Responses to Board Member Questions Concerning
Proposed High School Budget

February 24, 2020

1. **How many FTEs did we cut or absorb last year?**

   We cut 1.1 FTE teachers last year—0.6 math and 0.5 (approximately) Latin. We added a 0.4 FTE computer programming teacher, although that was to free up our technology integrator to do full-time technology integration, which was the original intent of her position. For two years, in order to get computer programming off the ground at CEHS, she had taught two programming classes, in addition to her role as technology integrator.

2. **We have heard that we have some very large classes this year due to an unanticipated increased enrollment. Could you please share some of those large class sizes and how they compare to our class size guidelines? If you've heard any feedback from students or teachers could you share that too please**

   We have 18 core discipline teachers who teach a full, five-course load. Our other twelve core discipline academic teachers teach four classes either because they are science teachers with lab periods or because they are teachers assigned two periods to the Achievement Center in lieu of a fifth class.

   Of those 18 teachers, the <u>average</u> student load per teacher is 90.3 students, which exceeds the top range of policy IIB's student load guideline, which calls for a student load per teacher of between 75 and 90 students. Three out of the four math teachers not assigned to the AC have student loads in excess of 90 students; of those, two have student loads in excess of 100 students. Two out of our five World Language teacher have student loads in excess of the top range of the guideline. Without additional World Language staffing, it is certain that all five of the World Language teachers will be above the guideline. Two of our six Social Studies teachers are above the maximum range of the guideline.

   Teachers are recognizing the impact of larger student loads. English and Social Studies share a particular, common concern that the increasing demands of correcting student written work will force a reduction in that work next year if class size continues to increase, without a corresponding increase in staff. All teachers are being particularly stretched thin with the need to support numbers of students that exceed Board guidelines.

3. **How many students would benefit from offering an introductory French class?**

   Our best forecast would be 10-14 students per year. If the class fell below 10, we would need to examine other options. Typically, we do not schedule a class unless ten students sign up for it.

4. **Is there any way to coordinate with the middle school (I believe in 7th grade students have an opportunity to switch and start a different language?). Have online resources**

or programs like Rosetta Stone been evaluated as options for getting students the skills they need to succeed in French II?

As to Rosetta Stone, yes, we have tried that in the past, although not for French I. Although we tried it only for a few students, the results were not promising. Particularly for early foreign language learners, there is an unsurprising need for direct teacher interaction. And it takes a huge amount of discipline to learn *any* course cold online. World language would be one of the toughest to learn this way. The other issue with programs like Rosetta Stone is that they do not necessarily our curriculum, particularly with respect to vocabulary, so transitioning from a program like Rosetta Stone to a regular class setting would create obstacles for students.

Additionally, probably the biggest group of students who would be appropriate for French I are students who have not been successful in the past. These students would not be a good match for any online program. They need direct and frequent teacher interaction and support.

The world language departments at the middle and high schools do have a close connection. It is true that some students change in grade 7. Because of the way students begin foreign language in Cape Elizabeth, the demand for French I would be greater in one year and smaller in the next. But just as we offer and fill Spanish I every year, we anticipate there would be a demand for French I every year as well.

In fact, the mid-course changers are another group that faces a particular disadvantage caused by the absence of French I. Although the majority of students who transition do so from French to Spanish, there are others who switch from Spanish to French. For many of these students, French I would be the most appropriate placement. Because of the absence of French I, however, these students end up being assigned back to Spanish, a language they had already tried and left.

A final group of students who would benefit from French I are harder to predict in terms of numbers in any given year. They are students who come from other schools and students who wish to take French as a second foreign language. Connections with the middle school would not reduce these kinds of needs.

So, in principle, we are open to all sorts of creative ideas to meet this need but, in the end, we know there is a need and that it will be best met by being able at least to offer French I every year. At this point, we know we do not have the staff to teach French I if enough students signed up to take it, so we do not offer it.

5. **Several (most? all?) of our HS world language teachers are certified to teach both French and Spanish. Have you considered alternating offering Spanish 1 and French 1 – every other year Spanish 1 is offered; every other year French 1 is offered. How far would this go to meeting the needs of students who need/want intro level French or Spanish?**

There is actually only one teacher in the high school, Sonia Medina, who has the background or experience to teach both French and Spanish. Ms. Medina currently teaches both languages.

Alternating offerings from one year to the next would not really address the issue. Currently, there is enough of a demand every year to staff both Spanish I and one or two sections of Spanish IA, which in the future will be called Spanish Foundations. The reason there is that demand in Spanish every year is because we historically have more students taking Spanish than French at any one time because of students switching from French to Spanish at some point during their schooling. So only offering Spanish I every other year would create a bigger problem than the problem we have now of never being able to offer French I.

It is possible, because of the alternating language starts in their early years, that there will only be enough students every other year to justify actually creating and teaching a section of French I. We will monitor that. Based on the fact that next year is a French year and based on information we've already received from Middle School teachers, we are very confident that there will be a need for French I next year. We also know that with our current staffing we will not be able to meet that need.

6. **Is there a different way to staff or pay for staffing of the Achievement Center that would allow those teachers who work there to instead teach a class? Have we considered offering a small stipend for working in the achievement center vs the current benefit? Could we run a cost – benefit analysis of offering teachers a stipend versus hiring more FTE in those particular subject areas? (If this is a viable option, would these stipended positions would need to be established in the teacher CBA?)**

I have considered bringing English and math teachers out of the AC to help address the need to keep down the growth in class sizes. If we were to do that, the Achievement Center would transition to a peer tutoring center. If we have to do that, we will. Already, math teachers are only in the AC for four out of the eight periods in the high school day.

Taking teachers out of the AC would definitely impact our ability to support students, although it would help with the budget.

By taking math teacher out of the AC, we would be able to offer two more sections of math. By taking English teachers out of the AC, we would be able to offer four more sections of English.

Our need for additional math staffing will not be fully addressed by adding two more sections. I have asked for a 0.6 FTE addition, which represents three classes. The math department reminds me they forecast a need for even more than that since we will have more students next year than we did last year, when we had a 0.6 FTE math position that was eliminated last budget year.

The proposed addition of a full-time English/literacy teacher would represent an additional five teaching sections. Removing English teachers from the AC would free up staff to teach four sections but would not address the long-standing regular education literacy support need.

Removing the English and math teachers from the AC would also not address needs in other areas, including World Language, Science, possibly Social Studies and other elective areas depending on signups, since there are no teachers from those disciplines assigned to the AC.

Staffing the AC by teachers receiving stipends would, I suspect, run into collective bargaining agreement issues. This may be a problem of our creation since we have treated an AC assignment as a teacher assignment, not an extracurricular activity.

Having said that, this is a creative idea, and I will explore it through conversation with teachers and representatives of the teachers' association.

7. **Teachers who teach fewer than 5 classes - has any thought been given to alternate ways to staff the achievement period?**

   In the past, we have had discussions about treating assignment to the Achievement Center (I assume the question is about the Achievement Center, not the Achievement Period) as a duty rather than a teaching assignment. The advantage of doing that is that we might be able to have more disciplines represented in the AC than simply English and math. The downside of the idea is that it would significantly challenge our ability to staff study halls. We would need to figure that out. Similarly, as with the proposal to staff the AC by teachers receiving stipends, there may be issues this raises under the teachers' collective bargaining agreement. This is an issue we'll explore more fully.

8. **How will the suggested teacher leader position be evaluated for positive impact? Could this be a stipend rather than an additional hire?**

   I don't think it's a viable alternative to staff a teacher leader position with a teacher receiving a stipend. The core issue is to have a teacher who has daily, scheduled time, during school, to serve in the leadership role. A stipend frees up no time in a teacher's schedule. Stipends are more classically given for teachers who serve in advisory or coaching roles, outside of school hours, for clubs or groups who meet seasonally or on a much less than every-day basis.

   We would evaluate the impact of this position by tracking indicators of our ability to more effectively coordinate and even expand supports for students who need more supports or different supports than we are currently able to provide.

9. **How have the responsibilities of the HS librarian increased / changed since she was hired?**

   Since she was initially hired two things have changed regarding the librarian's role.

   The first and most important change is that the full-time aide position that existed when she first was hired was eliminated.

   The elimination of that position means that the librarian has picked up the role of shelving books, processing new books for the shelf (adding them to the computer system, stickering

them, etc.), maintaining the student color printer, general tech support for staff and students (password lookup, etc.), creating display boards, making sure the collection is in order on the shelf, and checking materials in and out.

The second change is that technology has become a ubiquitous tool in classrooms, and staff and students have become aware of the librarian's strength in the area of technology. The requests for support have exploded.

10. **We heard a presentation on e-sports - are the 12 laptops something that could be used for this as well as computer programming? Are there laptops in the school department that could be used for this?**

The short answer is that eSports requires a much more robust computer than have been proposed for computer programming classes (and the current expectation is that programming will need more than twelve computers, so the programming teacher is exploring cheaper machines than Apple laptops). They require the sort of speed and graphics handling capacity that typical laptops do not provide. In order to support eSports, the laptops would need to be Windows machines in the $1,500-2,000 per machine range.

There are not currently nor does there seem likely to be next year redeployable laptops that can support our programming classes. When the school department replaces staff laptops, they are deployed for use at other schools or they are so old that they do not have any value.