

The Regional School District 13 Board of Education met in regular session on Wednesday, February 22, 2023 at 5:00 PM in the library at Coginchaug Regional High School.

Board members present: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone.

Board members absent: Mrs. Petrella

Administration present: Dr. Schuch, Superintendent of Schools, Mrs. Neubig, Director of Finance, Mrs. Keane, Director of Student Services and Special Education, Mr. Brough, Human Resource Specialist, Mr. Pietrasko, Director of Infrastructure and Security Technology, Mrs. Quarato, Learner-Centered Specialist and Mrs. Siegel, Learner-Centered Specialist

Mrs. Dahlheimer called the work session to order at 5:00 PM.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Agenda

Ms. Betty made a motion, seconded by Mr. Stone, to approve the agenda, as presented.

In favor of approving the agenda, as presented: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

2023-2024 Budget Discussion

A. Staff Reductions in Proposed Budget

Dr. Schuch reminded everyone that three FTEs were reduced in the 2021-2022 budget, 10 last year and they are proposing to reduce 2.6 more this year. He felt that the proposed staff reductions were responsible. Dr. Schuch explained that the new bargaining agreement allowed the district to eliminate a number of overages and is no longer designating team leaders to teach a reduced load. That doesn't show as an FTE reduction, but will save in the budget. In terms of the 2.6 reductions, he explained that the .6 is a high school math position and the other two are at the elementary level in related arts, one being an art teacher and one is a library media specialist. This will result in two individuals sharing the duties and responsibilities for three schools. This will not change the amount of art or library media time that the learners get.

B. High School Class Sizes

Dr. Schuch explained that he asked Mrs. Stone and Mrs. Trainer to gather information about class sizes at the high school. Mrs. Trainer reviewed that Mrs. Neubig had reported that the average class size at CRHS is 15.9 and Mrs. Stone and Mrs. Trainer looked into that information further. The State of Connecticut asks public high schools to report their population as of October 1st each year. This past October, there were 384 learners at Coginchaug and that number increased to 393 as of January 30th. They are seeing fluctuations in all grade levels. Students leave the district for various reasons, but also come back at the high school level. For scheduling purposes, they anticipate on having somewhere between 374 and 384 learners at the high school next year.

Last year, there were 102 eighth graders, with 29 applying to other schools and 26 of them actually enrolled in other schools. To date, the current freshman class is at 75 and is the smallest at the high school. It does appear those numbers are increasing to somewhere around 100. The current eighth grade

class has 103 learners and only 20 have applied out of district to date. Mrs. Trainer believes that the outreach programs that they are putting together are working and they can hopefully retain more students. The unknown about this is that students don't have to determine where they will go to high school until May. Schedules have been worked on for several months, but they won't actually know who will be at Coginchaug until May.

Looking at the rest of the high school population, they are seeing a great shift in numbers. Since the start of this year, 24 learners have joined the high school, with 14 of them being former students in the district. The other 10 students were completely new to the district. They also had 11 learners withdraw from CRHS.

Mrs. Trainer reviewed the number of students in each class and she noted that they look to be plateauing again at the 100 mark. It is important to remember that the number of students is fluid and opportunities need to be available. State graduation requirements state 9 credits of humanities, 9 credits of STEM and the Capstone projects. Mrs. Trainer reviewed Coginchaug's minimum graduation requirements but noted that there is flexibility and personal choice. She then went on to review minimum suggested course work for most four-year universities and noted that other programs have different requirements as well.

Mrs. Trainer reviewed the class sizes of the core academic areas (English, Social Studies, Math and Science) that are required as well as electives. Scheduling is not a perfect science and there are inevitably conflicts. Many sections of related arts electives are offered to ensure that students have choices.

The related arts department does a great job on the offerings, with way more electives that teachers can actually carry in a course load each year. After students register, they go through to offer electives that speak the most to the students' interests. Mrs. Trainer reiterated that electives are so important to offer to students. Their hope is to offer more programs to encourage students to stay in the district for high school.

Dr. Darcy asked if class size numbers were available by academic track, specially what the AP class sizes are. Mrs. Trainer did not have that number but offered to get that information. She explained that they run AP classes on a rotation if there aren't enough numbers. They are also looking at more UCONN offerings. Dr. Darcy asked how many academic levels there are in classes, such as English, and Mrs. Trainer explained that that depends on the academic department and the grade level. Freshman English may have A, B and Honors, but more levels may be added in the upper grades. Senior English classes are electives with mixed abilities, with an honors extension offered as well. Dr. Darcy felt it was very difficult to take this small number of kids and break them into three levels and that could also change class sizes. She felt that the class size numbers are amazing at this level, but she was concerned that consolidation could be done and have them remain within the teacher contract and sound research-based class sizes. Mrs. Trainer noted that she and Mrs. Stone have been looking at that and want to research it further. Dr. Darcy agreed, but noted that for every year they wait, there are 100+ kids who are not getting the best opportunities that they can get.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if applications for outside high schools are closed already and it was believed that they are, but the students have not been told if they are accepted or not. Mrs. Dahlheimer wondered if they are confident in the number of students planning to leave. Mr. Roraback felt that it is an uphill battle with admissions and enrollment and the system he is in starts recruiting eighth grade students in October. He asked if there was any feel for currently-enrolled high school students leaving the district. Mrs.

Trainer did not have that number now and felt that May is when they will see that. Mr. Roraback felt that it was no one's fault, but just the reality. Dr. Schuch explained that the mathematical modeling in the enrollment forecasts accounts for those patterns over time, but it is an inexact science. He noted that they go into any budget year running the risk that they have overstaffed or understaffed kindergarten for the same reasons.

Dr. Schuch explained that the administration has also talked to team leaders about minimum class sizes and Mrs. Trainer reported that have asked the teachers to have double-digit numbers in all classes. They have asked the teachers to advertise their classes, especially in elective areas, to ensure those numbers. Mr. Roraback believes that is a great concept and healthy competition is good. Dr. Schuch added that single-digit electives have been offered in the past, but they felt like this was the time for the board to look at that. Mrs. Caramanello felt that the threshold should be higher than 10 and Mrs. Trainer agreed, but explained the difficulties of scheduling. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if there was a target for the AP classes that don't even meet half of the threshold and Mrs. Trainer agreed to provide that information.

Mrs. Caramanello felt that there could be a huge savings at the high school if they were to eliminate the tracks. Mrs. Trainer stated that they did a quick analysis and no department had enough of a savings to eliminate a full FTE, but they will continue to look at that. Dr. Schuch felt that they need to be a little bit cautious with electives because if the threshold is too high, not as many electives will be offered and that may impact who comes and stays at Coginchaug. He added that savings can always be achieved, depending on how high they want to push the average class sizes but that could have an adverse effect as well. Mrs. Trainer added that that could also cause more students to elect study halls and they would not want to see that happen. Dr. Darcy asked if they have looked into virtual high school or regional remote classes, especially for those electives with small numbers. Mrs. Trainer stated that a lot of research is being done on that. Mrs. Quarato added that there are two courses being taken right now that are virtual, a Latin course and a learner is also taking an American Sign Language course. It does take a lot of independence to take those classes, but they are happy to be able to offer that option. Dr. Darcy mentioned that AP is often a good place for that as they are usually self-motivated. Dr. Schuch felt that is a very viable option, but didn't believe that Connecticut is quite where other parts of the country are with that. He added that some teachers may feel threatened by that, but he felt it would be the responsible thing to do.

Dr. Schuch added that he felt that some experience in virtual learning would be helpful for the learners going into college and the work space.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if parents of current eighth graders understand that there are options other than what is in the current program offerings. Mrs. Trainer noted that the program of studies does speak to the Latin offerings on VHS, but doesn't advertise many other classes. There are contractual limitations about offering online classes when there are teachers in the classroom to teach that class. She did believe that that will grow as the learner-centered approach continues.

Mr. Roraback felt that having three tracks is divisive and teachers should expect to have all types of kids and find a way to reach each one. He would like to see less tracks for that reason alone.

A question was asked if students were unable to take courses they wanted and Mrs. Trainer explained that there are options within the rotation, but she did not have an exact number. They hope to have numbers by April, but class conflicts inevitably occur. Mr. Moore asked if they will meet their STEM

commitments next year and Mrs. Trainer noted that she has not found any major challenges in course offerings.

Mr. Moore also asked about the Talented and Gifted program and Mrs. Keane explained that they are responsible for identification, but not programming. Dr. Darcy felt that that was just another way to separate kids based on perceived ability. Mrs. Keane added that the district does have an Enrichment Coordinator.

Mrs. Trainer explained that they do not provide for a target class size, but always stay under the maximum enrollment. Science tends to be around 24, family/consumer science is around 14 because of kitchen space and more individualized programming, like robotics, can be somewhere between eight and 16 because of equipment. They try to run the electives that have the most number of requests. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked to see individual class sizes, not just averages.

Dr. Darcy asked if there are mixed-grade classes and Mrs. Trainer stated that they do, with most of the electives being mixed grade. Many of the required core academics tend to be more grade-specific. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if PE at Strong is going to continue to be per quarter and Mrs. Gonzalez explained that it will.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the board would like to get the requested information for next meeting.

C. Interventionist and Instructional Coach Staffing

Dr. Schuch explained that members of the community have asked about intervention programming and instructional coaching programming. They are two separate programs that are very different. Intervention is an expectation and a requirement of the state.

There is an intervention model in the district across all of the schools where students are provided tiered instruction, tier 1, tier 2 and tier 3. There is an intervention team at each of the schools in literacy and math that involves both interventionists and tutors. They provide tier 2 and tier 3 direct instruction based on the students' needs and available data. This is sometimes done across grade level due to scheduling, but most of the time it is within grade level. Interventionists participate in weekly meetings in rounds with teachers and student cases, progress and goals and objectives are reevaluated. The teachers in the intervention rooms also provide support to classroom teachers and discuss learners who are in need of tier 1 support. They also support within strategy groups to make it fluid with the classrooms. They help teachers analyze diagnostic reports with benchmark data and help to restructure groupings within the classrooms. The interventionists do benchmark assessments for and with teachers. The literacy team, along with coaches, goes across schools as well to do benchmark assessments to provide for the least amount of stopping services to students.

Interventionists also work closely with families to provide progress reports, meet with families during conferences and give timely feedback. They also supervise the tutors that work with them and are responsible for planning and analyzing the data.

Dr. Darcy asked how students get referred to tier 2. Students start with a tier 1 intervention plan that is developed by either a coach or an interventionist in math or reading. If teachers are finding that they are

not moving at a good pace for at least six to eight weeks, they come back to the team and the child can be referred to the team to be looked at as a case study to determine if more support is needed.

Mrs. Caramanello wanted to see more interventionists in the proposed budget and she asked if the administration feels there is an adequate number. She asked if interventionists are placed in classrooms as subs in lieu of working with their groups. She also asked about a .2 position at the high school and a 1.4 position at Strong. Dr. Schuch stated that those numbers are correct, but added that if the administration was asked if they wanted more interventionists, they would probably say yes. Mrs. Durkin explained that it is definitely a last resort to use interventionists as classroom substitutes, but it has been done. There are two reading interventionists and one math interventionist at Memorial as well as two tutors, so the tutors may be pulled to substitute. Classes are sometimes covered by multiple people. Mr. Ford added that it is pretty infrequent to use interventionists for classroom coverage. Mrs. Murray explained that Brewster has three interventionists and two part-time tutors. Mrs. Caramanello reiterated that she would like to see more put in the budget for this, especially in the high school.

Dr. Schuch felt that a possibility would be to raise class sizes and redirect some staff to be interventionists. Content at the high school level is more intense, so it would look different at that level. It was explained that intervention is primarily meant to start at the elementary level and then go either to recognizing somebody who needs more support where intervention is just not enough or have help in the classroom to hopefully exit intervention. Typically, intervention might have bigger numbers at the elementary level, with the numbers going down in middle school and even further in high school. The high school model is more often to offer specific classes to students who need support. Dr. Schuch cautioned that that looks more like multiple levels or tracks at the high school level.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked why there is such a discrepancy of interventionists at Memorial compared to Strong. Dr. Schuch felt that some of that was inherited and he explained that he is more a proponent of a site-based situation where allotments would be relatively equal. Mrs. Dahlheimer noted that there is only a 1.4 for intervention and 30 percent of the kids are three grade levels and below in ELA. She felt it was shocking and concerns her. The coaches recognize that and are working with the teachers to bring more strategies into their classes.

Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that the state has requirements for special needs teachers, but they do not mandate increased intervention. She also does not want to see kids identified as talented and gifted and then have no programming. She would like the district to think more holistically about this.

Dr. Darcy asked if there are plans to systematically improve tier 1 which she believes is the big leverage point. She understands that is what instructional coaches are there to do, but it is not necessarily a systemic approach.

Mr. Ford explained that the coaching model has been restructured to more of a site-based approach which they felt would be more effective. The learner-centered coaching staff is also available to all schools. The primary responsibility of instructional coaches is collaboration with all teachers, supporting instruction and curriculum delivery and student learning with an emphasis on tier 1 instruction. Part of coaching is helping teachers to improve practice and different teachers have different needs. Coaches also go into the classrooms and work with students, but that is not their primary responsibility. They assist teachers with assessments and also provide interventions to different learners based on need.

Coaches play an important role in the PLC process, supporting the instructional plan and working with teachers to look at student learning outcomes and assessment data. They also support teachers in their professional learning as the district moves to a more personalized professional learning model. They also support curriculum development and implementation.

The coaches are typically building test coordinators, especially in the SBAC buildings. They are part of the district assessment team and manage the data dashboard. They support teachers with budget development as well and take part in events like Read Across America Day.

Mr. Ford felt that the program looks a little different from building to building because of the different needs based on grade level and staffing.

Mrs. Durkin was an instructional coach for five years and it was a little different every year. The group of teachers and what they would like to work on changes every year. She does believe that tier 1 is a huge piece of coaching and they really focus in on that. Mr. Ford added that having a site-based approach really allows for that vertical lens to what's happening in different classrooms. He also noted that coaches do collaborate with one another as well and communication between schools is really important. Instructional coaches also collaborate with interventionists and special education teachers as well. Coaches do not just work with classroom teachers, but all staff.

Mrs. Gonzalez noted that she has been able to use the coaches to help focus where they want to go in tier 1 instruction which has been very beneficial, especially because they have fewer interventionists. The goal of tier 1 is to keep students out of intervention. They have been getting good feedback from the coaches and the teachers. Mrs. Keane felt that there has been a huge shift over the past few years to have coaches actually in classes doing modeling. Mrs. Gonzalez added that she is thrilled with the coaches this year.

Mrs. Dahlheimer returned the focus to staff reductions in the proposed budget and asked for an analysis of music vs. tech in the district at the elementary level. She wondered if there was a possibility of a consolidation between those two areas and clarified that she wanted to know what is offered in STEM vs. music programs at the elementary level. Dr. Schuch agreed to do that. Mr. Roraback felt that that has manifested itself at the Strong School level. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that if they are able to consolidate in art, maybe they can consolidate somewhere else as well to possibly allow for more one-on-one tutoring. Dr. Schuch asked if they wanted an analysis of what there is currently or a recommendation of what it could be and they would like both. Dr. Schuch then asked if the board was open to further reductions in those area if it makes sense to the administration and Mrs. Dahlheimer stated that she would be. Others would want to see the numbers first.

Mrs. Dahlheimer also reviewed that they asked to see individual class sizes at the high school. She also asked about 2.6 PE at the high school and Mrs. Trainer explained that two of three can teach both PE and health whereas one is only certified in health, but also does unified sports. Ms. Betty asked about the one school counselor and Mrs. Keane explained that that is the term for guidance counselor. Ms. Betty also asked about instructional assistants and special education assistants.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if information was available on how often interventionists and coaches are pulled for subbing. Everyone agreed that that happens very rarely. Mrs. Murray noted that she may pull the math interventionist to teach a math block in a classroom for an hour. Mrs. Caramanello reiterated that

she believes more interventionists are needed; not necessarily coaching. She felt that they need to catch kids up to what they've missed. Mrs. Durkin felt that instructional coaches are in every classroom at least once a week and the classroom teacher, the interventionists and the coaches analyze the data, put learners into different strategic groups, plan out the progress monitoring and keep circling back. She feels that the coaches work much more on strategic group work than classroom activities. Mrs. Quarato cautioned that they want to keep kids within the core time as much as possible.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that the opposite is also true. Going back to the 30 percent of kids who are three grades below, they are sitting in an English class going through the core curriculum and likely having zero clue what they are listening to. If ways aren't identified to get those kids back to where they can successfully operate in the classroom, she doesn't see it working. Mrs. Gonzalez agreed, but also felt that a really skilled teacher knows to differentiate and recognize that sometimes kids need to be pulled aside.

Dr. Schuch explained that there were a lot of things that the administrative team asked for and the proposed budget began at a 12 or 13 percent increase but landed at 4.5 percent. He would not want the board to believe that they wouldn't want more intervention services; it's more the reality of budgeting. Mrs. Caramanella felt there may be other places to cut. Dr. Schuch and the team could not identify anywhere that could be reduced in order to increase intervention, other than what has already been proposed. Mrs. Durkin felt that that's where they have to be more creative with what everyone's job is and look at data across all assessments.

Ms. Betty asked if instructional coaches was supposed to be temporary and Dr. Schuch stated that he has heard that as well, but it was done before his time. Mr. Brough and Mr. Ford have never heard that they were supposed to be temporary. Mrs. Dahlheimer thought that it was funded by a grant originally and then the grant expired and it became part of the budget. Mr. Moore thought it started around 2016 with one person coaching all elementary.

Mr. Moore asked if they have ever looked at teacher skills in relationship to their performance and possibly adjust a teacher to a different class. He stated that he has seen data in the past and could identify what teacher is having difficulty in moving kids forward and the data was specific enough to show a particular problem in a classroom. He felt that an option to intervention is to adjust the teacher location to serve the children better. He added that they would also need to make sure that teachers are performing at the level they are expected to which is probably the hardest thing to do in any job. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that that is done through the annual review process.

Ms. Betty also asked if coaches are consistently working with teachers on a day-to-day basis and it was explained that they are. Dr. Darcy felt that teaching is a science as much as it is a vocation and having instructional coaches to help teachers hone their craft provides the potential to help hundreds of kids. She also felt that it will be even more imperative with the upcoming change in the reading program.

Ms. Betty asked what the Coordinator of Student Affairs specifically does and Mrs. Gonzalez explained that he does pretty much anything that needs to happen. He works very closely with students and has reached out to all sixth-grade families to build relationships. He works with teachers to help them problem-solve behavioral issues or concerns. He is basically Mrs. Gonzalez' right hand and she doesn't know if she could really be effective without having someone there. She felt that he is like an assistant principal. Dr. Schuch felt that that position came into existence the year sixth grade was moved to

Strong. Ms. Betty asked the question because she thought the Coordinator of Student Affairs was originally meant to be district-wide.

Ms. Betty asked if the guidance counselor, social worker or psychologist could handle any of his duties and Mrs. Gonzalez stated that they do handle some of that, but he is doing more on the restorative practices type of work. He also helps with discipline and Ms. Betty thought that would be helpful district-wide. Two people at Strong are trained in restorative practices and they go to the other schools to do training as well.

Dr. Schuch noted that if the Coordinator of Student Affairs position didn't exist, Mrs. Gonzalez would likely need an assistant principal. Mrs. Keane explained that there are 308 students at Strong, with 2.5 counselors who are working really hard. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if there was any money earmarked for an increase in counseling at that level. Mrs. Keane will be looking at IDEA because they don't want to use temporary grants. Root Center is also at the high school and Community Health Center at Strong and Memorial. Mrs. Gonzalez noted that she is booked solid and Mrs. Keane added that elementary schools are now asking.

Mrs. Dahlheimer added that she thought there was a certification issue with the way that position was titled, but Mrs. Keane stated that it went back to not adding another administrator. Ms. Betty pointed out that there were 393 kids at the high school and only two guidance counselors, one psychologist and .5 social worker. Mrs. Trainer noted that they are stretched very thin and explained that the social worker is split between Strong and CRHS. Mrs. Keane explained that there is a school psychologist and a .4 social worker at Lyman with the other .6 of the social worker at Brewster with a school psychologist. At Memorial, there is one counselor and one school psychologist. Strong has a school psychologist, a counselor and .5 social worker, with the high school having .5 social worker, one psychologist and two counselors.

Mrs. Dahlheimer then asked about enrichment at Strong which is a full-time position just for sixth grade. Mrs. Gonzalez is hoping to spread that enrichment to all the grade levels, but that will actually increase class sizes and give students more offerings. The related arts teachers will teach sixth grade in quarter one, seventh grade in quarter two, eighth grade in quarter three and a course that students can opt into for the last quarter. Art is considering ceramics, health is looking to do nutrition and cooking as well as expanding enrichment to others. Mrs. Keane added that the Enrichment Coordinator also does the testing and coordination for Gifted and Talented. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked how many tutorials that will remove and Mrs. Gonzalez wasn't sure but felt it would remove the majority of them though it will still be offered for students to opt into. Some students like tutorials to get their homework done and parents have said they want their child to have it.

Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if kids are pulled out of instructional time to get private music lessons and Mrs. Gonzalez stated that that does happen. Mrs. Dahlheimer asked if they have looked into having that not happen and Mrs. Gonzalez stated that she has, but hasn't figured out how to make that happen. Dr. Darcy asked to clarify if private meant individual or by an outside vendor and Mrs. Gonzalez explained that they can be semi-private but are delivered by the music teacher. This is true at Memorial as well. Mrs. Durkin stated that they try to pull students during their "what I need" block, but that doesn't happen every day. It is also set up on a rotating schedule, so they don't always miss the same class. These instructional periods happen in addition to the regular music classes. Mrs. Gonzalez stated that she has had parents

who are concerned about that, so the music teacher is rotating schedules and also provides passes to miss instruction.

Mrs. Durkin added that students can opt out of instrumental lessons and they have had students who started in band, realized the commitment and decided not to pursue it. Mr. Ford stated that the instrumental lessons start in fourth grade for students to become part of the band. Mrs. Durkin added that students do not miss full classes for instrumental lessons. Fourth grade tries to minimize any direct instructional blocks, but fifth grade is a bit different. Mrs. Durkin offered to chat with Ms. Betty about this more as she was concerned about what is happening with her child. Dr. Darcy added that this is an example of a gifted and talented program and this honors kids whose interests might match up with their talent. The band director can't help individual students in class, so that is why there are instructional lessons.

Mrs. Dahlheimer felt it was important for the board to look equitably across all studies. The district has lost the outdoor ed position and the STEM coordinator. Dr. Schuch stated that one of the reasons why the STEM coordinator was an easier decision was because the position had evolved into a technology support position. A lot of STEM activity has been happening on its own and Dr. Schuch did not feel that they have taken a step backwards.

Mrs. Dahlheimer summarized that they will have further discussion once they receive all of the numbers. Dr. Schuch felt that part of the concern from the leadership team has been where the overall working budget sits with the board because if it needs to be reduced significantly, they would have to look at further staff reductions. Mr. Moore felt that much of the increase in the overall salary budget is due to special ed requirements, including outplacements. Mrs. Neubig explained that the \$130,000 is overall salaries and does not include outplacement tuition. A special ed teacher had been hired last year.

Ms. Betty asked for a cost breakdown of the alternative ed program, including staff salaries, supplies, transportation, how many students are included and how many hours are they in school. Mrs. Keane explained that it is a very flexible program as part of the high school. All of the numbers for that program are included in the high school numbers. Some students are partial days, others are full days in regular classes and some are in a combination of classes. It is highly individualized and there is a total of about 20 participants. Mrs. Roy asked if any kids that are outplaced could be served by the alternative ed program and Mrs. Keane explained that the program is meant to keep students in the district and individualizing programming so that that can be done. Mrs. Neubig added that the number also includes the 18-22s that don't go to MTA that the district needs to pay for. Dr. Schuch felt that it is not only the right thing to do educationally, but also produces big savings in outplacement. Mrs. Neubig reviewed that they saw a big savings three years ago when the program was implemented, but the needs have grown over the years. Mrs. Keane does move staff around as requirements change.

D. Other Staffing Topics

Mrs. Caramanello felt that a lot of the staff and townspeople would like to see the budget more under the umbrella of the Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment model as opposed to a learner-centered model. She strongly believes that the district needs that Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment. She knows that the budget is the budget, but she believes it is lacking that position. Mrs. Caramanello also asked if Central Office was considered for staff reductions because, as enrollment declines, they shouldn't just be looking at staff and teachers. She felt that there are a lot of administrative

assistants, including for learner-centered specialists, human resources and business office. She asked for someone to let her know why so many are needed when they are talking about cutting staff.

Dr. Schuch felt that while the job title might be administrative assistant, these are folks that are doing specialty work for the district in specific areas. He added that the Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment is now the learner-centered specialist. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt the question really is whether or not it was looked at to cut positions at Central Office and the answer is yes. She felt that could be broken down further. Mrs. Caramanello felt that it just gets harder and harder to not cut Central Office when they talk about cutting staff drastically.

Dr. Schuch reminded everyone that all the information they are asking for is produced by exactly those people. Services to employees could also be cut if those positions are reduced. His professional experience and expertise leads him to feel that the district is about the right size in that area. He felt it was arbitrary to just say Central Office cuts and they need to be more specific. Mrs. Dahlheimer felt that taxpayers and the senior population don't see it that way when they see enrollment declining. She would like to see a breakdown to be able to explain that to the taxpayers. Dr. Schuch felt that part of his job is to advise the board on how they are organized and if they need to lower the budget, then they should lower the budget. Dr. Schuch does not feel there is a direct correlation between declining enrollment and what central support positions are needed. Sometimes, the work is still the work regardless of the size of the district.

Ms. Betty felt that the taxpayers are going to want to know how they justify these positions. Dr. Schuch stated that last year he heard taxpayers ask why they didn't make any cuts. Cuts were then made and the budget passed. Mrs. Dahlheimer commented that there are lower class sizes at the high school, with no proposed reductions except math. Several positions were reduced last year.

Dr. Schuch would like to know if the board thinks the proposed increase is too high or close. Mrs. Dahlheimer would like to see the increase come down and she would also like to see what other districts are doing. She felt it was hard to analyze that without seeing class sizes and the information that they requested. She would like to see as much information as possible at the next meeting.

Mrs. Neubig reported that other districts are proposing a high of 7.95 and a low of 2.87, with an average of around 4.5 to 5.

Adjournment

Mr. Stone made a motion, seconded by Ms. Betty, to adjourn the regular meeting of the Board of Education.

In favor of adjourning the regular meeting of the Board of Education: Ms. Betty, Mrs. Caramanello, Mrs. Dahlheimer, Dr. Darcy, Mr. Mennone, Mr. Moore, Mr. Roraback, Mrs. Roy and Mr. Stone. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debi Waz

Debi Waz
Alwaz First