

Special meeting of APP Task Force, Feb. 3, 2005

This was the third special meeting called by the Task Force to discuss future program options for APP. The discussion is an attempt to address program overcrowding, and to have a working list of priorities in the event other building opportunities open up.

Colleen Stump, head of advanced learning programs for the district, opened the meeting by saying that the final version of the parent recommendations will be presented "as is" to the Program Placement committee and other members of the school district staff. She responded to some questions about what's driving this process, and cited the need to be ready in the event some district buildings are slated for closure. That process is supposed to be complete by July.

The recommendations could be presented in this way:

- A. A summary of key considerations, values and recommendations
- B. Core questions applied across the recommendations.

This would lead to a discussion of given situations and potential options.

Colleen said that in an ideal world, the APP program should include the following:

- Keeping the cohort (APP students) together by grade level as well as by curriculum through high school.
- Equity of access (insuring that minority kids are represented in proportion to their presence in the district).
- Social and emotional needs of students would be addressed.
- Administrative support dedicated to the goals and participants in the program.
- Teachers are trained and eager to teach the cohort
- Giving kids social diversity in age-appropriate ways that enrich student experience without jeopardizing academic needs.

The options that have emerged thus far include:

- Staying put at current locations (shared with special ed at Lowell; shared presence with neighborhood and Spectrum at Washington Middle School; shared presence with neighborhood at Garfield).
- Addressing overcrowding at Lowell by changing the configuration to grades 1-4, 5-8, 9-12.
- Splitting the program into two sites, whether at elementary, middle school or high school levels not determined.
- A shared APP-Spectrum middle or high school
- The current model with innovative "alternative" APP classes at some neighborhood schools.

Lingering questions:

- Is there really a capacity problem? Increases in program enrollment sometimes occur as "blips" that go away later. But even if there isn't, there's no "flexibility" to consider alternatives.
- How are transportation costs factored into these considerations? No one can really calculate those except the transportation department.
- Is there a way to provide different emphases at different campuses? Such as a math/science magnet school, or a language/performing arts magnet school.
- Will "splitting" or providing alternative program costs make the program more expensive than it is now? Not good in these tight budget times.

Colleen said she would oppose sprinkling the program among several schools in the district; Roger Daniels, head teacher for the highly capable program, is concerned about providing a legitimate APP high school program if the program was split up among several campuses.

At this point in the meeting some folks spoke up and said that they didn't feel middle and high school parents had been adequately represented by folks attending the two previous meetings. A lengthy discussion ensued, and it was decided to pursue a survey along the lines of the survey created and distributed by the Spectrum parents. That effort is being put together and will be discussed at the next Task Force meeting (March 17).

