



GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10

DATE OF MEETING: **January 12, 2016**

TITLE: **Study of High School Instructional Time**

BACKGROUND:

The Governing Board has recently been contacted by a parent and representatives of the Amphitheater Education Association with their joint recommendation that instructional time in the District's high schools be modified. The Governing Board President subsequently added this item to the Governing Board's agenda, and this item was prepared at the Superintendent's direction.

It is the Administration's understanding that the Governing Board President has requested that Ms. Tina Mehren, a CDO parent, make a presentation to the Governing Board regarding her proposal. In addition to Ms. Mehren's presentation and the content of this Board Agenda Item, the Administration will offer additional information to the Board which may aid in its review and discussion of the issues presented.

While the limited time frame for addition of this item to the January 12th Board meeting did not permit a full briefing on the complexities of the issues presented, the following information may be beneficial for this discussion by the Board.

Explanation of State Specifications Regarding Instructional Time/Current District Practice

The amount of instruction which students receive is, generally, a function of several variables. Certainly, state law is one of those variables, as the legislature has set finite *minimum* instructional time requirements during which students must be served. Where school districts fail to meet these requirements, the state equalizes (takes away) the District's funding to some degree. The time requirements set by the legislature varies by grade level. These bare minimums, of course, are rarely a school district's sole determinant as to the instructional time provided to its students.

The state requirement, after all, is about funding – defining the minimum amount of instruction which a student must receive in order for the school district to receive funding for the student *as a full time student*. But, school districts often determine to exceed these funding thresholds for a variety of reasons which may include, but are not limited to:

- Inclusion of sufficient time in each period for teachers to differentiate instruction for learners of varying levels and styles
- Providing sufficient time within the school day to provide additional supports to students (e.g., one-on-one, tutoring, etc.)
- Enhancement of curricula beyond “the basics” of state standards
- Provision of comprehensive programming, including special content courses such as career and technical education and higher level content
- Number of courses required by the District for enrollment purposes
- The length of passing periods and whether those passing period are included in minimum instructional period calculations
- Transportation limitations

For high schools in Arizona, state law expressly defines full-time enrollment of a high school student in two primary documents. The first of these is A.R.S. § 15-901(A)(1)(b)(ii) which describes a full-time high school student as one taking:

“four or more subjects that count toward graduation as defined by the state board of education, each of which, if taught each school day for the minimum number of days required in a school year, would meet a minimum of one hundred twenty-three hours a year, or the equivalent, that meets for a total of at least seven hundred twenty hours for a one hundred eighty day school year, or the instructional hours prescribed in this section in a recognized high school.”

The Arizona Department of Education further defines instructional time in Policy GE-18, “Instructional Hours and Programs”, Policies and Procedures Manual (Rev. 7/1/13). This policy excludes from instructional time any periods of the day during which an instructional program or course of study is not being offered. Instructional time also does not include lunch or recess; “homeroom” or study hall periods; school assemblies; periods of time that are voluntary for students to attend; any period of time “not considered instructional”; and early release and late start periods.

Additionally, the second document, ADE Policy GE-18 further explains the mandate of A.R.S. § 15-901(A)(1)(b)(ii):

a full-time student in grades 9 through 12 must be enrolled in four (4) or more subjects which count toward graduation as defined by the state board of education. Each subject must meet at least 123 hours for the required number of days (180) during the school year, or the equivalent. All four or more subjects combined must meet at least 720 hours for a 180 day school year. “Or the equivalent” may include:

- 4 or more subjects offered 1 or 2 or more at a time;
- 4 or more subjects offered on alternating days; or
- 4 or more subjects offered through other schedules.

Each subject must meet at least 123 hours and all subjects combined, 4 or more, must meet at least 720 hours.

As the Board was previously briefed, Amphitheater’s high school courses generally meet in the vicinity of 180 hours, to assure the state’s mandates of 180 hours across our minimum of four courses (or 720 hours) is met. There is some variance between schools; however, due to the individual specifics of each high school’s bell schedule, and such other factors as the frequency and duration of their early release periods and their passing time between classes. The actual current instructional time per class is shown in the following table.

<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

The factor of passing time (the time when students are moving from one class to another) is a very significant one in terms of calculating “instructional time”. The state allows up to 7 minutes of passing time to count as instructional time for funding purposes, and so the times listed above do include up to 21 hours per year of passing time. Obviously, students do not receive instruction during passing period.

Recent Parent/Amphitheater Education Association Proposal to Modify Instructional Time

Ms. Mehren, and the Amphitheater Education Association, have now proposed the District modify its definition for full time enrollment for high school students, increasing the class load from a minimum of four to five courses. This would reduce the hours per class to 144, roughly. (720 hours/5 classes = 144 hours). Again, the effects of passing time would reduce actual instructional time below this figure.

Beyond the simple reduction in classroom time spent by teachers and students in a particular content area, this change would also mean a significant loss of funding for the District, because the District would be financially penalized for every student taking less than 5 courses. To put this in perspective, the District had 147 students carrying only 4 classes and taking JTED classes during the first semester of this year. With the

5 class change, we would estimate annual funding losses would have been \$146,000 to \$155,000 assuming all of these students were only reduced to .75 FTE by the ADE for funding purposes.

There are other ramifications of such a change that staff are still researching.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is presented for the Board's study and discussion at this time.

INITIATED BY:



Todd A. Jaeger, Associate to the Superintendent

Date: January 11, 2016



Patrick Nelson, Superintendent