:30PM, High School Little Theater

**School Committee Agenda February 26<sup>th</sup> Meeting**

**7:30 CALL TO ORDER**

- A. Pledge of Allegiance
- B. Superintendent’s Report

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

- A. Budget Update
- B. Thurston Middle School Modulars

**ACTION ITEMS**

- A. Proposal for Full-Day Kindergarten

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION** – Agenda items and non-agenda items and other matters within the Committee’s jurisdiction

