

EAST GRAND RAPIDS PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Kent County, Michigan

***Our Mission***  
***East Grand Rapids Public Schools, in partnership with students, parents, and community, will ensure that each student acquires the knowledge, skills, and strategies necessary to reach his or her full potential, and become a productive citizen.***

**SPECIAL SESSION of the East Grand Rapids Board of Education**

Community Board Room, Woodcliff Center  
2915 Hall St., East Grand Rapids, MI 49506  
Phone number for information is 235-3535

**Tuesday, March 23, 2004**  
**5:30 p.m.**

**MINUTES**

The SPECIAL BOARD WORKSHOP MEETING of the East Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education, Kent County, Michigan, was held at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 23, 2004 in the Community Board Room, Woodcliff Center, 2915 Hall St., SE, East Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

**Board of Education:**

**Present:** Mrs. Beth Lent, Mrs. Natalie Kuras, Mr. Brian Ellis, Mr. Charlie Denton, Mrs. Stacy Trierweiler

**Absent:** Mrs. Rosalie Stein, and Mr. Joe Camp

**Administration:** Dr. James Morse, Mrs. Christine Vettese, Dr. Ty Wessell, Mrs. Jeanne Glowicki, Mrs. Joann Kuklewski, Mrs. Linda Kehm, Mr. Doug Jenkins, Mrs. Kathy Wisniewski

**Meeting Call to Order**

Mrs. Lent called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. Mrs. Stein was not able to attend the meeting so Mrs. Lent appointed Mrs. Kuras as Secretary Pro Tem.

Mrs. Trierweiler thanked everyone for the support and kindness following the unexpected death of her brother-in-law.

Middle School Schedule – Dr. Wessell and Mrs. Vettese

Dr. Morse thanked the committee members for their work. Mrs. Vettese discussed the process of getting to the starting point and the ideas received from the committee. She thanked the committee for all of their work. Dr. Wessell thanked Mrs. Vettese for her leadership and Mrs. Lent for her contributions to the committee. He also thanked each of the committee members for their time, energy and enthusiasm on this committee.

Dr. Wessell and the other committee members presented a PowerPoint presentation outlining the changes to the schedule. (See attached)

Following the presentation, questions were received from the Board members. Mr. Ellis questioned if the way we are doing the schedule now is not feasible and asked if the partial teaming is not working. Response: The teachers and the budget reductions are driving the changes. We need to either go back or move forward. He asked about the academic help time being moved to the morning. Response: This time will be beneficial to students especially since sometimes now they need help in the afternoon or evening but the teacher is not there until the morning. Mr. Ellis stated he has a music concern. He feels we have a great program now and asked if the committee looked at any tradeoffs with other electives to preserve the days in music? Response: The Committee spent more time on this issue than any other. There were compromises made but they feel like the right compromises. The committee also feels the numbers in the music program will stay up. The PE is making accommodations and will now also take on the health curriculum. Mr. Ellis asked if a student elects to take music and foreign language then how many other electives could they take? Response: One.

Mrs. Kuras thanked everyone on the committee for their energy and positive attitude and the hard work. She asked about the starting time. What time does school start now? Response: 8:00 a.m. Next year the starting time would be at 8:15 a.m. with the academic help time from 8:00-8:15 a.m. She asked, "If there were large classes for first period, would there be help for those teachers for homeroom?" Response: Teachers and administrators would team up for large classrooms. Mrs. Kuras expressed a concern about the Health curriculum. Response: Mrs. Rademaker stated their department feels comfortable with the fit of science and PE and they do not feel that this would be watering down the curriculum. Mrs. Kuras asked Mr. Topolewski what he feels is the biggest hardship for the music program? Mr. Topolewski stated not meeting every other day as a full ensemble, but he feels good about final product. He knows that the program will be losing contact time with students but stated they will need to rethink how they do lessons. He is pleased that the 6<sup>th</sup> grade program will remain. Mrs. Kuras asked about the reading and technology changes, how those will be incorporated. Response: Various committee members responded to her concerns.

Mrs. Trierweiler commended everyone for taking the time to figure all of this out. She commented that parents want to and need to talk with teachers and asked if this will happen, will there be any opportunities? Response: There are still challenges left to

make things work. We may need to change how we do parent/teacher conferences. The Counselors role may change some. Work will also be done on a communication plan for parents. Mrs. Trierweiler asked if the starting time makes sense? Response: The teachers are in agreement with time change and feel it will be a positive change.

Mr. Denton asked if the learning styles of Middle School students were taken into account? Response: Mrs. Fee responded that these changes will allow for more depth in the curriculum, teachers will be able to begin homework assignments in the class, there will be more time for labs, and finally this will be a better match with the High School academic time. Mr. Denton asked if there would be any change to the challenge class offerings? Response: The 6<sup>th</sup> grade will add advanced math, all the others will remain the same. Mr. Denton stated that we would need to monitor the impact on the music program. He also asked if the Health curriculum would meet the state requirements? Response: We will make sure it meets the State and our Board requirements.

Mrs. Lent offered her observations of the thoughtful collaboration this committee used and she thanked everyone involved. She stated the Board appreciated the involvement of all the Middle School staff in looking at this proposal. She feels a key advantage to this schedule is the focus on core objectives and academic achievements. She feels that the parent communication and teacher communication during this process has been beneficial and when all is said and done she feels that this schedule will be simpler for the Middle School students.

Public comments - There were no public comments.

Dr. Morse stated that the Middle School schedule was looked at as a direct result of under funding by the state. He is pleased by the positive attitude of the staff to develop a program that is best for the kids. He thanked the committee for their work and felt we have done the best job with the resources we have. If anyone has any questions feel free to call him or Dr. Wessell. Dr. Morse will be asking for approval of the Middle School schedule at the next Board meeting.

#### Proposed Revised Calendar - Dr. James Morse

Dr. Morse stated that the calendar was looked at again, as a direct result of State under funding. We will have fewer half days for students and staff. Staff development will take place on full days, which is a much better use of time and resources for both staff and students. The district is staying with the Kent County common calendar as far as the school start date, end date, semester break, and winter break. Winter break next year will be a full week for parents and students but teachers will have collaborative planning for three of the five days during that time. A Collaborative Planning time was added for teachers on the Monday following Spring Break, which will give families one

## Special Board of Education Meeting

March 23, 2004

Page 4

extra day. School will be ending on the same date, the second full week in June. The Teachers Association worked with administration on this calendar. The savings from

this change will be approximately \$50-75,000/year. The Support staff working time will be reduced and we will see a savings there. However, if something is not done, there is a greater risk of laying off a number support staff. We will still have some layoffs, of both teachers and support staff, but not what it might be. Approval of the calendar will be requested at the Monday meeting.

Mrs. Lent asked if the Board members had any questions or comments. Mr. Denton asked if staff development time would be the same amount of time? Response: There would actually be more teacher professional development time now. We will have five full days and be going from approximately 16 hours to 30 hours. He asked if this calendar would accommodate snow days? Response: Yes.

Mrs. Trierweiler asked if we would be sharing collaborative planning time with other schools? Response: We may be able to offer a mini-conference for our teachers as well as other schools. We are looking into the possibility.

Mrs. Kuras stated she sees a net change of instructional time to 32 hours less. She asked for an explanation so she understands. Response: Dr. Morse stated that most days for collaborative planning in the other calendar were half days. With this calendar there is a switch to full days, which is more productive for everyone. The State gave schools the ability to adjust calendars due to budget constraints. We would like to keep our parameters within the Kent County common calendar.

Mr. Ellis stated he likes the philosophy of full days for school. He feels the half-day results in lower productivity. He also feels that there is a good time allocation for professional development. He asked how conferences would work? Response: Dr. Morse stated we now have three weeks of conferences, with the three levels having conferences over that time period. With this calendar, there will be one week for conferences for all the buildings. During spring conferences, the teachers will have full days of instruction. There will be more evening conference times, which will be good for families. Next year will be a pilot year, but it looks like it will work very well. Adjustments will be made, if necessary. Mr. Ellis commented that for parents the two teacher record days in January are a challenge. Families who have just had a couple of weeks off now have two more days off. Response: Mrs. Bischoff stated this is the one issue that could scuttle the calendar being approved by the teachers. She stated that the teachers need this time. Dr. Morse stated that as administrators we are able to carve out time to complete projects while teachers are on the line every day. They need a break to put things together and get report cards out. Teachers and administrators will continue to look at this issue.

Mrs. Lent commended the administration on the creativity of looking at how we do what we do. She stated that professional development is key to what we do and she is pleased with the partnership of sharing budget reductions.

Public Comments

Mrs. Sally Malnor asked if thought was given to starting school after Labor Day and going further into June? Response: Dr. Morse commented that the teachers feel an earlier start is better learning time. He also mentioned that we are trying to stay with the Kent County common calendar. Mrs. Malnor stated she has heard that on teachers record day the teachers are in school on that day but are frustrated that the computer cannot keep up with the work they do and they end up doing most of the work at home. Instead, because they are to be in school those days they are using the time to clean classrooms and various other things. Response: Dr. Morse and Mrs. Bischoff stated that we are working these issues out and making accommodations. Sometimes this is the choice of teachers.

Any Other Matters to Come Before the Board

None

Adjournment

Mrs. Lent adjourned the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Natalie Kuras, Secretary Pro Tem  
East Grand Rapids Board of Education

3/24/04