

BETHLEHEM AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD OF SCHOOL DIRECTORS  
PUBLIC 2008 - 2009 BUDGET WORKSHOP #1

FEBRUARY 13, 2008

The first Public 2008-2009 Budget Workshop of the Board of School Directors of the Bethlehem Area School District was held on Wednesday, February 13, 2008 beginning at 6:06 p.m., in the Auditorium of East Hills Middle School, 2005 Chester Road, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Members present: Directors Amato, Cann, Craig, Dexter, Follweiler, Haytmanek, Koch, McKeon, and Leeson - 9.

MEMBERS  
PRESENT

Others present: Dr. Joseph A. Lewis, Superintendent of Schools; Mr. Robert Gross, Associate Superintendent; Mr. Stanley J. Majewski, Jr., Board Secretary; administrators, members of the press, and other interested citizens and staff members.

OTHERS  
PRESENT

President Leeson stated that the administration was prepared to give them a presentation this evening and she thought that out of courtesy they should at least listen to the entire presentation before asking questions. She asked the board if they preferred to have questions come from both the audience and the board at basically the same time in more of a discussion or would they prefer to have questions from the board first and then from the audience?

DISCUSSION  
FORMAT

Director Craig replied that he preferred to have the board ask their questions and then allow the public to provide comments.

Director Dexter said she preferred to hear from the public because they are going to get together again tonight and maybe some people are here who won't be here at both meetings.

Director Cann said that they (the board) could ask questions whenever they need to and thought this forum was easier for the public.

Director Craig added that he agreed to whatever the majority decided.

Director Follweiler thought that at a previous meeting, the public's input fed into the questions from the board. She didn't know how they would control it with Robert's Rules, but was in favor of a hybrid whereas the board has questions and a member of the audience has a similar question for discussion.

Director McKeon agreed with Director Follweiler's recommendation.

President Leeson received a general consensus from the board after asking if they would be in favor of basically staying on one topic but allowing both people from the audience and board members to ask questions or comment on the subject.

Dr. Lewis informed the public about how the process was approached. He said there were several divisions within the district. Tonight they will look at the Superintendent accounts; those that are controlled through his office along with Human Resources accounts which are controlled through Mr. Gross' division. He stated that part of the consideration with it is that all of the departments are intrinsically linked so one simply cannot fully understand a recommended reduction unless they understand the associated program, materials, space, lease or energy costs which may be associated with a staff reduction. He said their entire cabinet was present this evening and if additional information was needed relative to related costs, they were prepared to answer questions. He noted that it would appear disjointed because they obviously may not be presenting the entire program adjustment with Career Academy. He said they would not be looking at lease reductions, materials, custodial costs or electricity tonight. They will be looking at staff as it was related to the Career Academy. He stated that he used it as one example and would try to keep it from becoming a digression. He said they would like it to be an understanding of what the administration has done. He also stated that they were here because of many circumstances and should focus on how they are going to find solutions and not to point fingers as to how they got to this point or that point, as that is not a positive approach to solving their problems. He said the problem was that they need to stay under the index as the board has passed a resolution to stay under the 5.40 index assigned to it by the Department of Education. That is the index of percentage increase in millage to the taxpayers. He noted that roughly 5.2 million dollars is the equivalent of 5.4. In addition to that, there are shortfalls that constitute about 5.4 to 5.5 million, which will need to be reduced from the proposed 2008-2009 budget. In the next three budget hearings, they will see cuts which will probably exceed that number. He wanted to be empirically clear that cabinet wrestled with the process because there are things that they may have indicated as a recommended cut but would like to restore if, for example, additional state funding comes through in the governor's budget proposal or if additional revenues come through from other sources. He said he wanted to be very clear that there has been a lot of misinformation afloat that entire programs were going to be reduced or taken away. He noted that he has spent a good hour per day responding to emails and telephone messages relative to programs such as Reading Recovery and that is not a targeted program. He stated that yes, absolutely, there are adjustments being recommended.

Dr. Lewis stressed that in order to cut 5.4 or 5.5 million, depending on how one's calculator works; staff and program cuts need to be significantly made. He stated that cabinet prioritized by looking at affecting as few instructional programs as they could. From transportation to athletics - to facilities - to energy - to support personnel - relative to additional lease space, for example. All of those items were reduced first. As they will see, the board asked them to build a spreadsheet that looked at 2 percent, 4 percent, 6 percent, 8 percent, and 10 percent cuts across every division.

DR. LEWIS –  
INTRODUCTION  
OF BUDGET

Dr. Lewis noted that some divisions cut 25 percent because they were able to, and, for example, if indeed the board accepts the lease reductions, they will see Mr. Gilliland's reductions exceeding 10 percent and they will be in red, which means they were recommending that they go there first. Every cabinet member was targeted to get to the approximate point of 5 percent or better because they wanted to be sure that the board had options and recommendations on which to deliberate.

Dr. Lewis said that the first page was merely a worksheet that showed what accounts are attributed to his division. He referred to the center box at the top and noted a rough figure of \$10,000,000. That amount is extrapolated across the 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 percent to show in the area to the right, what was targeted for potential cuts. He noted the area to the far right is not in red and are not recommended, but they are there and if they have to be, that is where they are. In the first column – 2 percent, they have recommended a budgetary reserve reduction of \$200,000. The rationale is that there are no new contracts in the hopper. The budgetary reserve is generally put aside for satisfying those contracted obligations to negotiated and agreed upon contracts with their seven different employee groups. With none in the hopper, that reduction is obviously recommended.

In the second column – Public Relations, and a central administrator. Those two positions could be assimilated. He stressed that they be viewed as “positions” and not as “people.” The tasks could be merged and services could still be offered in those two particular areas with one being in Curriculum and the other in Public Relations.

In the 6 percent column – the board conferences. The board had indicated a less of a desire to attend conferences, some supplies and some other lesser expenses related to convocations, books and food for committee meetings.

Dr. Lewis noted that food for committee meetings had been already cut back to less costly items. Food for other events that both the board and superintendent conduct had been reduced as well. He noted \$88,000 for two bookroom clerks. He commented that they were not looking to hurt anyone, and would certainly look at any cuts being accomplished through attrition or transfer. They are truly trying to do this without rifting a single individual who has dedicated their time and service to the district. He noted a reduction in hall monitors, which was not recommended and a building allocation reduction of 0.28 percent, which again was not recommended.

In the 8 and 10 percent columns, those items are not being recommended but are there if the board should decide that they want to take a deeper cut into budgetary reserve. They could do that in either the 8 percent or 10 percent column. The rest is self-explanatory through positions, building allocations as well as secretarial staff in the far right, bottom column.

Dr. Lewis stated that in essence, the total recommended reductions of the \$10,000,000 are about \$505,000 or about 5 percent of the budget category.

Mr. Gross began his segment of the budget presentation. He referred to the page titled Human Resources Accounts and noted on page 1 of 2, they were dealing with a very significant amount of money. He said he had the charge of dealing with the humble amount of \$66,000,000 in a proposed budget of \$170,000,000. Mr. Gross referred to page 2 and stated he followed through with the same exercise as requested by the board in terms of looking at a 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10 percent reduction in the various accounts. He noted that under the 2 percent reductions, through the attrition of nearly 50 professional personnel, they would realize a net gain of an estimated \$1,300,000, which are current salaries. He stated that most of the individuals, who are departing from the school district, although not all, are fairly high in the pay range and on the salary schedules.

In the second column they start moving into some proposed areas for potential reductions. The first thing listed under the 4 percent category is ten classroom teachers through a proposed elementary class size adjustment for a savings of just a little over half a million dollars. He explained that as he had informed the board previously, some of their elementary schools were enjoying some very low class sizes in the vicinity of 13 and 14 pupils in a classroom with most of those of course being at their three highest impact schools and at their moderate impact schools. In taking a look at what they can do via classroom reduction through attrition is to essentially absorb approximately ten classroom teachers and still maintain a class size ratio in the vicinity of 20 to 22 pupils per class. He made note of the word "approximate" because they may want to revisit that with additional revenue. Mr. Gross said there were a few outliers that are a little higher but they were trying to maintain a smaller class ratio at their moderate and high impact buildings through economically disadvantaged in English language learner buildings where a good deal of population exists.

Mr. Gross stated that he prepared a worksheet and had been dialoging with the elementary school principals relative to some potential changes in their allocations next year. He noted that essentially seven of those ten positions are simply absorbed through retirements, leaving the district with a very small hiring class for next year. He said that after doing the exercise today with a few principals, it essentially boiled down to an effort through consolidation and they would need to move approximately four of their elementary teachers into buildings which retain five total openings. They would essentially have one contract at the elementary level available and one LTS (long-term substitute) available. The one contract could be filled by one of their current long-term substitute positions.

Mr. Gross said that the bottom line is that they have some manageable class sizes such as 20, 22, 23, with one at 27, which they would want to take a look at, and noted a question mark was documented. He thought the chart was looking fairly reasonable. He said the decision would be for the board of school directors to entertain and he would provide a great deal of detail, specifically which buildings and grade levels they would be looking at, based upon their projected and current enrollments.

Mr. Gross focused on the three Welcome Class Teachers. At one point they talked about doing away with the program and is shown in the 10 percent column if they were to entertain that. It is not recommended, but is certainly something that is an added program, but, without question, is a valuable program. At this point they were recommending a consolidation of three of those classrooms and the net gain would be \$170,000. Those teachers would fill in some of the classroom vacancies that he talked about through the seven positions, which would be absorbed. He reiterated that they were not talking about ripping teachers or reducing their instructional force through layoffs, but were talking about absorbing them into classroom positions through retirements.

Mr. Gross moved on to the third row and noted the seven C.A. teachers listed are Career Academy Teachers. He said Mr. Washington and Mrs. Katona have been working with the committee to redesign their alternative education program into a half-day turn about program. He was sure they would get into more detail with the board at a future committee meeting which he believed was on the agenda. In essence, they were suggesting that the program operate full function with seven current staff members or half of the current teaching staff. The question posed to him would be the disposition of the seven teachers and he said the fact of the matter is that based on their high school subject area and certifications, those teachers could be absorbed into high school vacancies via retirements as well. He said they have a pretty good alignment but he still needed to speak in more detail with Mrs. Katona and Mr. Washington regarding certification needs. Mr. Gross noted that the licensing has strictly changed with their highly qualified teacher status. Along with the seven Career Academy Teacher savings, they are looking at taking the aide staff at the Career Academy and reducing that work force from four to two teacher aides. He noted that there were teacher aide vacancies every month so those individuals could easily slip into some of their elementary and middle school building aide positions. The net gain would be \$36,000.

Mr. Gross stated that they trimmed the Human Resource Office Budget by \$17,000 in everything from advertising, newspaper costs, various journals to material supplies and also food items for some of their hosted career fairs. The reduction in tuition reimbursement allocation is \$63,000. He noted that historically, the district has been very lenient with late pre-approval submittals for course reimbursement through their tuition loan program.

Mr. Gross said that many times they receive the request for tuition reimbursement after the individual is already well into their course work. One thing that they could entertain is if it is not approved from a pre-approval standpoint, then they would not approve it. At the present time and for many years, they have pretty much approved anything that had come across their desk. One thing they need to consider is that the tuition loan program is a stipulation of the collective bargaining agreement, so the “red” \$63,000 is a very dark red; almost a black-red, because of the contractual implications.

Mr. Gross moved over to the 6 percent column titled Reduction in Budgeted Substitute Teacher Allocation. He said that they believe they could perhaps take a better look at and have a tighter control in place relative to their temporary duty assignments and scrutinizing their conferences to a greater degree with regard to falling into line with the provisos of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and the curricular direction of the district. He believed they could control some of the substitute costs with tighter scrutinizing, however, it is difficult because they cannot foresee catastrophic illnesses from year to year, which can have a “double whammy” on the budget because it can affect health insurances. Whenever they have that issue, they are likely to have employees missing work and whenever possible they try to look at providing substitutes. They had a potential increase in the substitute daily rate of pay on the docket to present to the board. He said he did a study with the Intermediate Unit and surrounding school districts and they are right in the middle of the daily rate of pay for substitutes. Given the fact that they were looking to trim the budget, he didn’t think it was prudent to bring it to the board in terms of paying out more money.

Mr. Gross noted the Reading Recovery® Program cut. If they were to cut that program “in toto”, it is pretty much what they were looking at, and, they are not necessarily looking at it. He said that is what it would be there and in fact, it is in black because he does not recommend cutting the program. He said he recommends trimming it through the next item, which is the 6 percent column and is red. He said that Mrs. Katona and a committee of Reading Specialists and teachers are looking at redesigning the elementary reading intervention program to include Reading Recovery®. He repeated “To include Reading Recovery® but also utilizing our Reading Recovery® staff differently through a district-wide allocation and coupling them tighter with our use of Reading Recovery® strategies, but not calling it Reading Recovery® in grades two and three as well.” Part of what the documents and research from the Bethlehem Area School District has shown is that the aftercare for the first graders receiving perhaps the 20 sessions of Reading Recovery® while the students are brought to level and exited from the program in first grade, they are still “at risk” readers when they go into second and third grade. They are looking at what they could do in terms of better utilization of their reading specialist staff whom are involved with diagnostic care as well as developmental care of readers as well as incorporating their Reading Recovery® teachers.

He asked if they could trim their Reading Recovery® teachers and commented that ideally they would love to have that as an additional five Reading Recovery® teachers. They believe that through redesign and working with the teachers, they could make some modifications in the allocation of staff members for that program.

Dr. Lewis asked to interrupt for a second and stated there were individuals present who had concern about the subject. He said that he received a second confirmation from the Pennsylvania Department of Education Secretary, Dr. Zahorchak, and was reminded that they were in line for Reading Recovery® funding, which would be one of the approved programs that PDE is going to fund more heavily in the area of materials, staff development and part if not all of the lead teachers' salaries, albeit dependent upon the passage of the governor's budget. He said that he conferred with Mr. Majewski about getting their arms around the figure, but noted it was several hundred thousand dollars if one looked at the entire program. He wanted to share the information because he thought it was important. He brought attention to the fact that it was their first meeting and stated that what that picture looks like one or two months from now can be totally different. He said it was not their intention to "not fund" but it was their intention to "find funds."

Mr. Gross resumed his discussion and stated that they would make the necessary adjustments depending upon what the figure looks like from Dr. Zahorchak. He said that even with the teacher leader position being covered through a grant fund, it is a good chunk of the \$283,000 and they are probably in better shape that what the figure in front of them depicts this evening.

Mr. Gross stated that the department chair time adjustment under the 8 percent column, \$170,006, was the equivalent of three teachers. If they were to take the department chairs that currently have two blocks of time at the high school across the year and give them one block and still retain their \$3,000 or so stipend, they would realize a savings of approximately \$170,000. They are not advocating that they remove their supplemental stipend, which is a contractual provision. They would hold that to be in place, however, they were looking at an allocation of assigning one additional teaching period to those individuals.

The \$100,000 listed under Substitute Teacher Allocation for a total of \$300,000 was noted in red and Mr. Gross emphasized that it was a very dark red because they typically spend almost 1.5 million dollars in annual substitute fees. He noted the figures that he had in front of him and said that since 2003-2004, they had spent \$1,000,000 per year for substitute teachers. During 2006-2007 they budgeted \$1,200,000 and in 2007-2008 they budgeted \$1,500,000. If they take the \$300,000, they are back at \$1,200,000. He reviewed that TDA's (Temporary Duty Assignments), conferences as well as catastrophic or long-term illnesses do come into play.

Mr. Gross did say that they monitor the professional teacher absences on a daily basis, both in Mr. Thomasik's office and his own office. He said that at times they have made contact with staff members to inquire about their status.

Mr. Gross noted that the total recommended reductions amounted to \$3,300,000 or 5 percent of the \$66,000,000 under his charge.

President Leeson opened the floor for questioning.

Director Follweiler inquired about the Human Resources area. She stated when Mr. Gross discussed the first item regarding the ten classroom teachers being absorbed through attrition. She asked if it would be spread out through all of the elementary schools so that they might see a situation where one teacher may be moving to a different school because of the need.

Mr. Gross asked to give Director Follweiler a better understanding of the situation. He stated that in December, they put out an intent form that they ask all of their professional staff members to complete via web-based application, where they indicate their plans for the next year. This was done in conjunction and cooperation with the Bethlehem Education Association. He said they are asked to indicate if they have a desire to transfer to another assignment, grade, or building. They are also asked if they intend to go out on some type of leave, or plan to resign or retire. He noted that what they had in front of them in terms of the ten positions are based upon individuals who have expressed their intent to retire. The board has already acted upon several of the retirements and in fact they will be seeing five more individuals on the February 25<sup>th</sup> agenda. He reiterated that the process will be across all elementary schools and noted that Spring Garden Elementary School is looking at three retirements this year at three different grade levels. Mr. Gross noted that it creates vacancies for where they reduce a section.

Director Follweiler questioned if it was safe to assume that because the dollar amount was obviously based upon retirement, the higher paid individuals would be potentially back filled with some professionals with less years in the district.

Mr. Gross agreed and said they use an average salary figure for that which was based upon salary and benefits.

Director Follweiler inquired about class size adjustment, asking what the approximate maximum ratio at the elementary level.

Mr. Gross replied that it was dependent upon the grade level. They have a "magic bullet" guideline that they use and stated the primary grades (K, 1, 2, and 3), they attempt to stay in the vicinity of 24. He stated that in Grades 4



and 5, they attempt to stay within 26-27 students.

Mr. Gross said they try to stay at a lower ratio within the primary grades, when possible, in the vicinity of 18, and 20 to 21 in the intermediate grades (4 and 5), at their higher impact schools such as Donegan, Lincoln, Fountain Hill, Marvine and Freemansburg. He said there is an outlier section here or there and also a low-end outlier as well and commented that they try to balance it. A large part of it is up to the principal because sometimes they will have a particular composite of students that are very challenging so the student/teacher ratio would be lowered whereas another section or two might have 22, 23 or 24 students. He said they give the principals that freedom so they could customize the instruction to the needs of the student in the building.

Director Follweiler asked if that was in line with best practice for that level, grade and school.

Mr. Gross replied that he believed it was and stated the research was very clear in that unless they were in a situation where they have 15 or less in the class, the class size does not have a profound impact. The bottom line is what he said the other night and that is the teacher in the classroom.

President Leeson asked if anyone had any additional questions on the subject of class size.

Director Dexter stated that she went to James Buchanan Elementary School and learned that they started 1<sup>st</sup> Grade this year with 27 in one classroom and 29 in another. It really surprised her because they probably do have some balanced schools somewhere else that have 14 or 15 students.

Mr. Gross commented, "Not too far from that school."

Director Dexter replied that it was not good enough to have a first grade class of 29 students. She said it was unacceptable. She asked what kind of budget do they really need to have in order to assure the "one student at a time" motto. She asked how they could meet all of the needs without saying, "Well, you are from one area of Bethlehem, so you get a small class and you are from another. We have to balance it."

Mr. Gross replied that they did add a section at that grade which is in this years' budget.

Director Dexter said that it came to her attention because the parents were complaining but she wanted the district to meet the needs of all students without having the parents complain. She said a couple of years ago, they had a class at Spring Garden Elementary where they heard a gentleman concerned about 29 students in a classroom. She asked what it would take in the budget to do that right from the beginning so that parents don't have to complain and instead they could applaud. She asked Mr. Gross if there were other classes on

the bubble.

Mr. Gross stated there were a few on the bubble but not many. He said her question was very complex because the bottom line is the question—“What is the ideal class size?”

Director Dexter replied that they say it is 24 and 28.

Mr. Gross added that they use those as guidelines to try to stay within and do not use those as absolutes. Just from the perspective of four different school districts in the state and said they try to keep their class sizes as low as they possibly can while remaining fiscally responsible. They have to recognize the notion that some class compositions are going to be far more challenging than others, particularly with the English language learners and economically disadvantaged students. They attempt to use the formula to further lower class sizes for those students.

Director Dexter said she would be more specific and asked Mr. Gross to compile information for the next budget workshop. She wanted to know how many classes in the district, based on current projections, where they expect enrollment to exceed the guidelines. She said if they were looking now and see that William Penn is going to have a class of over 24 if the enrollment is was projected; she wanted to know about that. She also said if they just say that 24 is the maximum number of students in K through 3 classrooms, then how many teachers can they actually cut, because if the answer was significantly different than this, then they are not looking at a realistic cut.

Mr. Gross asked for the opportunity to explain and respond. He said it was certainly doable by the next budget workshop because what she was really asking for was his yellow and red flag lists. Those are classrooms that he considers to be on the bubble, based upon what he called a “certain class count number.” He gave the example of adding a section but then ending up with three classes at 17 students per classroom rather than two classes. He must ask if that building can house the extra class from a facilities standpoint. The numbers as of February 13<sup>th</sup> could be far different from what they will be two days before school on August 26<sup>th</sup>.

Director Dexter replied that they were in the planning stage at present, so they have to plan.

Mr. Gross suggested that based upon the projected numbers for next year’s enrollment, he believed the consolidations could be done and stay within the guidelines.

Director Dexter said that the corollary to her question was what reasonable reserve was needed in the budget. She said she wanted to know realistically because she didn’t want to adopt a budget in February, March or April that is

a “best case” scenario.

Mr. Gross stated he would get it as “real” as he could for her.

Director Dexter said she didn’t want to hear what she heard this past year from parents. She said that she heard the principal asked eight, ten, or twelve times for another teacher in January.

Mr. Gross added that what she didn’t hear was that there was no place to put them.

Director Dexter stated that she did hear that and they talked about that. The parents also asked if they could have another teacher so that they could have a teacher possibly work half the day in the morning with one of the classes and the other half in the afternoon with another class. She said if there were projections and they had a class of 29 and it was time to open school, she didn’t think it was a good enough solution for them to throw up their hands and say, “Oh well, we are off by five kids and look what just went in the door.” She said they needed to find a solution for that so they didn’t have first graders in classes that high, even if it was a low impact school. She asked him to look at the numbers so they can be realistic and not just say that we need to put ten teachers on the chart here.

President Leeson said she was somewhat in support of Mr. Gross’ case. She asked him about the recommendation of 1,019.3 teachers, which was a reduction of 38.5 teachers from the previous year. She asked if the reductions were in addition to or incorporated into that number.

President Leeson said he didn’t have a full 38.5 teachers which he was expecting to reduce on his sheet and asked if they were adding in some positions.

Mr. Gross replied that some of those positions are part of the 1.3 million dollar attrition/retirement figures. He said the actual count of teachers is based upon Mr. Majewski’s proposed budget and he noted that he provided him with the figures. That has changed somewhat because at one point it included a different design for the Career Academy and a different design for classroom reduction. He stated that the appendices would need to be changed.

President Leeson asked for clarification, stating there are ten classroom teachers, three Welcome Classroom teachers, and seven Career Academy teachers. She asked if the number of teacher positions that they were recommending at this point was a total of 20. She commented that they were basically adding 18.5 teaching positions back into the budget. She said there were also five Reading Recovery® positions which would be a total of 25.

Dr. Lewis replied that the original budget proposal contained the adjustments made in the exercise, which the number was greater. He told President Leeson that she was correct in that it was not a greater number of reduction in staff because now they were looking at being able to manage the Career Academy with a different arrangement and to keep Reading Recovery® in the reading intervention process with a greater number of teachers. He believed the original draft would contain that adjustment.

Mr. Gross stated that he was correct and the figure of 38 included 18.4 Reading Recovery® teachers, which was now five and 14 Career Academy teachers, which now was seven. He said they were able to meet the 5 percent threshold in his budget without totally disbanding.

President Leeson asked Mr. Majewski if the proposed 2008-2009 budget had the 5.5 million or the necessary amount out of it.

Mr. Majewski replied, "It does."

President Leeson added, "O.K. this is good." She said she thought that their actual staff to student ratio was probably above what it was five or six years ago.

Mr. Gross questioned if she was speaking about the entire school district.

President Leeson replied, "Across the entire school district. When you take the number of students and number of teachers and not just staff." She said there used to be a 15.6 in 2002-2003 and she thought they were above that now.

Mr. Gross added that they are probably at 21/1 ratio right now.

President Leeson responded that it was lower.

Mr. Gross replied that it was good because he knew they went through several years of adding 18 to 20-some teachers.

President Leeson stated that they were anticipating \$1.359 million in attrition adjustment and asked if they had some of that money going back in the new contract.

Mr. Gross stated that it was \$300,000.

President Leeson asked if that amount was taken out of the figure.

Mr. Majewski replied that it was all calculated into that figure.

President Leeson inquired about the class size adjustment, asking about the \$680,424 in the original proposed cuts and was \$567,000 at present. She asked why it was reduced.

Mr. Gross replied that the first budget showed 12 teachers and he reduced it to ten.

Dr. Lewis added that they managed to find cuts in other areas. If they looked at his total reduction as compared to the original exercise, Mr. Gross was cutting \$200,000 less than his original.

Mr. Gross explained his reasoning to President Leeson. He said the first reason was that they were asked to meet a 5 percent threshold in their respective budget categories. He said he cut as per the original piece of paper, which they all had, and saw that he was over by 5 percent so he started to add back in, so he could hit 5 percent.

President Leeson replied that it must have been a directive from Dr. Lewis because she thought they were looking at each of the line items going across and not necessarily that everyone would get to 5 percent because certainly there were areas in which they will get to zero.

Mr. Majewski added that not everybody was looking at 5 percent. He said it was their target to be able to see at least 5.5 million dollars worth of recommended reductions. Throughout the presentations they will see approximately 5.8 million dollars noted in red. There is about \$350,000 more than what they would need in red, but, that is their flexibility. Mr. Majewski stated that for the most part, what they see in red is what they will need in order to be able to meet the originally proposed budget.

Mr. Gross addressed President Leeson and said that he would like to be the first person to say that he needed that \$300,000.

President Leeson addressed Dr. Lewis and stated that she was aware that the governor had already released his proposed budget and wondered if he wanted to share that the funding, if approved, was going to be more favorable to their district. That might actually be something they would like to consider.

Dr. Lewis replied that Mr. Majewski was his watchdog because he cautions him that what goes out is not necessarily what comes through the House and Senate in the final version. After hearing the governor specifically say himself last week, he was even more convinced that it was going to go through, but Mr. Majewski was ultra-conservative and will tell them that while they received about \$700,000-750,000 in additional basic subsidy, he factored in about a \$1,300,000 increase, they will be getting about \$2,000,000.

Dr. Lewis stated that until it comes out, be it June 30<sup>th</sup> or later, anyone can guess as to what the final number would be. Optimistically speaking, if they see education funding survive in the current budget, he (the governor) has begun addressing the funding inadequacies and has indicated that Bethlehem was not a rich district and requires higher state funding levels. He said the differential was an additional \$4,000 to educate a child at adequate funding for programs. He has indicated that 50 percent of the deficit, which was in the billions, needed to be caught up in six years, so his mathematical equation was that one-sixth of that needs to come out in this budget and that is what he infused back in. Dr. Lewis noted that 50 percent is local effort and 50 percent is state effort and he has challenged the legislature who has commissioned the costing out study to put their money where their study is and he was optimistic that they were going to see upwards towards that \$2,000,000 increase. He said that at a local level, they were below what should be their subsidy levels and there is no excuse for that and said that when they are in the mid to low 20's (20 percent), with a .48 aide ratio, something is still not copasetic from his viewpoint. Nonetheless, that was an increase with Special Education staying the same with a rough increase of about 3 percent, which is just about enough to keep even, as Mr. Agretto will attest. He noted with regard to funding, that they would see slight increases in categorical money, which was where the reading money will come from and the Project 720, Classrooms for the Future, Pennsylvania Accountability Block Grant, etc. would remain fairly stable. Dr. Lewis stated that overall the governor was attempting to put more state money into the subsidy piece, which has not happened in a number of years and as a matter of fact, it has gone the other way.

President Leeson asked Dr. Lewis if it would have a positive impact upon the district.

Dr. Lewis deferred to Mr. Majewski.

Mr. Majewski said that there was approximately \$750,000 more in the governor's original proposal however there was potential for them to take more than that back from the district and that is why he was cautious. He said they probably heard that there was talk about establishing a floor for the employer's portion of the retirement contribution. If that passes, and there is some momentum that it may become effective next year, it will cost the district approximately \$900,000, so they may have a \$150,000 shortfall. He said they are monitoring that very carefully. He has also looked at the growth of their assessments. As of the February 4<sup>th</sup> numbers, they were looking at an approximate 1 percent increase in their assessments. He noted that last year there was a 3 percent increase, which means it was about one-third of what it was. The assessment growth at present has slowed more quickly than what he had anticipated and he was watching that very carefully.

Mr. Majewski cautioned to not expect any positive surprises. The hard work of cutting the money out of this budget is going to need to be done because he is sorry to say that he does not see where they will be coming into extra money which would help with the process.

Director Cann asked Mr. Gross about the attrition adjustment, noting the 50 personnel involved. She asked if the 10 classroom teachers were in addition to the amount.

Mr. Gross replied, "Not all of them." The consolidation of ten classrooms was not in the retirement figure of \$1,300,000 but was in addition to, because those would be classrooms that were consolidated.

Director Cann also asked about the Welcome Class Teachers and Career Academy Teachers.

Mr. Gross replied that they have six Welcome Class teachers with three being funded through Pennsylvania Block Grant money. The other three teachers were funded through their general operating budget (GOB). The GOB contribution for those three teachers is \$170,000. In actuality it is probably a little more because it was based upon an average salary figure and the figures for their actual salaries are a little bit higher.

Director Cann asked if all of the numbers in the 4 percent column build on top of the \$1,300,000 in the 2 percent column.

Mr. Gross said 2 percent is a "stand alone." He added that the \$1,300,000 is a stand alone.

Dr. Lewis commented that the \$1,300,000 is about a \$25,000 differential per the teacher leaving and a new teacher coming in and it was not a reduction in force and so that is where that money adds up. He said that what Mr. Gross was looking at with the \$567,000 was ten teachers and he believed they used \$55,000 as the average teacher's salary.

Director Cann said that part of the question was when the individual retires, they have the pension payment and asked if it was a net figure.

Dr. Lewis replied that a new teacher coming in at one, two or three years on the scale, the differential on average, historically examined from a teacher who had been with the district for 30-35 years, was about \$25,000 complete with benefits. He said that the number has held very accurately over the last five or six years that they could tell and probably even longer.

Director Cann again questioned the pension payments.

Dr. Lewis and Mr. Gross both replied that the district contribution ended upon

retirement.

Director Dexter commented that she spoke with Mrs. Robledo-Shorey this week and was informed that there were presently eight teachers at the Career Academy so when she saw that they wanted to cut seven she was surprised. She wondered if that cut was actually off of projections.

Dr. Lewis replied that he thought she was referring to three models. There was a six, a seven and an eight teacher model being discussed.

Director Dexter said that her question to Mrs. Robledo-Shorey was how many teachers did they have at present.

Dr. Lewis stated that there were 14 positions right now and it included the guidance counselors as well and to keep that in mind.

Director Dexter said, "There were two guidance counselors, eight teachers..."

Mr. Gross stated there was an art teacher, business technologist, health and physical education, two social studies, two ELAs, two guidance counselors and CA/MP is included. He said he wasn't sure if she included that figure.

Director Dexter said that she did go down the list and said they had one nurse and two resource officers and wondered about the staffing.

Mr. Gross replied that they didn't include the resource officers in that cut. They are in a different category.

Director Dexter asked what the projection was for the resource officer situation and questioned if they were still going with two officers.

Mr. Gross replied that they would be going with one because the population would change to an a.m. population with career services and job opportunities in the p.m. and then they would have a separate p.m. population in the schooling who would have career opportunities and training in the morning.

Director Dexter responded that they were told the police department would not operate with less than two officers and inquired if they had changed their position.

Mr. Gross replied that he could not answer that question.

Dr. Lewis added that he had not broached that specific question with Deputy Commissioner Bedics or Commissioner Miller. He believed that the need for two officers was for the first year of operation because of the unique administrative and operational concerns. He emphasized that one-half of the population would be there at a given time and the Academy had been operating very well so they probably only need one officer there at present.



Dr. Lewis stated they have an additional grant application submitted to obtain another SRO (School Resource Officer) and he thought it was earmarked for Liberty, but they could look at some split time. At present, the plan is for one resource officer.

Director Dexter said that two weeks ago she met with Mrs. Katona and her staff in the Curriculum Department and asked about the impact of changing department chairs from current half-time classroom duties to adding another class to them. She wondered if she would possibly speak on the issue to all of the board.

President Leeson commented to Director Dexter that it was an excellent question, but before she went on, she wanted to be certain there were no further questions pertaining to the Career Academy. She inquired if there were anymore questions or comments regarding the subject.

Director Follweiler said that she believed the subject of the Career Academy would come up across many categories so that this particular issue is just on the staffing and it was the same as before in that it was through attrition and/or transfer.

Mr. Gross replied, "It's transfer."

Director Follweiler continued, "These seven folks are going to be moved to a different..."

Mr. Gross replied, "Well, I misspoke. We have some individuals with two in particular, that have moved into other positions as of this coming board meeting and one resignation, so there is attrition and the rest are transfers into areas where they are certified."

Director Follweiler added that she thought they needed to look at the big picture at the end of all of these subjects to see the impact.

President Leeson asked about CA/MP with regard to the Career Academy.

Mr. Gross stated that CA/MP would stay and Mr. Washington was working on that. He commented that it was working fairly well right now with the current link to the Career Academy in that a staff member relieves the CA/MP person for a prep into lunch. Mr. Washington is working on a similar arrangement with that and it would stay and exist with the restructured Career Academy.

President Leeson inquired about the configuration of CA/MP and to go back a couple of years ago, she recalled there were behavior and family specialists.

Mr. Washington replied that it is a different configuration from what she knew.

President Leeson asked if it was just an in-school suspension program.

Mr. Washington stated that they are still providing services to the kids but they are just not providing as much. They still have Rose Schenk doing her type of work.

Dr. Lewis added that Ms. Schenk accepted a new position so Mr. Washington has put a stop-gap in that position. They would be recommending someone who was previously there to help them for the balance of the year. It is currently configured in a similar way but just not with as many counselors and analysts involved.

President Leeson commented that she still was not quite clear and asked if Rose Schenk was leaving.

Mr. Gross stated that was correct and it was on the agenda for February 25<sup>th</sup>.

President Leeson commented that Mr. Washington said it was not configured the same way and she heard there were a teacher and someone from KidsPeace. She inquired about exactly how many people do they have and how many students and grade levels can they accommodate at CA/MP.

Mr. Washington replied that they could take a range from 15 to 20 students. They have a teacher on staff there along with a guidance counselor. It basically covers from 6<sup>th</sup> grade up to 10<sup>th</sup> grade.

President Leeson asked how many suspensions they are able to accommodate at CA/MP in the 6<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> grade range.

Mr. Washington replied that he didn't know the answer to that and he heard a complaint that they wanted to send students and they were turned away.

Mr. Gross asked President Leeson if they could go back to the class size issue. He wanted to mention something that would come into play with regard to Director Dexter's point. He noted that this past year they had 240 elementary students participate in the open enrollment program whereby a petition will arrive through the Child Accounting Office and Mr. Washington's office in order to open enroll from one elementary school to another, perhaps based upon where the daycare or after school latchkey program might be for the youngster. That needs to be considered when they look at where they are going with regard to class sizes. He stated that Director Leeson brought this up at one of their last meetings. He said they would not accept students in an open enrollment program where the class size would exceed the point where they needed to add teachers or classes.

Mr. Gross added that there is also another piece which comes into play and noted by virtue of NCLB and the AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) status of some buildings, some parents have requested transfer out of some elementary schools and they were required to honor their request. He said that under the open enrollment proviso, it was really up to the district. He suggested that they take a close look at open enrollment and the nature of it within the district by virtue of the fact that they do have a proposal in front of the board to consider ten classroom consolidations. The point is that they are going to need to scrutinize that with perhaps more rigor than they had in the past. Mr. Gross noted that they have been very generous with their parents and rightfully so because they were here to service the children and their families, but, at the same token, they wanted to keep their class sizes as low as possible.

Dr. Lewis added that he thought it was also a re-education piece in that principals are very accommodating, as they should be, but there has been sort of an automaticity to the process and then the expectancy that it is every year thereafter. He said it needed to be reassessed on an annual basis and commented that it is hard to do but sometimes they need to say to a parent that they cannot accommodate their child in the open enrollment situation this year. He said they did not realize the number of open enrollments coming in at Donegan alone and commented that it was 16 or 17 youngsters, which had a significant impact on their class sizes across the grade levels.

President Leeson requested a written report.

Mr. Gross brought attention to a chart showing information since 2005 as well as their NCLB required transfers. He said he would provide the information in their packets.

President Leeson replied that it would be helpful.

Director McKeon said he assumed they were jumping to the front of the line regarding the NCLB students.

Mr. Gross replied that it depended upon when the request comes in. He said there was a negotiation that occurs if indeed the school that they want to attend can't accommodate them. They are not going to add another teacher.

Director McKeon said that he understood that but if they were accepting open enrollment and it is a NCLB student.

Mr. Gross said they must accept the NCLB and he said Director McKeon was right. He noted the other side of it is that under their current open enrollment policy, they typically allow the child go with the provision that they provide their own transportation. There is a transportation cost associated with NCLB.

Director McKeon asked about if the school where the student wanted to transfer to was adjacent to their district.

Mr. Gross replied that if they were outside the mileage parameters they would use a bus.

Director McKeon questioned if the two districts border on each other and were within the mileage criteria, would the students necessarily receive transportation.

Mr. Gross replied, "No." He said if they assumed they were right on the line and they wanted to go to a building within the mile circumference, then they would walk. He said they would see more detail when they have the material. He noted that five students transferred from Donegan to Spring Garden and they are riding.

Director Craig made comment about the students who want to go to another school just because they want to switch over if there is space. He said that the student who transfers to another school because his school in need and was allowed to leave would only get priority if he was attempting to enter at the same time.

Director McKeon asked for more clarification.

Director Craig gave an example of having two students with one coming from James Buchanan Elementary School and wanted to attend Spring Garden Elementary School where there is an opening. If the student from the other school, maybe Donegan or Marvine applies and gets there at the same time; then the priority is obviously with the one student. The problem arises with the class maximum size. There are two or three students in there who are not residing in that geographic area, but, who are there because they were allowed to transfer because there was originally room and now you have students who qualify to transfer and they want to gain entry.

Director Cann had a question about the superintendent's budget. She noted a reduction in the budgetary reserve and asked if every grouping that they looked at have their own reserve.

Dr. Lewis replied that it varies from year to year. If there was a large workforce involved in negotiations for a given year and they have knowledge that they will be coming to an agreement, then they attempt to anticipate the costs. It then goes into that particular reserve fund. It also covers other increases such as to administration. At present, they have two groups that are involved in discussion but it wouldn't come into implementation until the following year so they feel safe having a minimum of \$200,000.

Director Cann asked if the district's general reserve was part of that or was it a totally separate thing.

Dr. Lewis replied that it was not fund balance.

President Leeson asked about the budgetary reserve and said that in their 2008-2009 budget, they are only proposing \$100,000, but they were cutting \$200,000, and she was attempting to figure out how they were doing that.

Mr. Majewski replied that the document which she was looking at was met with all of the cuts and in order to do the exercise, they put the money back in for calculation purposes of the 2, 4 and 6 percent reductions. If she saw it being reduced, it was not an additional \$200,000, because it had already been taken out in there, so there is still \$100,000 remaining in that budget.

Dr. Lewis asked to explain something on the front page, of which they sort of skirted over. The middle lot on all of the sheets would be the exercise that they received. He said it would be painful but they could guarantee that they could stay under the 5.4 index and that was what was represented in the middle block. Mr. Majewski showed the original document in the top box but in order to not cause confusion, one must add back one exercise back into the document and then go through the next exercise. He emphasized that the document is not exactly replicated in what cabinet had done and noted that some things had changed. For example, Mr. Gross was cutting less positions and Mr. Gilliland may have some additional reductions from facilities after lease discussions.

Mr. Majewski added that when the original budget came out, there were a number of cuts and if they were to assume that they accepted all of those, there wouldn't even be discussion at the present time. Since they are now going through it, cabinet by cabinet, they had to put it back in so that they could now have a full budget and start taking a look at what is and what is not an acceptable reduction. The assumption is that at this point, none of the reductions that they were initially proposing have been accepted and they need to explain every one of them.

President Leeson asked for some budgets to be available for the next budget workshop.

Mr. Majewski replied that he had some with him but didn't want to create confusion because there would be two different numbers but he did bring them in case you wanted to review them in advance of their scheduled presentations.

President Leeson announced that copies were available and were in the box.

Dr. Lewis added that the budget information was also available on the district

website.

Director Follweiler stated that the budgetary reserve is listed as \$63,000 in the 2007-2008 amended budget.

Mr. Majewski replied that at that point in time, it was what was left in the amended budget and not the original budget and actually it is presently at zero.

Director McKeon asked if the retirement payment for administrators in Meet and Discuss appeared in any of the documents that they have at present.

Mr. Majewski replied that it appeared in the employee benefits section as part of his presentation.

Dr. Lewis added that Meet and Discuss applies to several areas.

Director McKeon commented that it appeared in that way during the last round.

Mr. Majewski stated that it might have been printed in that one group but that type of expenditure may be in some other contract.

President Leeson addressed the question which Director Dexter had previously posed.

Director Dexter brought attention to the \$170,106 under Department Chair Adjustments, which she noted was in red. She mentioned that she had spoken with Mrs. Katona and her department a couple of weeks ago and asked what the impact would be if they changed the department chairs' current role and asked them to teach extra sections. She wondered if she could share her views with the entire board on that issue.

Mrs. Katona replied that it is not a surprise that her department worked very closely with department chairs and they serve very much of the time as resources to the teachers and as they work on curriculum, practices and so forth and in trying to get people together and get messages to them. Sometimes the principal route becomes difficult because they have a lot on their plate so the department chairperson becomes instrumental at times in helping them to move things along. Certainly, that would affect the supervisors of her department, but, she was sure they would work with whatever they needed to do. As a curriculum development and integration view, there certainly would be some concern about the effect it would have.

Director Dexter said that one of the members of the department commented that there was more articulation between the department chairs at Freedom and Liberty High Schools than what had once occurred and also that more articulation was hoped for between the middle school and high school so they

could talk about curriculum issues.

Director Dexter stated that some of the department people were concerned about whether they would be able to produce the same kind of blend that they had hoped for in the curriculum issue if they cut the department chairs' availability time. She reiterated that the scheduling time was one of their concerns.

President Leeson stated that they are currently on school improvement in both schools and said that of course it had some additional requirements. She asked if the department chairs carried some of the burden of the additional requirements.

Mrs. Katona replied that the chairs have worked with the principals on Project 720 but she couldn't state the specific things that the department chairs are doing in those terms at present. She asked the department chairs to write different sub-committees to look at some of the pieces of Project 720 and how they could meet the goals.

President Leeson said not only Project 720 but she understood there was an action plan called Getting Results. She asked if the department chairs work on developing it and the implementation.

Mrs. Katona stated that the department chairs would be one of the first lines that the principal would go to but they aren't necessarily the only teachers that work on that and certainly the committees that the schools have formed are comprised of teachers from a variety of areas. She said that they were a part of it but it doesn't all rest on them but they are part of that effort.

President Leeson added that she understood that in particular, the English and Math are the ones that are currently being tested and there is a heavy burden on both of those department chairs. She asked about the department chairs for several different categories such as math, English, science and social studies, special education, ESL and language.

Dr. Lewis said that Mr. Gross had the entire list because he did the analysis. He asked Mr. Gross to read the list.

Mr. Gross said they currently had eight at Freedom High School in the four major subjects including world language but actually it had changed because they added fine and practical arts. They had the four core subjects, world language, fine and practical arts, health and physical education department chair, special education department chair of both high schools. He noted that Liberty High School enjoys Kathy Halkins as the district department chair for nursing and health services.

Director Leeson stated she had eight department heads in addition to Kathy Halkins but commented that she covers more of the district. She said to

just look at the eight positions.

Mr. Gross commented that the core subject areas get two periods per year and the “minor” subjects, but nonetheless, as important, receive one over the span of the year. What they were doing was bringing the core subjects from two to one instead of elimination.

President Leeson inquired about “two per year.”

Mr. Gross further explained that it was one per semester or two a year.

Dr. Lewis added that they teach two in four blocks.

Mr. Gross said they have a prep period and Mr. Zeiger will remind them that contractually they have an obligation.

President Leeson said she understood and reviewed that it was one prep period and one extra.

Mr. Gross stated that the core teachers would have a subject and a subject, a planning period and department chair during Semester I. During Semester II, they would have subject, subject, planning period and department chair, again for the core subject areas. The other subject areas have three classes and a planning period in one of the semesters and then two classes, a planning period and department chair.

President Leeson reviewed that they teach five out of eight and in the core subject areas they teach four out of eight.

Mr. Gross agreed with her statement.

Director Dexter stated that she once supported the idea of having them teach another class and may have even suggested it but last year and this year in particular, she has seen the department chairs take bigger leadership roles in our district. She has seen them at many meetings including Project 720 Meetings, Student Task Force Meetings, and Mentoring Meetings. She wondered what the impact would be regarding their participation if they were teaching more. Director Dexter asked if they were paid additionally for the after-school meetings.

Mr. Gross responded yes and said it was an important consideration. He said he didn't have the collective bargaining agreement in front of him. He conferred with Mr. Zeiger about the stipend for the department chairperson for after school time.

Mr. Zeiger replied that the school time is not inclusive within that stipend and said that besides the stipend they would view it as a bargainable issue because it would be looked at as a change in terms of a condition of employment for the department chairs.



Mr. Zeiger said that he wanted the board to be aware of that and they are not willing to say that you can just add on another class to the department chairs. He said they would be taking it as an issue.

Director Dexter asked Mr. Zeiger what it meant.

Mr. Zeiger replied they have to bargain and they just can't make unilateral changes in terms of conditions of employment with a bargaining unit member without bargaining that with the association.

Dr. Lewis told Mr. Zeiger that they acknowledged it with him several months ago when they discussed it and are willing to have that dialogue.

Mr. Zeiger responded that they didn't have the dialogue as of yet so without having it; he thought they were a little early in discussing it. He wanted them to know that they do have a problem with it.

President Leeson commented that the \$300,000 extra dollars might be part of this situation. She asked if there were any other discussion or questions and stated that anyone was free to ask a question.

Director Follweiler stated that it came up earlier and at previous meetings and she said she would keep coming back to it, continuing that she knew they voted not to go to referendum and that was approximately for 5.4 million dollars out of the budget. She believed they owed it to the taxpayers to look for the maximum amount to have the lowest amount of tax increase possible, which would be additional money. She didn't want to attempt to run the ten-mile race and target eight miles because she thought that it was the minimum they could do but she wanted to run the ten miles. She wanted to make it clear that they have to be ideally looking for a zero tax increase and minimally, no referendum. She wanted everyone to at least know that her position was really strong on it.

Dr. Lewis responded that it is why they had additional areas where they might choose to make something a cut or not. He said he was asking Mr. Majewski to make that quick calculation and noted they didn't have them at present but they would get them for her.

President Leeson had another issue to address and stated that under the Superintendent's Budget, they have a convocation speaker and a convocation expense of \$8,500 and she inquired if it was a one-day or one-half day of expenses.

Dr. Lewis replied that it was a one-day expense and it was "red", however they met the standard but it could easily become red. He said that frankly, he

was planning for it to be red.  
President Leeson replied that she agreed.

Director Follweiler asked if the cut intended to lower the expense or eliminate it.

Dr. Lewis stated that if they had some type of opening item, it would be cut drastically to perhaps providing teachers with some coffee and donuts at a goal setting session. If they got Liberty back, then they wouldn't have to rent chairs. He noted it was higher in the past because they didn't have a facility or they had to run double sessions at Northeast. They didn't have a place to hold the entire staff. He hoped that the Liberty Auditorium would be back and they could simplify the convocation to a combined event and it would be significantly less.

President Leeson commented that instead of using a speaker, they could use some of their students for the opening.

Dr. Lewis said that they were thinking of a celebration this year. He said there were always student performers.

Director Follweiler stated she just wanted to understand if the expense was \$5,000 for the speaker and now they were reducing it to \$2,000 or she asked if the expense was being eliminated.

President Leeson said her next item was the Superintendent's Office book expense of \$7,500. She asked for an explanation of that expense. She was aware of the book club.

Dr. Lewis replied there were also books for the board, books for Mr. Gross and other cabinet members who request materials, subscriptions and journals.

Mr. Gross added Fair Labor Standards, Act Finders and subscriptions that he had to get.

Dr. Lewis added the Purdon's updates from the state and noted that three departments or maybe four this year receive complete Pennsylvania State School Law updates. He said not to mistake that figure for just the book club. The book club was just a few hundred dollars and was a professional initiative. He said if that funding goes, they would have to find another way to obtain those documents and didn't want to say copy them but certainly pass them around. At the present time it was important that at least three if not four of the offices have the references to the law and regarding school code changes in addition to the Westlaw® Series on labor law. It is a combination of things which come out of that particular 640 account.

President Leeson asked if it would be possible to take a sharp pencil to the account to see what they could reduce because, of course, they were looking at areas which did not impact students. She suggested they consider sharing some of the materials as they had their library set up.

On a previous matter, Director Haytmanek inquired if there wouldn't be a paid speaker at the opening convocation to do that motivational work as done in the past.

Dr. Lewis spoke with Ms. Campanella about possibly changing their opening ceremony to reflect on some of the positive things this district had accomplished over time considering that their friends in the media tend to often dwell on the negative. He believed they could put together a representation of that as well as student performances, which would reflect the quality of the programs in the district. He thought it important that they get staff together and give them a short review of where the district was going, the goals of the board and administration and what had strategic planning accomplished. Dr. Lewis commented that there seemed to be a lot that should be presented in this particular year, so they felt, as somebody had pointed out earlier, this is not something that directly impacted instruction.

Director Haytmanek recalled that they had Teacher of the Year here at one point and was very well received by the teachers. He said that with an \$180,000,000 budget that it would be an item which they would try to keep in the budget.

President Leeson agreed that they have had some very stimulating individuals, but it was not necessarily something that was always done or is done in many other districts. She said that it was kind of an extra bonus, and as much as it was very interesting, in a year where they must make cuts, the extras are sometimes the things that have to go.

Director Haytmanek commented that it was very well received and the teachers got off to a good start.

President Leeson asked if there were any other issues regarding the Superintendent's Office.

Director Follweiler stated that they shouldn't discount the possibility of finding a volunteer speaker. She thought they might be someone in the community who would like to volunteer their time.

Director Craig commented that he thought they absolutely could get someone in the community to do it but he doubted if it would have the same impact. He noted when he taught, he recalled the people who came in to do the opening

programs and they were very good.

Director Craig said that he had heard the subject of volunteerism discussed by the board in a lot of areas of the budget and he thought it was very commendable to think that way but he was not sure how realistic it would be in some areas. He said he hoped it would work out.

President Leeson asked for further comment. She stated she would include the convocation speaker, convocation expenses and the books.

Mrs. Fernandes had a question for Mr. Gross. She asked about the five Reading Recovery® Teachers to be cut from the budget. She inquired if they were five .5 positions because Reading Recovery® was only a .5 position or would it be ten .5 positions.

Mr. Gross replied that it would be five .5 positions. He reviewed that Reading Recovery® is a .5 initiative and they were proposing a reduction of full-time equivalency.

Mrs. Fernandes asked if it would be five .5 positions district-wide, so it is only 2.5 positions district-wide.

Mr. Gross agreed.

She asked if the cuts would be at the high impact or low impact schools.

Mr. Gross replied that the determination was up to the committee as to where and how that redesign would look.

Director Dexter asked about the amount of \$283,000 relative to 2.5 positions.

Dr. Lewis stated that he believed there was a misunderstanding about Mrs. Fernandes' question. He reviewed that she asked about how many positions were being reduced out of 18 people.

Mr. Gross added that they had 18.4 FTEs.

Mrs. Fernandes said she thought they had about 38.5 Reading Recovery® positions.

Dr. Lewis replied that they have 38 half-time Reading Recovery® teachers. The .5 is what is confusing everyone.

Mrs. Fernandes asked if the cut was five .5 positions or five half-time positions.

Dr. Lewis said they won't quibble over whether it was 18.5 or 19 FTEs; but the full-time equivalency is reduced by five. He reviewed that if they take the 38 people involved, then it was ten off of that, but if they take it as FTEs, which is how they calculate staffing, then it is 18.5 less five. Dr. Lewis said it

was an approximate 30 percent reduction in people.

Mrs. Fernandes stated that it is ten half-time Reading Recovery® teachers.

Dr. Lewis reiterated that it would be ten out of the 38 to 39 positions and said it was approximately 27 percent.

Director Dexter commented on the issue of Reading Recovery® and said that this week she received emails from Mary Beth Rucker and Natalie Heller, teachers at one of the schools. They invited board members to come and observe a Reading Recovery® lesson if they wanted to know more about it or to give them a chance to speak one-on-one with a Reading Recovery® specialist. She said that one of the questions that she has had on her mind was whether or not the program could be delivered within small group settings rather than in one-on-one instruction. She was on the fence about it. It would seem logical to her that it could be done but they have had so much feed back from teachers, parents and people in the community, who said it would dilute the program. She said she made an appointment to visit Calypso tomorrow and commented that Terry Diehl had invited board members to drop in and said they didn't need an appointment.

Mrs. Katona made comment on the question about the possibility of small group instruction regarding the Reading Recovery® Program. She said that Mr. Gross had indicated before about the committee which would be meeting again next week. The question had been addressed and thus far, the committee was of the frame of mind that there may be children in the program whom at times need one-on-one and they started to talk about design last week in terms of whether they might have more people working throughout the district at different times with students to share the load. They talked about the importance of sustaining the benefits of Reading Recovery® in their second and third grade classrooms. There are a lot of different issues that have risen and all of these items are really on the table and they continue to discuss and look at what could this look like and as Mr. Gross said before, in some cases it might be a matter of using some of the Reading Recovery® strategies and not calling it Reading Recovery®, but utilizing their good teaching strategies. She asked how they would make sure that other teachers get that, but that was all part of their discussion.

Director Dexter said that a parent at one of the school meetings which she attended, made a compelling case for the new program because she said that her daughter was identified as the fifth student that would be served, but the school could only serve four students. The parent recognized that her child had reading problems but she couldn't get her into the Reading Recovery® program and so she felt that her child was one that should have been served. She thought their goal was to attempt to stretch it farther using their resources.

Director Dexter commented that she could not say that she did or did not support it because she has had other people meet with her and make comment that it won't work and can't happen so she said she would go see for herself. She encouraged the other board members to do so also.

Mrs. Katona referred to the data from the DRA that Dr. LoFaso had prepared that they received for this past Monday night was very telling to them. One of the things that they heard at the last meeting was that some of their schools which are considered low impact vary year to year with regard to students needing a service such as Reading Recovery® where a teacher needed to be there for a whole year to work with the students. She said they needed to look at that data and if nothing else, the discussion has steered them towards really examining who those students were and making sure that on a year to year basis, they are covering their needs.

Director Dexter responded that she thought what Mrs. Katona was saying was that it was not only important for them to hear from people who have been served but to also consider the needs of students who haven't been served.

Mr. Gross presented a list of the Reading Recovery® teachers and said to bear in mind that at their highest impact buildings, mainly at Donegan and Freemansburg, almost all of the teachers for Reading Recovery® were grant funded. He said it was obvious they wouldn't look at those areas. He believed they had 3.5 Reading Recovery® teachers assigned to Donegan and three of the 3.5 positions were grant funded with only one being funded out of the general budget. He noted that they would also try to streamline more of the grant funding in that direction and into some of the critical programs.

President Leeson questioned how many students does the elimination of 10 half-time Reading Recovery teachers (5 FTEs) impact.

Mr. Gross stated they were allowed to teach four at a time and asked for confirmation.

He was told that over the year they could teach eight.

President Leeson asked if it would be a potential of 80 students that it would impact.

Mr. Gross replied that there is potential for 80 one-on-ones.

President Leeson thanked Dr. Lewis and Mrs. Katona for organizing the taskforce. She thought it was a great idea to get the input from everyone at this stage. She felt they were in a difficult position because they were looking at cuts prior to having a design and wished they had more input from the force

before looking at the some of the cuts.

Mrs. Katona replied that they were kind of working simultaneously and said they would bring it to them as they start to really craft it.

President Leeson expressed that she wanted to see 3<sup>rd</sup> grade data showing how many students are at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level and have been in the system since 1<sup>st</sup> grade, whether or not they have received Reading Recovery®.

An individual from the audience asked if the positions were cut from Reading Recovery® would the entire reading support program be restructured so that there would no longer be any one-on-one instruction for any of the students.

Dr. Lewis replied that he thought it premature to make any assumptions and after discussion the other night, from his perspective, he believed some children were in need of one-on-one instruction. He said that it was the only way for them to improve but he also believed that some recent research showed that small groups could work. His stated that there was a gap but not that Reading Recovery® doesn't work; it is first grade exclusive. He had asked for and had seen some of the data and asked where the students were by the time they were in third grade. Dr. Lewis said he was concerned about the students that were coming in but he was most concerned about the students who had been with them during grades one, two and three because that is how to test the program or with any other program, interventions or specialists. He said the short answer was no and that there was no intention to go away from one-to-one, but was there a balanced approach of which they might be able to incorporate. The truth of the data was that they had youngsters who may or may not have exited and who may not gotten the program as they heard the other night that a child did not make it into the program because she was the fifth student in a given semester. He noted it was unacceptable for that student to be missed.

Mrs. Fernandes commented about the impact a teacher has when teaching eight to ten students per year. She noted that in the afternoon the teacher may take on small groups or has another assignment as the majority of teachers do and it would impact her training and expertise. She felt the ongoing professional development was critical and once it was stopped, the teachers may slip back.

Dr. Lewis said he agreed wholeheartedly with Mrs. Fernandes regarding the professional development as does Dr. Zahorchak and stated he wanted to maintain that and for all reading interventions.

Mrs. Fernandes stated that the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences - What Works Clearinghouse has cited that Reading Recovery® was the only intervention that met all criteria.

Director Dexter stated that she wanted to go back to Mia or Ann and said they shared their thoughts one day about how Reading Recovery® training also made better classroom teachers, if the teachers stopped being reading specialists and returned to the classrooms. She asked if they would address that statement for the benefit of the board.

Ann Goldberg replied that for example the respective leaders right here in the district have said to her that their training in Reading Recovery® was probably the single best preparation that they could have which is pretty remarkable. It teaches the teacher how to look at a child and determine his strengths, evaluate his needs and tailor a program to bring him along up to the classroom level. She said they have had reading specialists who have 20-25 years of experience that after becoming trained say that they understand better than they ever did

President Leeson said she had the opportunity to go to the League of Urban Schools and noted that Johnstown has seen an improvement of 20 percent gross at their 11<sup>th</sup> grade level. She said she was particularly interested in hearing how they achieved that and while she was speaking with their superintendent, she asked about the progress of their fourth and eighth grades. He replied that they were doing well in math but not in reading because they do not have an intervention. She said she understood that they were advocating Reading Recovery® and Reading First.

Dr. Lewis added that there is some debate on Reading First right now.

President Leeson mentioned Dr. Zahorchak's comments about possibly having some funding impact. She said they were looking at a \$283,000 reduction and asked if that would be able to cover it.

Dr. Lewis replied that he didn't want to make a prediction until he saw some hard numbers. He said Dr. Zahorchak was a very enthusiastic secretary and he made the remarks right in front of Governor Rendell, specifically stating that Bethlehem was first on the list. He emphasized that they needed to see how the proposal looks and hoped it would be significant funds.

President Leeson asked if they could be hopeful that the "red" line would become "black."

Director Craig went on record to say that if the money does come to the district, he wanted to put it into the Reading Recovery® program.

Dr. Lewis agreed along with Mr. Gross.

President Leeson asked for a general consensus from the board regarding



support of the Reading Recovery® program if they could possibly afford it.

President Leeson asked if there were any other additional comments or questions on Reading Recovery® or on any other issues.

Director Cann thanked the administration for presenting a great format and commented that they had a few questions but overall it was very easy to understand and was very much in line with what was requested. She said the reductions showed real creativity and motivation.

Dr. Lewis thanked Director Cann and commented that he and Mr. Gross met to finalize some items and look at some of the classroom consolidation pieces. He wanted to share that it was surprising that the actual schools being affected by the consolidation have somebody leaving their workforce. It may not be at the exact grade level, but with no exception, they covered seven to ten through natural attrition so no one is hurt and the class sizes remain fairly stable and certainly within the guidelines.

Mr. Gross added that the class size estimates were 20, 22, 26, 23, 20, 23, 24, and 20.

Dr. Lewis said that Mr. Majewski also pointed out the fact that their growth has leveled off and it has allowed them to take a harder look inside. The district had experienced some growth over the last half decade but it had leveled off so that has been a benefit also.

Mr. Gross noted that the one school where he stated the class size of 26 presently has four sections with 70 students. They were projecting a gain of 8 students to an increase of 78 students, at which case it would then be 26 students with three sections. At the present time it was 70 with three sections and they would have a class size of 23 or if they picked up one or two, they would still be at 23 or 24 students.

Dr. Lewis thought the Buchanan example was a good one but wanted them to realize that there would be a couple of outliers. He stated that when using simple math and rounding, they roughly had 300 elementary sections and there would be a couple of outliers, which never work out perfectly. He had previously stated at so many parent meetings that if they had three sections and they hit a certain number, well then it becomes magical and they have a low class size. If they don't then they are pushing the upper limits. He said they need to have a line.

Dr. Lewis stated that at the next meeting they would receive two more sets of data; Curriculum and Instruction and Student Services. He said that he and Mr. Majewski needed to provide a way to show them the total picture and compared it to a chess game, and if a piece was moved, something happens

elsewhere and if something was restored, then something must go.

Dr. Lewis reflected on when he was a principal and would tell his teachers to have some solutions when they came to his office with a problem. He concluded that there was still a lot of work to be done.

President Leeson brought attention to an area that hadn't been addressed yet, in which she noted had grown over the last couple of years. She said that in the 10 percent column was a cabinet individual. She noted there was a number of additional supervisory personnel and cabinet level people from the previous administration. She thought that when they restructured, at one point it was going to be budget neutral, but that budget had grown over time. She wondered if they could take a look at the positions within the Educational Center to see if there was a way to reconfigure them so their expertise could still be utilized within the district but perhaps in a different way.

Dr. Lewis replied that they could certainly have that discussion and pointed out that the district is more complex than ever before, noting that they didn't have AYP and corrective action. They had a good action plan over the last couple of decades but now the "getting results" one is much more composite and data driven and he said he wasn't just speaking about quantity of pages. Dr. Lewis said they could certainly discuss doing more with less, but he also thought they have added some significant programs and enhanced some so they need to be careful. They have an adjustment made within the proposal after Mr. Villani left and they would adjust one more administrative supervisor within, meaning that person might become a principal or something to that effect. He said they were willing to discuss these issues and mentioned that Mr. Zeiger has spoken to him about correlative change in work force and he thought there was some merit to it but he thought they needed to look at the overall responsibilities also.

President Leeson asked if there was any comment from the floor.

Mr. Zeiger questioned the turn around at the Career Academy and the disposition of the students for the second half of the day.

Dr. Lewis replied that as he said at the onset of the meeting, that there was some problematic discussion that would have to take place and will come from Mr. Washington's division. He thought that Mr. Washington along with Mr. Katona were the most well versed on the three proposals which were on the table at present. Dr. Lewis said that he would take a stab at just stating that it was a turn around program so there was instruction during the morning and an experienced based program similar to the Vo-Tech, Triangle Tech, job shadowing or an apprenticeship. He asked Mr. Washington about more detail.

Mr. Washington added the Career Link.

Mr. Zeiger questioned if district employees were running the other half of the

program.

Dr. Lewis replied that in this proposal it would be district teachers.

Mr. Zeiger asked if they were looking at proposals that would not utilize district employees.

President Leeson inquired if they would be getting a presentation on the Career Academy.

Director Dexter echoed Director Cann's earlier comment that the format and discussion this evening really worked for her to get a better handle on what they were proposing. They really don't have the solutions yet but she didn't expect to have them yet. She emphasized that she loved the format involving the exchange and inviting comments as they moved from topic to topic and she wondered what others thought.

Director Craig commented that he thought it worked very well tonight in light of the fact that most of the people making comment were district employees. He said he wanted to see how it worked when they discuss something like the Rifle Program and there are 55 parents present who want to speak to the issue. He concluded that he thought the evening went very well.

Director Follweiler stated that she felt it went very well and that everyone was gracious and respectful to everybody else. She thought it was wonderful that people in the audience had so many comments and agreed with Director Craig in that they may get more controversy with certain subjects. She thought that because the subject of Reading Recovery® has been discussed many times and she knew several people who were in attendance and had come to all of the meetings pertaining to the subject. She didn't think they stayed away from anything that was going to be a hot button topic. Director Follweiler conveyed that the format worked very well and said she learned a lot with many of her questions being answered by someone else's comment.

President Leeson also thanked the administration for doing an excellent job of going through all of the items. She expressed that it was a difficult exercise but she thought they did a good job and appreciated that they were prepared to candidly answer their questions.

Dr. Lewis requested a date for the second of three budget workshops and noted the topics would be Curriculum and Instruction and Student Services.

After some discussion the board arrived at a meeting date of Wednesday, March 5, 2008. President Leeson stated that Mr. Majewski would not be in attendance on that date they would be getting a presentation, and if they had questions which were specific for him, they would have to hold them.

President Leeson asked if there were any objections or if they would prefer to have him present at the meeting. Everyone in attendance agreed that March 5th would be the next meeting date for the second budget workshop.

Attest,

Stanley J. Majewski, Jr.  
Board Secretary

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