



To: Elmbrook Board of Education
From: Chris Hedstrom
Re: **February 8, 2011 Agenda Item 4.D. Class Size and Staffing Assumptions**

Presentation: This is a short presentation with time for discussion to develop an understanding of the staffing assumptions and process used for the upcoming school year. This presentation focuses on general education teacher staffing and while some of this is data- and fact-based (using numbers, trends, and arithmetic to make decisions), certainly there is a philosophical discussion to be had here as well (when and how do we make exceptions to the rule?). Our financial condition, strong in terms of our AAA bond rating and healthy fund balance, is threatened by declining resources and enrollment as well as the increasing costs that are required to deliver quality programming while maintaining class sizes. As a result, competing values are expressed among district stakeholders as individual Board members grapple with decisions before them.

Because human resources are the greatest expense in school districts today, it makes sense to discuss the practice and decision-making process that occurs throughout the annual staffing cycle. This paper attempts to illustrate the process the school district uses to ensure adequate staffing levels are met based on the wants and needs of our school system.

Background: The annual staffing process begins each fall with a review of the projected enrollments, anticipated budget, and class size reports. Based on these factors, a projected staffing plan is developed and communicated to the principals to aid in their planning for the next school year. Teaching employees are reminded to provide administration with staffing or retirement requests by February 1st so future plans and preferences can be factored in. With this information, a preliminary list of reemployment is developed. If there are more employees than positions, employees with the least amount of seniority are given letters notifying them of a preliminary layoff. All other teaching employees are recommended for renewal by the statutory date of March 15. If there are vacant positions and no qualified (certified) current employees available to fill them, then the recruitment and hiring process is put into motion.

From mid-February and ongoing, meetings are held with human resources, principals, and teachers as the staffing needs are better defined and refined. Factors that impact the refinement process include budget information and discussion, actual enrollment, student signups at the middle and high schools, as well as retirements, resignations, and leaves of absence (leaving and returning). As more information is known, teachers that were not provided with a contract by March 15 are notified of reemployment or are provided with a final notice of layoff by May 30. Teachers on layoff may be recalled to a position anytime after notice is given up to three years.

Alternatives, Assumptions, and Recommendations:

Class Size Assumptions – The table shown below illustrates common guidelines that are used when making staffing decisions and to ensure efficiency, equity, and maintain programming. The guidelines are not Board policy and can be flexible based on specific need and available resources. An example of flexibility could be a first grade classroom that is growing beyond 25 students.

Grade/Subject	Min	Max
K-3	--	25
4-8	--	29
9-12	--	30
6-12 PE	--	35
Electives	18	30
Some Electives	18	24
Singletons	<18	30
World Languages	n/a	n/a

The 1st grade is considered a critical grade level for foundational learning and the class size is protected. In times of limited resources, this could mean splitting a first grade at 26 students while allowing a 2nd grade to grow to 26 or 27 students, supplementing that 2nd grade with an additional part time assistant, rather than adding another section there. Another example of protecting the class size guidelines occurs when an elementary classroom is made up of students with a variety of needs (such as ELL or special education with associated support and assistants). A class that stays within the guidelines is preferred to allowing an overload and adding another adult (assistant) to the mix. In other situations, we may need to transfer nonresident

students to another school in order to avoid opening additional sections. When this occurs we are sometimes forced to separate families by school, which might be accepted by the family, or might cause the family to withdraw from the nonresident program.

Some electives at the secondary level have limited equipment or safety considerations that do not allow more than 24 in a class. When more students enroll than can be accommodated in these classes, we refer those students to other courses unless there are at least 36 students signed up for the class. At that point we would split the class.

Average Class Sizes

In 2010-2011, the average class sizes are shown in the table below:

Grade/Content	Average	Lowest Class Size	Highest Class Size*
K-3	21.0	17 (Hillside 2 nd)	25 (Brook El, Burleigh 3 rd)
4-5	24.0	21 (Brook El 4 th , Hillside 5 th)	29 (Swanson 5 th)
6-8 House	27.0	25 (PPMS 7 th)	29 (WHMS 6 th)
6-8 Electives	23.3	12 (WHMS Latin)	32 (WHMS PE 6, Spanish 7)
9-12 Core	23.9	10 (BC Science)	31 (BE Social Studies)
9-12 Electives	22.2	10 (BC Latin I)	37 (BE Phys. Ed.)

*Does not include instrumental music

Singletons and Combined Courses - There are some courses at the secondary level that are allowed to run at the minimum or below minimum levels. These “singletons” have the leeway to run below the established minimum class size of 18 in order to preserve the program. Examples of these are new programs, first time courses, and some AP (advanced placement) classes. Sometimes elective departments will combine courses that have lower enrollments to provide the variety that meets the students’ interests. We see this most often in the applied technology, or art departments where at least 18 students from two or three courses are combined into one period with one teacher. Similarly, we will combine world language levels in order to provide five years of instruction. The Latin program purposefully combines Latin 4 and 5 as part of the College In School (CIS) program where Latin 4 instruction is provided in one year and Latin 5 in the next.

For the first time in 2011-12, the middle schools’ elective classes have been redesigned as grade level courses as opposed to specific content courses (an example is 7th Grade Art, as opposed to Mixed Media, which is now a part of the generic Art course). This was done as part of a study team’s recommendations to achieve class size efficiencies.

Student Adds/Drops - Students at the high school level sometimes change their minds about a chosen course and subsequently drop that course or drop down from an Honors or AP course. This causes some classes to fall below the minimum of 18. Other times, class sizes are bolstered by late student sign ups. Central office and school administrators review previous years' experience with drops and adds before making staffing decisions.

Timing Constraints and Unknowns

1. Staffing Decisions vs. Re-Employment Notification - Middle and High School students finish their course selection process sometime during mid- to late-February. Staffing cannot begin in earnest until we "run the numbers" to determine which courses students have chosen to take. At the same time, state statutes and the master agreement have specific time lines for notification of re-employment. Thus we are in the position of having to provide some staff members with *preliminary* notices of layoff. Note, this is not a final layoff notice; rather it is a notice that we do not have enough information to provide some teachers with a contract by the March 15 deadline. When a preliminary notice is given in lieu of the March 15 contract, individual staff members are given information about the likelihood of re-employment on either a full time or reduced contract. As soon as staffing is better known, a contract is recommended for those teachers. Final notices of layoff (if any) are delivered by May 30. In 2011-12 the new block schedule will be implemented at the high school and this will reduce staffing levels and could possibly increase class sizes.
2. Scheduling/Traveling – As we work to ensure the most efficient staffing levels, more teachers are being required to travel between buildings. Most often we are able to limit travel to one time per day. In some situations we have had to schedule teachers to travel two or three times per day going between as many buildings. In these situations, we look to make the best use of time, or attempt to hire multiple part time employees.

Budget – The annual budget process informs staffing decisions. Initial staffing targets are determined based on the projected budget and enrollment as well as the adjustment recommendations from budget teams. The budget is based on estimated revenues and this year, we may not have all of the information we need for budget allocations until after the time lines for notification of re-employment have passed. While we would like to plan for staffing based on what was in place last year (revenue increase of \$200 per student), we need to remain prudent in anticipation of the biennium budget. School districts around the state are attempting to meet staffing needs while maintaining (not increasing) the revenue limits. This means staffing at the very minimum, especially for school districts that are experiencing declining enrollment as Elmbrook is. Other factors, including union contract negotiations, impact the budget as well. Unknowns in this area exacerbate the situation and require even more conservative approaches to staffing our schools in 2011-12.

Elmbrook is fortunate to be a "positive" open enrollment (OE) school district, which means that more nonresident students enter the district through the OE program than exit, and this helps the budget. The recommended available seats in this program is determined with great care and analysis to ensure no one section "tips" thereby requiring an additional section with associated costs for that year. Placement of new OE students is determined based on actual enrollments.

Recommendation – None as this is a discussion item. If a change in practice is called for as a result of this or future presentations, consensus opinion is requested so administration can move forward accordingly.

Attachment: Annual Staffing Process Calendar

Annual Staffing Process Calendar

2011-2012

November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receive Projected Enrollment Report • Review and Distribute Class Size Report • Develop Teacher Seniority List (Years of Service and Certification)
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Anticipated Budget Plan • Develop Staffing Plan (Number of sections/Total FTEs)
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate FTE Allocation to Principals; Principals Communicate to Staff Teachers to provide Notification of Early Retirement, Leave of or Return from Absence, Placement Preferences (by February 1st)
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Re-employment List Based on Seniority, Certification and Grade Level • Recommendation for Notice of Preliminary Layoff • Secondary Staffing Meetings
March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation for Re-employment • Secondary Staffing Meetings – Develop Schedules • Budget Hearings
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice of Re-employment (Recall from preliminary layoff) • Budget Presentations/Decisions • Recruitment and Hiring Process (as needed) • Actual Enrollment Monitoring
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secondary Master Schedules Developed (Schools) • Budget Presentations/Decisions • Notice of Re-employment (Recall from preliminary layoff) • Recruitment and Hiring Process (as needed) • Final Notice of Layoff (if needed)
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget Approval • Notice of Re-employment (Recall from preliminary layoff) • Recruitment and Hiring Process (as needed)