

MINUTES OF THE ANCHORAGE SCHOOL BOARD

SPECIAL MEETING OF FEBRUARY 4, 1999

The Anchorage School Board met in Special Session on Thursday, February 4, 1999, at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Room, at the Anchorage School District Administration Building. President Harriet Drummond presided.

A. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, FLAG SALUTE

Board Members Present: Harriet Drummond, Peggy Robinson-Wilson, Dave Werdal, Kathi Gillespie, Bettye Davis, Rita Holthouse and Debbie Ossiander.

Others Present: Bob Christal, Carol Comeau, Janet Stokesbary, Mark Pasier, Pat McDowell, Gail Opalinski, Arge Jeffery, Robyn Rehmann, Fred Stofflet, Norm Holthouse, Russ Ament, Ed Conyers, Steve Kalms, Teresa Johnson, Ed Blahous, Julie Ginder, Dolores Solano, Marie Laule, Bill Mikawa, Jill Waters, Stan Syta, Brent Rock, Linda Beyer, Neal Black, Ray Fenton, Tom Straugh, Michelle Egan, Heather Wagner, John Alexander, Hans Bernard, Mary Tanghe, the press and other interested people.

The School Board opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

B. CONSENT AGENDA

ASD Memorandum #172 - FY 1999-2000 Proposed Financial Plan (Revised)

It is the Administration's recommendation that the School Board approve and authorize the Superintendent to prepare the Anchorage School District's FY 1999-2000 Proposed Financial Plan as set forth in the projected revenue and expenditure schedules included in the Preliminary Financial Plan and the budget revisions made by the School Board during the first reading on February 1, 1999 (Attachment A). The total budget recommended is \$397,433,560. This includes individual fund budgets currently projected as follows:

	<u>Proposed FY 1999-2000 Financial Plan</u>	<u>Percentage Increase Over FY 1998-99 Revised Budget</u>
General Fund	\$328,298,897	4.62%
Food Service Fund	10,000,000	6.38%
Debt Service Fund	38,134,663	(10.48)%
Local/State/Federal Projects Fund	<u>21,000,000</u>	2.44%
Total – All Funds	<u>\$397,433,560</u>	2.88%

The amount of local tax contribution to be requested is \$117,194,540.

It is further recommended that the School Board authorize the Superintendent to adjust the budget expenditure ceiling above in accordance with any education related ballot propositions that may be approved in the April 20, 1999, Municipal Election.

ACTION:

Moved by Debbie Ossiander to approve Memorandum #172
seconded by Peggy Robinson-Wilson (Second Reading).

Bob Christal explained that the adjustments to the budget made at the First Reading are incorporated into this revised memorandum. The General Fund Revenue Budget has increased from \$327,100,000 to \$328,298,897 for an increase of \$1,198,897.

Sheryl Morrison commented that she supports the full day kindergarten program and noted that all schools should be able to have this program. Ms. Morrison further commented that the teachers, staff and parents of Willow Crest Elementary are very supportive of this program and urged the Board to support extending this program to all elementary schools.

Barbara Bernard urged the Board to reinstate the Writing Assessment funding that was eliminated from the budget during the First Reading. Ms. Bernard explained that this training helps teachers recognize their strengths and weaknesses in writing. The Writing Assessment is an effort to provide an objective measure of progress students make in using the six traits of writing which include ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and conventions.

Peggy Robinson-Wilson asked how this writing training could be provided to all teachers.

Barbara Bernard responded that trying to find ways to provide this opportunity to all teachers is being looked at very seriously.

Debbie Ossiander inquired about the writing component of the exit exam and if there has been any discussion at the State level that identifies what they're looking for or if there are any guidelines in this area.

Barbara Bernard explained that it is clear that people involved are aware of the rubrics. The more experience students have in the 6th grade using the rubrics, the more comfortable they are in the exam.

Fred Stofflet noted that in reference to the high school graduation exam, it will be given on a trial basis this spring. Dr. Stofflet commented that it is believed that a student who is knowledgeable in the sixth grade training module would be able to score well on the graduation exam. Basically, the rubrics used in the scoring process is part of the training so that the scorers who are reading the students' materials have had the training so there is a consistency.

Carol Comeau commented that when it was found out that the State was withdrawing the funding support for the Writing Assessment, it was determined that it would be in the best interest of students to recommend to the Board that funding for this be put in the budget to continue this training. This was heavily discussed before this was made a priority in the Instruction Division.

Rita Holthouse expressed concern that the teacher training equates to a teacher pull-out and inquired if credit courses have ever been considered for this training.

Tom Straugh responded that a one credit class is being offered this year involving this model and there are currently approximately 100 people signed up to be part of this process this year. This is a project that teachers are volunteering to get involved with and the District tries to minimize the time teachers are asked to be out of the classroom.

Barbara Bernard explained that a national trainer comes in for four or five days and it is at that time the intensive training is done.

Bob Christal explained that District teachers come from all across the country and that there is not a standard way to train teachers. There needs to be some time during the year when teachers can do the writing

assessment that they have taught for the previous six months. Many teachers believe there is a tremendous value to this program.

Bettye Davis noted that there is a lot of testing coming forward to students and anything that can be done to help them with the upcoming benchmarks is important. Teachers know how to construct sentences. This training teaches teachers how to get students to write at their highest level at all times. Ms. Davis further noted that she would like to see the Board reconsider the amendment to remove this from the budget.

Janet Stiles, classroom music teacher, urged the Board to reconsider and examine the strengths and weaknesses of the entire K-12 music program and to involve all music teachers before designating money to any one music program.

Gwen Heyman, classroom music teacher, urged the Board to give all the parties involved in the music program a chance to look at where the needs really are for kids in this District. Ms. Heyman encouraged the Board to look at the entire program in a way that would be beneficial to all students and to allow the Administration to determine where the funds ought to go. Currently, students are encouraged to take band or orchestra so that teachers can get in their planning time. There are so many kids involved in the program that the teacher cannot give individual attention to students' needs. Some teachers try to fit their choral program into the lunch period. Ms. Heymen further explained that schedules are very tight with little flexibility.

Cynthia Burrill, Birchwood ABC parent, commented that band has become a passionate art for her daughter who is also involved in the Anchorage Honors Band. Ms. Burrill further commented that she believes that students involved in instrumental music excel academically and urged the Board to implement a 5th grade band program.

Whitney Burrill, Birchwood 6th grader, commented that 5th graders should be given the opportunity to participate in band so they can then move to a higher level before they enter middle school. Ms. Burrill encouraged the Board to support band at the 5th grade level.

Joslyn Hutchins, Birchwood 6th grader, commented that 5th graders should be give the opportunity to begin band at the 5th grade level to allow them to have more experience in it before they get to the 6th grade.

Carrie Stillman, Birchwood 6th grader, commented that 5th graders should be able to take band noting that she has come very far this year

through hard work but wishes she could have started in the 5th grade. Ms. Stillman asked the Board to please consider extending band to the 5th grade level.

Debbie Mullen, O'Malley Elementary teacher, explained to the Board that the Writing Assessment is very beneficial to teachers as well as students noting that her knowledge of the writing traits has allowed her to become a great teacher in writing. Ms. Mullen encouraged the Board to reinstate the funds for the Writing Assessment.

Barbara Nagengast, Spring Hill Elementary principal, commented that teachers who participate in the writing assessment training come back with a great deal of enthusiasm to share with their colleagues. The quality of writing from students has truly grown in those students whose teachers have gone through the writing assessment training. Ms. Nagengast further commented that the writing assessment is one component where teachers can see that students are using the six traits of writing. Ms. Nagengast encouraged the Board to keep this writing program in place for the next year.

Robert Clink, National Association of Teachers of Singing, applauded the Board for their attention in the music area and encouraged the Board for their continued support for this fine art.

Sam Struempfer noted that much has already been covered in the area of expanding the music program and encouraged the Board to not only boost the choral program but to also save the choral program.

Joan Dale, Willow Crest parent, commented that it is important to emphasize high-needs schools for full day kindergarten so that students who need more preparation will get it. Ms. Dale strongly encouraged the Board to consider Willow Crest for a full day kindergarten program.

Mike Martinson, Music Department supervisor, noted that school boards nationwide are seemingly becoming less arts friendly and for the hundreds of musical people in the Anchorage community, Mr. Martinson thanked the Board for their support of the music program.

Debbie Ossiander commented that she has received phone calls on a budget allocation in the School Board account on secretarial overtime pay and was asked why a secretary in the Superintendent's office was getting a \$12,000 raise. Ms. Ossiander explained that there are two secretaries doing the work of three from some time ago and this overtime is for attending meetings and taking notes over a long period of time. This was

previously handled in the form of a budget transfer and it is now being reflected in this manner as a placement in the budget for overtime in this area.

Bob Christal noted that for the 1997-98 School Year there were over 80 School Board meetings which includes not only the regular meetings but many special meetings and work sessions as well.

Debbie Ossiander noted that another area she has received phone calls about is the proposed new position of an Assistant Superintendent. Compared to other districts, this position is very well justified and for further clarification, the money allocated for this includes two positions and equipment.

Debbie Ossiander explained that she is absolutely aware that school boards are becoming increasingly perceived as not being arts friendly. School boards are also operating in fiscal situations to do more with fewer dollars. Demands are being placed for strict accountability on standards and boards and districts have to respond to that accountability. Math, reading, writing and science are very vital, but it would be a disservice if the arts were excluded. Music is absolutely integral to a fine education. Music pull-out does not harm the fundamental academic core. Kids who experience music and buy into music are kids who will do better in their high school classes. The time kids spend in a music pull-out program has the real potential to pay off at the secondary level. Kids in middle school and high school music programs are remarkable kids who have found a community to express themselves in a vital way. It is unfortunate that this Board doesn't have the resources to do more and to restore all the programs this District used to have. In this budget there is a little window of opportunity to allow the Board to do a little something for the arts. Ms. Ossiander further explained that her motion was not to reinstate a program that was eliminated a number of years ago, but to add a little bit to be able to help kids stay involved in a music program at the secondary level. The Administration will need to figure out what type of program they can come up with in lieu of the small amount of money they will have to work with.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by Debbie Ossiander
seconded by Rita Holthouse

that the Administration look
at strengthening and expanding
the choral music program,
reporting back to the Board if
more funding is necessary.

Debbie Ossiander reiterated that she does not want to tell the Administration how to deliver this proposal. Ms. Ossiander noted that the only reason she didn't include choral in her original motion during the First Reading is because she didn't know how to do it and that perhaps the Administration could look at restructuring the entire program. Ms. Ossiander urged support for this recommendation.

Kathi Gillespie inquired if the maker of the motion is asking the Administration to come back to reinstate the music program and what the budget parameter will be.

Debbie Ossiander responded that the only parameter is the amount of money which is \$430,000. Ms. Ossiander explained that she would like to give the Administration the opportunity to see what they could come up with and to report back to the Board if more funding is necessary.

Rita Holthouse explained that she is in sympathy with the intent of the motion but in looking at the amendment that was passed, the elementary instrumental music program would be expanded to the 5th grade. Now, both elementary and choral music are being looked at within the \$430,000 with direction to come back to the Board if more money is needed.

Debbie Ossiander explained that she wanted the Administration, in conjunction with the schools, to strengthen the secondary program down through the elementary level.

Bob Christal explained that it is very important to be very clear. At the First Reading it was to expand the instrumental program to the 5th grade and now it is to also look at the choral music program and not just at the elementary level. Then, the Administration is suppose to come back and tell the Board that to strengthen the program an additional amount of money is needed. The conversation originally had to do with instrumental and choral. This motion gives the Administration direction but the problem cannot be solved with the recommended amount of funding.

Debbie Ossiander commented that at this point she doesn't know what is possible. Ms. Ossiander explained that she is under the impression that there are some teachers teaching choral music in the middle schools. Ms. Ossiander inquired if it is possible at the 6th grade level to allow students to opt into vocal music, band or orchestra. That would take care of the 6th grade planning time issue or perhaps 5th and 6th grade could be offered at the same time. Ms. Ossiander further explained that she doesn't know the space implications and doesn't want the Board to design the program

when there isn't sufficient funding. Ms. Ossiander noted that the original motion was to expand down to instrumental and choral and that she hoped this motion would simplify things. Ms. Ossiander commented that she would like to see what the Administration can come up with for the money.

Recessed at 8:30 p.m.

Reconvened at 8:55 p.m.

Debbie Ossiander withdrew her amendment which was acceptable to the second.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by Debbie Ossiander	that \$430,000 be used to
seconded by Peggy Robinson-Wilson	strengthen the elementary band, orchestra and choral music program.

Debbie Ossiander explained that this is an attempt to give maximum flexibility to the Administration to work to the goal of helping the feeder programs which will ultimately strengthen the secondary program. (This amendment would replace the amendment made at the First Reading that would expand the Elementary Instrumental Music Program to the 5th Grade for \$430,000.)

Rita Holthouse expressed concern that without much advancement in any program that this may cause a dilution of the entire program. Dr. Holthouse would like whatever is done to have a definite impact and an improvement to the elementary school program.

Carol Comeau commented that she hasn't had a chance to analyze the program in-depth but there may be some different approaches that could be taken. It's important for discussions to take place and to look at different ideas.

Kathi Gillespie inquired if the classroom music program was primarily used to teach kids to sing.

Mike Martinson responded that singing is part of the program. Singing is a component of classroom music and any addition to the music program will help the entire program.

Bob Christal explained that music teachers and principals as well as the music supervisor will need to be involved in discussions to see what kind of program can be put together.

Rita Holthouse expressed concern about the splintering that exists in the elementary music program and would like to see it addressed in some way. Dr. Holthouse noted that the students won't get the best benefit out of the program until everyone is working together.

Bob Christal responded that this is an issue of teachers and the music program. It's important to make the scheduling work so classroom teachers don't feel their classes are so fragmented.

VOTE:

Ayes: Ossiander, Werdal,
Robinson-Wilson, Drummond,
Gillespie, Davis

Nays: Holthouse

AMENDMENT PASSED.

AMENDMENT:

Moved by Bettye Davis to restore \$77,515 to the budget
seconded by Peggy Robinson-Wilson for the Writing Assessment.
The money is to come from the
Undesignated Fund Balance.

Peggy Robinson-Wilson commented that as far as the staff development aspect of this training is concerned, this is very important but would like to see some other way to provide this training.

Kathi Gillespie stated that she is opposed to teachers being taken out of the classroom for 260 instructional days and noted that she would like the District to look into the area of providing training, and at the same time to reduce the number of days teachers are out of the classroom.

Debbie Ossiander inquired if there is any way the training could be provided without doing the assessment.

Barbara Bernard explained that the value in the way it is designed now is that teachers have current students working in front of them learning how

to work the six traits of writing. There is value in having it be a very intense exercise.

Bob Christal asked if there is another way to do the sub-teacher certificated time.

Barbara Bernard responded that there is not an answer to that at the present time but they are thinking very hard on other possibilities.

Bob Christal asked when they would be utilizing the substitute days.

Barbara Bernard responded that this occurs the first weekend in March (a Wednesday night, all day Thursday, Friday and Saturday). Also, the national expert that is brought in assists the teachers and intermingles with them during the entire four-day period.

Peggy Robinson-Wilson inquired if more teachers could become involved with this training at this time.

Tom Straugh explained that with the number of teachers already involved, it would be difficult to find space to accommodate more.

Peggy Robinson-Wilson inquired if teachers would only do the papers of their students, if the training would still take three and a half days.

Tom Straugh explained that the first part of the activity (four to eight hours) is spent on training and calibration of the reader and the next two and a half days are spent in production reading. (All of this is supervised by the national experts.)

Peggy Robinson-Wilson inquired if there is a different way of providing this training by using in-District staff spread out over a longer period of time.

Tom Straugh explained that one of the goals is to get the simulations returned and the data back to the kids in the District who participate. The data needs to get back on a specific timeframe.

Fred Stofflet explained that the teachers are not just looking at the writing of students in their own classrooms but the writing of students across the entire District which helps to establish a level of expectance across the District.

AMENDMENT TO AMENDMENT:

Moved by Rita Holthouse
seconded by Kathi Gillespie

that the amount of funding
restored for the direct student
Writing Assessment be \$51,555,
eliminating the funds for
substitutes.

Rita Holthouse commented that there is a belief that there is a great deal of value in the training and noted that she would rather it be done in a way of not pulling 260 teachers out of the classroom. Dr. Holthouse further commented that she feels the training can be done without pulling the teachers out of the classroom.

Fred Stofflet stated that if the funding is cut by a third then it is unrealistic to be held accountable for doing the writing assessment.

Debbie Ossiander inquired what could be realized with \$50,000.

Bob Christal responded that there would be some additional training and a commitment of teachers to do the scoring.

Harriet Drummond noted that the Board has pulled many items off agendas because of concerns surrounding substitute teacher time for unfunded State mandates. Ms. Drummond further noted that she would not support lowering the amount for this writing assessment because it would strap the teachers from doing a good job.

VOTE:

Ayes: Gillespie, Holthouse

Nays: Ossiander, Werdal,

Robinson-Wilson, Drummond, Davis

AMENDMENT TO AMENDMENT FAILED.

VOTE ON AMENDMENT:

Ayes: Ossiander, Robinson-Wilson,
Drummond, Davis

Nays: Werdal, Gillespie, Holthouse

AMENDMENT PASSED.

VOTE ON MAIN MOTION:

Ayes: Ossiander, Werdal,
Robinson-Wilson, Drummond,
Gillespie, Holthouse, Davis

Nays: None

MAIN MOTION PASSED AS AMENDED.

Bob Greene of the School Budget Advisory Committee commented on the 1999-2000 Proposed Financial Plan: (1) There will be a large increase in property taxes which will be a very sensitive issue this year in light of the very large increase the District received last year. Asking to go to the cap will not be viewed very well. (2) There appears to be an excess in the increase in the administrative area. The educational areas are a smaller part of the budget this year and the administrative area is taking a bigger proportion. The increase in administrative positions can be fully supported but they are just hard to justify at this time. (3) There is concern with what is happening in the technology area. The technology plan needs a lot of work. Computers shouldn't just be thrown in and a decision made after the fact of what will be done with them. (4) In the Rentals area, the old system was computerized and the old system didn't work very well. There is a significant potential to save money in that area. The computer system could be used to enhance the changes but the opportunity is being missed and the problem is that once the software is in, the opportunity may be missed permanently and the equipment may end up in the wrong place.

C. SCHOOL BOARD COMMENTSD. EXECUTIVE SESSION - (PERSONNEL/FINANCE/NEGOTIATIONS/LITIGATION)E. ADJOURNMENT

The Special Meeting of February 4, 1999, was adjourned by unanimous consent at 9:55 p.m.

Harriet Drummond, President

Dave Werdal, Clerk

Date Minutes Approved