

**Highly Capable Committee
Minutes
Feb. 7, 2008**

Welcome and introductions.

Item added to tonight's agenda is review of data from Assessment Dept.

Minutes reviewed and accepted without changes.

Data handout distributed and reviewed.

Discussion about data:

- PATS elementary students are within the top 5%ile
- This spreadsheet is based on 06-07 data
- Enrollment at each middle school is: 750 for WMS, 410 for MMS, 330 for JMS, and 380 for RMS
- How does this data compare to national average?
- These numbers could impact what we proposed as options for middle school gifted programs
- How many students per school per grade level are in PATS? It varies. District wide there are 15-17 per grade level.
- What is criteria for elementary hi-cap? They must score in upper 3%ile in MAP testing and have a teacher recommendation.

Discussion about MS options with middle school administrator's input:

- We were not able to get transportation cost information for tonight's meeting, but we are working on it
- The numbers seem to support an east/west program
- Comments from WMS administrator are:
 - Options 1 (Block concept) would not seem favorable, as it could have a negative impact on other students
 - Clustering seems better, as it will challenge gifted students, as well as encourage growth for all students within a classroom
 - Clustering is already happening to some extent, but is not intentional in its structure
 - Clustering is especially rich in language art block classes. Discussions are enlivened, rewarding and expansive for all students.
 - In the past there were enrichment classes at WMS in math, science and writing. They were project based. However, they were phased out due to a lack on interest and enrollment from students.
 - It is important to challenge gifted students, but this should not be at the expense of programs that serve other students.
- These are special needs kids and we need to find a way to serve them.
- We need to look at the higher end of the spectrum, and the difference between those in the 90%ile and 95%ile. There is a difference between motivated kids who need rigor, and in gifted kids.
- Comments from MMS administrator are:

- It would be interesting to see how many students fall into the 97thile, and can we as a district support that. Based on the numbers at MMS, clustering is the most attractive and do-able
- Will there be a cut-off as to when we do or do not serve students, because there are too few in a school?
- Clustering is more flexible and allows for fluctuations in student population, but training costs will be ongoing. Training costs will be more one time with an east/west program.
- If we have a gifted program at middle school, will there be students who return from Nova? How would that impact our cluster groupings in classes?
- We need to communicate with 5th grade parents as to where we are headed.
- What are the transportation requirements for an east/west program?
- OSD is not obliged to transport students.
- We could make a recommendation where we offer an east/west program with no transportation, or we offer an east/west program where OSD pays for transportation, or we offer an east/west program where OSD has transportation for a fee to families
- We may have to stagger start time to get kids to the site.
- We also need to make sure we serve students emotional and social needs.
- Comments from JMS administrator are:
 - There are a lot of challenges with any of these options
 - Clustering is already happening at JMS, although it is not intentional in its delivery model
 - JMS does not have the flexibility that WMS has because of its size
 - The haves and have-nots are getting wider in this country, and is having an impact on schools
 - There will be budget issues for principals to consider
 - There is concern about academic need vs. social needs
 - He is an advocate of skipping grades, as needed for their academics. Some kids, as determined ready by their parents, are going to CHS for ½ day.
 - JMS is trying to offer creative avenues and options for their gifted students
 - Family buy-in is critical
 - Smaller class sizes and differentiated instruction is vital in making this happen
 - When JMS had a 7 period day and REACH was offered as a pull out from block, it did create problems/comparisons between the REACH and block classroom.
- Gifted students can have very high academic needs, but can also have behavior challenges and be very demanding

- It would be beneficial if there could be even 1 hour per day when gifted kids are pulled out of class to work on higher level learning and thinking skills.
- Rubrics are useful in differentiated instruction, but not all teachers use them.
- Comments from RMS administrator are:
 - It is important to acknowledge that our teacher work hard. It bothers him that teachers are perceived as not doing their jobs well.
 - Pulling 6 or so gifted students from a classroom would be a huge challenge at RMS.
 - Could we offer a special pull-out class for these kids? What can he as an administrator do to make this happen?
 - Given our budget issues, is it really do-able to add a highly capable program for middle school?
- We are not meeting the needs of these gifted kids because we perceive them as high functioning. But, they are not high functioning, they have higher drop-out rates and more behavioral issues.
- These kids are special needs. There is a lot of funding to serve low-end special needs students, but what about these high-end kids? Can the district spend a small portion of their budget on this smaller population?
- Right now the only funding is from the Highly Capable grant. Approximately \$67,000 comes from the grant and is used to fund PATS. PATS costs about \$200,000, and the district makes up the difference.
- How can we move forward?
- We need to define how we can serve these children. We need to have input from other parents in the district.
- Math is taken care of, but we need something available in science and language arts/social studies.
- Gifted students don't just need more work, but they need their work supplemented and enriched.
- There may be contract issues for teachers that need to be taken into consideration.
- It seems reasonable to make a recommendation to the Board this spring. But, we will probably need to work on contract issues and implementation plans next year, with an actual implementation of 2009-2010 school year.
- Matt McCauley is committed to support this through budget cuts. We support kids on IEPs, in PATS, IB and AP. Middle school needs support.
- There would be room at JMS to house a highly capable program.
- If we propose to do a east/west or magnet program, we will need to hire teachers specific to highly capable instruction.
- It is important to know what parents will buy into.

- Dedication of instructors is important.
- Clustering, East/west program and Magnet program all still seem to be options to consider.
- Could we add pull-out as an option? Faculty would work with and mentor students to excel, challenge them and set goals.
- What about paying a stipend to staff to have an after hours program?
- We need to set up a system that will be available to all schools.

There was group discussion about the decision making process for making a recommendation to the Board. It was recommended that we use an informal process, such as Roberts Rules of Order.

The following was agreed upon for the decision making process:

- It would be an informal process, which would include a motion, discussion, request for vote and consensus.
- Consensus does not mean you have to agree with the motion, but you “can live with it”.
- If consensus cannot be reached, then a 66% majority of those present would pass a motion. No proxy or substitute votes allowed.

Proposed agenda items for next meeting:

- Draft survey to parents for committee to review. Matt McCauley and Dave Losh will work on this.
- Costs
- Data about top 2-3%ile

Maria Spivak can make calls to about other districts, and the programs they are using at middle school level. Matt will call her with contact information.

We need to continue our discussion about:

- Cluster concept – and related costs
- East/west concept – related costs, transportation (Y or N), space available (west – yes at JMS, east – ?)
- Magnet concept – related costs, transportation (Y or N), space available (JMS?)
- Pull out / mentor concept

Bring your calendar to the March meeting, so we can look at adding some meetings. We may need to meet every 3 weeks until a Board recommendation is formulated.

We would like MS Administrators to attend the meetings for the remainder of this school year.

Our target date for a recommendation is May. It should include a requested range of dollars from the budget.