

WSHS Steering Committee minutes
April 17, 2007

Phil Brockman, Interim High School introduced the new meeting facilitator, Brad Bernatek. Each committee and audience member introduced themselves.

The reason for the facilitator change was discussed. Ramona has a very full work load. Brad has been working with Carla on strategic academic projects. As a former management consultant, he has experience at facilitating meetings.

A memo from Carla Santorno was handed out. The memo detailed specific criteria that need to be addressed by the committee. Brad said he would get the criteria posted on the school website.

There was a request for clarification of the term 'year-long' in regard to math, etc. If we remain on a 4x4 schedule, that will mean one one-credit math course each semester for each freshman and sophomore student. Bob Court said that there is a year-long one-credit math course planned for students who are behind; in this case these students would have a half-credit per semester in this year-long 85 minute/day bridge course to get them caught up.

A parent observer expressed her understanding that Carla's handout represents a change from what was approved by the School Board. She was referring to the Power Point presentation which Carla made to the School Board last spring, which showed an example of a schedule with shorter periods within the 4-period day. Phil directed everyone back to Carla's memo to the committee – it is to be used to guide the committee in our work, superseding whatever came before.

A teacher on the committee commented that conditions 1 and 2 in Carla's memo (math and world languages) are essential to the entire school, whereas condition 3 (music) is not and that we should not change an entire school for something that is not essential.

A parent commented that students will top out in math too early at 2 courses per school year. A parent observer says her son entered AP calculus in his junior year. She supports shorter-length class periods. A parent asked if students possess the intellectual maturity to move this quickly through math. A parent said that we need to look at all students – some need the slower class.

Brad called for breakout groups to report from the previous meeting. Jeff Ursino's group's report:

- On the 4-period day, $\frac{1}{4}$ of staff is on prep at a time. This adds 2.5 kids per class.
- On a 6-period day, $\frac{1}{6}$ of staff is on prep at a time.
- We are currently close to our facility-use capacity on our 4-period schedule. We will need a smaller student population for a 6-period schedule in the same facility.
- Every teacher during prep is displaced from a room and would have to share use of teachers' office space (in a 6-period day).

A teacher said that there would be a change in staffing in a 6-period day, due to the lower number of students served in the facility. His calculations indicate a reduction of 5 teachers, with the most impact on elective programs. Brad asked him to write this up for the committee.

A parent observer said the top concern is that students be prepared for post-high school. Another parent observer said that Nathan Hale, a similar size school, offers more electives than WS. Brad asked this parent to write up what he came up with in comparing course catalogs. A teacher on the committee asked what this parent counted as electives.

Another teacher on the committee said that you can't compare class to class. You must also look at the number of credits. It was suggested that the same analysis the parent had done be repeated, using the master schedule from each school. Not every course in the catalog is offered every year. Also, the offerings should be compared over 4 years, rather than a single year. Someone observed that Hale is larger than WS, so has a larger staff.

This committee has asked for and is still waiting for simulated schedules. Brad said we will postpone the next scheduled meeting while he works with District personnel to get the simulations completed. The simulations will cover a 6-period day at WS, looking at the impact on course offerings, room assignments and staffing if we migrate from a 4 to a 6-period day.

Where are we in the process?

What have we done so far? In reference to Carla's memo:

1. Mandatory year long math can be instituted for freshmen and sophomores.
2. We would need another FTE in World Languages to teach Spanish to make this work. This is not currently in the budget.
3. Current students can take year long music, if it is their priority. Can we alter the school schedule in some way to allow them to take year long music, without sacrificing their other elective choices?

A parent observer said that we should not only address the minimum requirements as outlined by Carla. A parent on the committee said that Carla's letter does not address the School Board discussion. We should focus on the students – find the best delivery system in the state and copy it.

A teacher on the committee said that she was thinking about the students and how they learn. Instruction would be different under a 6-period day. She will have less time as a teacher with each student if her load is nearly doubled from 90+ students to 150+ per day. It would be difficult to deliver science instruction when more students are doing labs all on the same days.

A committee parent agrees and says that is why we need to see the schedule simulations and to get teachers' and parents' ideas about what we gain and lose under different schedules. Which schedule best gets us there?

A teacher on the committee observed that one of our transformation goals is personalization. The 4x4 schedule allows more time with each student. Personalization would be lost in a 6-period day.

A parent on the committee said that we need to do some good faith team building.

Brad asked what criteria we will use to evaluate either schedule. Next meeting we will look at the 4 and the 6-period day schedules side by side.