

# MEMO

**To:** School Board  
William Gronseth, Superintendent

**From:** Douglas A. Hasler *DH*

**Date:** June 2, 2017

**Re:** Community-Based School Equity Initiative

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I have been asked to provide financial information relevant to the Community-Based School Equity Initiatives relating to the expansion of AP/CITS course offerings, changes in Transportation policies, and the distribution of Compensatory Education revenues.

## **AP/CITS Courses**

There are approximately 20 AP/CITS course offerings included in the high school master schedule. I have investigated the idea of making use of telepresence technology to increase the number of sections of AP/CITS courses available to ISD 709 high school students.

We have obtained a cost estimate for installation of telepresence technology in a total of 4 rooms at East and Denfeld. With this technology, a teacher and a classroom of students in one of these rooms at one of our high schools would be linked to a classroom of students in the other high school. This technology is not mobile, and would be installed into each of the four rooms in the two buildings. The first year cost, including acquisition and installation of the technology, and monthly fees, would be approximately \$180,500. In future years, annual licensing fees would cost about \$17,500. The current cost estimates allow us to project forward for a period of about 5 years. Beyond that point, it is likely that the technology would be obsolete and in need of replacement.

Each “telepresence” course would tie up two classroom spaces – one in each high school. I have not had a chance to determine the availability of classroom spaces to be used as “telepresence classrooms” in each of our high schools. Assuming that appropriate classroom spaces exist at each high school, these classrooms could facilitate a total of 12 class sections a day.

In addition to those technology costs outlined above, it may be necessary for additional staffing (perhaps in the form of a paraprofessional) to be assigned to supervise telepresence

classrooms (for those instances when the teacher is in the other high school). The annual staffing cost for a paraprofessional would be approximately \$50,000. If such supervision is determined to be necessary, two full-time paraprofessionals would be needed.

## Transportation Policy Changes

The Community-Based School Equity Initiative proposes three changes to current transportation policy: (1) Provide seasonal bus service within a 2-mile radius of Denfeld; (2) Provide City (DTA) bus passes to students on limited income within a 2-mile radius; and (3) Time bus service to high school for zero hour arrival of all bused students.

It is not clear what “seasonal” bus service would mean. From an operational perspective, it would be very difficult to vary the provision of transportation services on a day-to-day basis as dictated by local weather conditions. Accordingly, the most realistic way to implement this proposal would be to establish start and end dates (such as December 1<sup>st</sup> to February 28<sup>th</sup>) during which additional transportation service would be provided.

Additional “seasonal” transportation services could be provided through a combination of buses finishing up bus runs for Lincoln Park Middle School in the morning, to contracting for additional buses in the afternoon. Not knowing how many students might take advantage of this transportation option, we are assuming that four additional bus runs would be provided in the morning and the afternoon. The daily cost for each combined morning/afternoon run would be approximately \$200 (4 additional runs per day would represent \$800). Assuming 60 days of “seasonal” transportation service would be approximately \$48,000.

Prior to implementation of “seasonal” transportation for Denfeld, additional study should be done. Data should be gathered to determine to what extent student attendance rates drop during periods of inclement weather. If it is determined that students from families in need have lower attendance rates during such times, we should consider whether additional transportation services should be added not only to the Denfeld attendance area, but Lincoln Park Middle School, East High School, and Ordean Middle School as well. Finally, if elementary students are expected to walk 7/10ths of a mile (for the elementary walk zone), is it appropriate for all secondary students (within Denfeld, and/or other secondary buildings) be eligible for “seasonal” transportation services?

As to the proposal to provide DTA bus passes to Denfeld students on limited income within a 2-mile radius, there are currently 164 Denfeld students who meet the eligibility criteria for free/reduced lunch. There are a range of bus pass options available through DTA. A 90 (consecutive) day teen bus pass costs \$108; a 180 (consecutive) day teen bus pass costs \$215. I am not providing a more definitive cost-out for this option as it is unclear whether the bus pass option is proposed to cover the full school year, or merely the winter months.

The proposal for zero hour transportation raises a number of significant issues. The School District does not have the capacity to transport all students to Denfeld (or both high schools) in time for what is now considered zero hour – we do not have a sufficient number of buses available at that time. Further, if all Denfeld (or all high school) students were transported to school in time for zero hour, students would either need to be enrolled in a zero hour class, or under supervision of school staff. Additional staffing costs for either of these contingencies is difficult to assess at this time.

## **Distribution of Compensatory Education Funding**

The Community-Based School Equity Initiative proposes that Compensatory Education funding be directed to schools based on the number of underprepared students enrolled. It is not clear how to best identify “underprepared” students. The Compensatory Education Revenue funding calculation uses free/reduced lunch counts to determine funding amounts.

For the upcoming school year, Compensatory Education revenue will be allocated to schools for staffing support, and in the form of discretionary funds. For Denfeld, such funds will total \$461,758. For East High School, those funds will be \$474,014 (all for staffing support). For these two schools together, such funds total \$935,772. The FY 2018 Compensatory Education revenue calculation generates \$719,215.96 based on Denfeld (free/reduced lunch) student enrollment; \$118,675.60 based on East High School (free/reduced lunch) student enrollment (or a total of \$837,891).

If Compensatory Education funds were shifted such that Denfeld received \$719,215, an increase of \$257,458, it would be necessary to reduce the East High School staffing allocation by the same amount. With this shift of funding, a decision would need to be made as to whether the reduced staffing allocation for East High School would be replaced by General Fund support, or whether staffing at East High School would be reduced. According to current staffing cost measures, \$257,000 is equivalent to staffing FTE of approximately 2.7. Given current projections for General Fund expenditure and revenue levels, there is no surplus of available resources to increase General Fund staffing support for East High School if Compensatory Education funds were redistributed in the manner described above. If staffing at East High School were reduced by 2.7 FTE, there would be a corresponding increase in the classroom ratios at East. While I do not have a projection available for you at this time, I hope to have one available in time for our Monday meeting.

I hope that the financial information outlined in this memorandum is helpful. I will look forward to participation in the discussion of these, and other proposals, during the Monday Committee of the Whole meeting.