

School Committee Thursday October 19, 2006  
Summary by Kathy Wallace, Education 411

Official Minutes will be available via Listserv or on the website.  
The following is my summary of the matters  
discussed at last week's meeting.

**KEY POINTS:**

COMMUNITY FORUM: TUESDAY OCTOBER 24 7PM HIGH SCHOOL  
UPDATE ON HIGH SCHOOL TRIP TO OXFORD  
2006 MCAS RESULTS  
STATE OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT

**OPEN FORUM**

There will be an open forum hosted by Superintendent John Antonucci on Tuesday October 24, 2006 at 7PM at the High School. There will be a brief presentation followed by a Question and Answer period. Superintendent Antonucci hopes that members from the community at large will attend in addition to those with school age children.

**HIGH SCHOOL TRIP UPDATE**

High School English teacher, Karen Brachman, reviewed a trip for HS seniors in Summer 2006. 14 students, 4 boys and 10 girls, studied English literature at Oxford University. The students performed extremely well, every student earned at least a B+ with several earning A- and there was one A. These students earned 3 undergraduate credits.

**MCAS 2006 Results presented by Dr. Av Green**

Please refer to the full presentation that is posted on the school department website. <http://www.westwood.k12.ma.us/index.cfm?pid=10263>  
Look in Forms and Publications.

Grade 10 English Language Arts

	Advanced	Proficient	Need Imp.	Warning
2006	50%	44%	5%	1%
2005	49%	45%	5%	1%
2004	56%	37%	7%	1%

Grade 10 Math

	Advanced	Proficient	Need Imp.	Warning
2006	63%	24%	11%	2%
2005	65%	22%	12%	1%
2004	65%	22%	11%	2%

English Language Arts (First time given is 2006)

Grade Advanced and Proficient

8	92%
6	91%
5	85%

Math (First Time given in 2006)

Grade Advance and Proficient

7	56%	Comment by Av Green "Not good result"
5	74%	
3	73%	

Dr Green stated that these results demonstrate the need for additional Math support at the elementary level. Dr. Green stated that Math is a building block content area and if we are not strong now in elementary that we play catch up the rest of the way.

STATE of the SCHOOL DISTRICT presented by John Antonucci

Please refer to the full presentation that is posted on the school department website. <http://www.westwood.k12.ma.us/index.cfm?pid=10263>  
Look in forms and publications.

**BUDGET**

We were level funded for the school year 2005-6. Level funded means that we had the same budget but higher expenses in some areas, creating a situation where we did not have level services.

In 2006-7, we had an increase of 4.64% in the budget. Because of higher expenses in special education (state mandated), energy and healthcare, this budget still had significant cuts.

- Net reductions of 6.34 FTE (Full Time Equivalent staff)
- The actual staff reduction was 14.69 FTE offset by 8.35 adds to staff due to enrollment or SPED.
- Four buses were eliminated or 25% of the fleet, buses are now near maximum capacity, longer routes and fewer bus stops
- Increased user fees for full day Kindergarten (\$1450), transportation (\$235 Elementary and \$385 HS) and HS extracurricular activities \$100 and HS sports are \$300 per sport.
- Continued reliance on fees
- Reduced an already sparse supply budget by 20%
- Staff turnover item of \$180,000. This means that new staff had to be brought in at cost savings to outgoing staff, i.e. hire cheaply. If they got a stack of 100 resumes, they had to eliminate 75 candidates who were too expensive for the position.

**ELEMENTARY**

Budget cuts or limited growth in the elementary budget and increasing enrollment has put a significant strain on:

- our ability to improve competency in Math
- specialist programs, Art, Music, Physical Education and Library
- unable to hire a Math Coordinator for the 4th consecutive year
- reduced specialists by 2.4 FTE, leading to the DEAR time. (Drop Everything and Read, a time where children are not being taught but reading in a large group with volunteers and some school staff, every other week)
- Grade 5 Choral concerts have been cancelled due to lack of music teachers
- Loss of doubles in specials: Art, PE, Library and Music are offered only once a week with some doubles every other Wednesday.
- Scheduling of specialists is untenable as specialist are shared among schools and need to teach up to 7 classes a day.
- 23% of elementary classes are at or over guidelines.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL

- 24% of all classes have between 25 and 30 students.
- with 697 students the MS is overcapacity
- in General Arts: (Music, PE and Art), 21% of the classes have 40 or more kids
- Special Education cut 3 teachers at MS. This has forced a change in the delivery of services, with more students being taken out of the classroom. In class support for Learning Center students had been eliminated.
- Decrease in the number of classes being co-taught by special educators.
- Unable to offer technology courses. Westwood students get only one semester of Technology in Grade 6 and that is it for K-8.

### HIGH SCHOOL

- Class size: In 1996, 3.8% of classes had 25 or more students, now 29.8% of classes have over 25 students.
- Over the last 10 years, WHS has been able to maintain most program offerings, albeit at the expense of reasonable class size.
  - Last year (after 2 years of staff reductions) was the breaking point as several classes /programs were eliminated, including Business, 9th Grade Reading, Environmental Science, AP Psychology, Level 3 Psychology to name a few.
  - Students do not have as much choice in classes and it is difficult to switch out of a course after school begins because other sections may be at limit.
  - Some colleges look for 4 years of science and some of the students could not get into a science class. The Principal had to write a letter of explanation with their application.

### SPECIALS: Art, Music, PE and Library

- 3 out of the 5 elementary schools library is closed one day a week
- For the second year, there is no budget for new library books
- Music, entire HS population is served with .4FTE. The only music elective is band.
- WHS is not meeting 7 of the MA Music Curriculum standards
- Middle School- Elimination of in school strings program, now meets after school

### STATE AID

- The State Aid formula was established in 1993 when many towns were just being built up such as Medfield. Per pupil state aid is as follows (see broader list online):
- |          |        |
|----------|--------|
| Westwood | \$885  |
| Medfield | \$1731 |

Dover Sherborn \$1205

- In addition to State Aid

having been reduced across the board, Westwood is at a disadvantage with this formula. This is difficult to get changed because

there is a hold harmless provision that says your state aid will never go down.

#### **BUDGET CALENDAR for 2007-8**

-Budget to SC by 12/22

-1/11/07 Budget presentation to SC

-1/20/07 Public Forum on 2007-8 budget

Teachers contract expired at the end of 2005-6 year. A mediator was used and a

new 3 year contract was agreed upon.

Year 1 1.3% increase

Year 2 2.5% increase

Year 3 2.89% increase

They dropped a step in the matrix to compress it, it takes our teachers 14 steps

to reach the maximum salary where many other towns have 10-12 steps.

#### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

A parent raised a concern about the 5th grade puberty program and stated the

program should be

called a sex education program and that the video may not be appropriate for all kids and parents should have better information.

A HS parent asked if we are not meeting some Mass music standards does that put us at

risk for accreditation. Answer...this is not ideal and something that we want to address but

it does not put our accreditation at risk.

A parent asked what is the possibility of the State Aid formula being adjusted?

Answer, every year the legislature raises it, but because there is the hold

harmless provision, it means they cannot take away from a town and give to

another. Lobbyists are working on this at this time.

School safety was addressed as some schools are locked and others are not. The

purchase of a buzzer system can be considered but often these systems are seen

as inconvenient to parents who then don't want them in use. Also, with kids out

on open playgrounds, it is impossible to have the

kids locked in at all times.