



**GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM
AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10**

DATE OF MEETING: January 26, 2016

TITLE: Study and (or) Determination of High School Instructional Time

BACKGROUND:

At its meeting of January 12, 2016, the Governing Board studied a parent’s proposal that the high school instructional day (class time) be reduced from their current levels. During that study, it was generally explained that the instructional time in each class period within the Amphitheater District’s high schools currently run in the ranges shown below, stated in class time hours per school year.

<u>School</u>	<u>Minimum</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
Ironwood Ridge	192.83	198.77
Canyon del Oro	180.42	186.37
Amphi High	180.12	186.18

It was also reviewed that the class time hours shown above are *inclusive* of the passing periods between classes – the time allowed between class periods for students to move from one classroom to another. As long as a passing period between classes is 7 minutes or less, it can be included within the count of instructional time for determining whether a school district meets minimum instructional time requirements for state education funding purposes. Thus, in Amphitheater, the instructional time ranges shown above include up to 21 hours (approximately) of the time allowed for students to move between classes:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Number of class periods per year per class:} \qquad 178 \\ \text{Maximum passing minutes per class period:} \qquad \underline{\times \quad 7} \\ \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad = 1,246 \\ \\ \text{Maximum passing minutes per class per year:} \qquad 1,246 \\ \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \underline{\div \quad 60} \text{ minutes per hour} \\ \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad \qquad = \quad 20.77 \text{ hours} \end{array}$$

In other districts, passing periods may not be included in their calculations of “instructional time.” Catalina Foothills High School, for example, does not include their passing period minutes in their calculations. Therefore, some of the disparity between the instructional time between Amphitheater high schools and that particular high school would be attributable to this difference in calculation methodology. In other words, 180 hours of “instructional time” in Amphitheater may really consist of something closer to 160 hours class time per year, after the deduction of passing period time.

As has been discussed, even after the deduction of the passing period minutes from “instructional time” calculations, there are still disparities in comparisons of Amphitheater District to other Districts. Because the comparison has already been made to Catalina Foothills, the following chart is offered to illustrate the remaining disparity.

Annual Hours per Period without Passing Time				
CDO	IRHS	AHS		CFHS
181.6	172.1	161.2		147.8
173.8	161.6	212.3*		147.8
174.9	164.4	168.8		163.7
173.4	179.9	169.3		144.8
174.0	164.5	168.8		143.8
174.9	161.3	178.0		144.8
174.4	185.2	168.3		144.8
*AHS Breakfast Time included				

A simple review of this chart suggests a clear disparity of instructional time, but any comparison of instructional time should not be made in a vacuum. Closer examination discloses the proverbial apples to apples comparison may be elusive here.

As discussed at the last Board meeting, for example, there are differences between districts as to the number of classes that students are required to take, thereby affecting the amount of instructional time a student spends in school. There are also differences in the number of sections which full-time teachers must teach, thereby affecting the instructional time taught by teachers and the number of teachers required to teach all sections. There may also be a need to consider differences in the populations served by each district or school and any effect such diversity may have upon the programmatic needs of the school or district and the time

demands such programmatic needs exert.

Those distinctions noted, there does still remain, in general, a greater number of instructional hours within the instructional program at Amphitheater high schools, as specifically compared to Catalina Foothills' high school. The question for the Board to determine, ultimately and obviously, is whether the difference is warranted or, perhaps, to what level any disparity is warranted.

Rationale and concerns voiced by constituents who contacted the Board included research on the sleep patterns of adolescents, time constraints for open enrollment parents who must drive their students to school, and workloads for staff members. These are, of course, all important considerations – and could be considerations that may ultimately suggest some modification of the instructional time for high schools.

As the Administration has explained, however, there are some other considerations that must also be included in the determination. These include the current and continuing pressures on schools for producing student achievement results that, in turn, affect everything from school labels to teacher compensation and evaluations ratings. There are other implications that are simply more basic – for example, the impact which changing the high school schedules has – in a domino-like effect – upon the schedules of elementary and middle schools, or the bus route times that serve all three school levels.

There are also financial implications for such a change. Those implications include such things as effects upon staffing levels and state funding, due to any changes in student course enrollment requirements that may be made in conjunction with a change in instructional time. As a reminder, the proposal currently made by the parents and several staff members, included a recommendation that the Amphitheater District modify its current course load “requirement” (for seniors) from four courses to five courses to avoid the loss of funding that would otherwise result from the proposed change in instructional time. Such a change, however, can only be effective (as it is in Catalina Foothills) by modifying the number of credits a student must earn for graduation. (To ensure five courses must be taken, Catalina Foothills has a credit requirement of 24, rather than Amphitheater’s 22 credits).

There also remains a group of implications that are unknown because they have yet to be considered, studied or addressed, and those would be the as yet unknown opinions of many other parents and staff members who have not been included in any vetting of this very significant proposed change. This proposed change was studied at the January 12th Governing Board meeting after being placed on the agenda just a day before hand. Two weeks will have passed since that study and the time this matter is appearing before the Board again.

A change of this significance in the District's programs and services should be studied in greater detail and certainly warrants broader input before being finalized.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Administration recommends the Governing Board continue to study whether and how a change in the instructional time in the District's high schools should be affected. However, the Administration recommends that the Governing Board direct that a formal study be conducted of three potential changes to instructional time to be effective for the 2017-2018 School Year:

1. Reduction to 170 Hours
2. Reduction to 160 Hours
3. Reduction to 150 Hours

The Board should require such study to examine and ultimately report to the Board on the impacts each specific change would have upon such factors as: class schedules, bus routes, food service programs, staffing levels, student achievement levels, programmatic design and offerings, student workloads, staff workloads, and District funding. The Board should mandate that the study include surveys of a broad cross-section of the entire high school parent, student and teacher communities.

If so directed, the Administration would propose that it provide several updates to the Board on the progress and status of the study, with a timeline that would ensure the presentation of both the study results and a final recommendation to the Board no later than November 2016, to allow sufficient time for students, parents, staff, schools and departments to prepare for any resulting change in the 2017-2018 school year.

INITIATED BY:



Todd A. Jaeger, Associate to the Superintendent

Date: January 21, 2016



Patrick Nelson, Superintendent