

4.4.1

Long Range Planning Committee Meeting Minutes - November 20, 2018

Attendees: Steve Jenkins, Diane Lyons, Laura Schulkind, Joe Phelan, Tom Burnell

Class size

The group began by comparing class sizes in Middle and High School core classes at Haldane, Scarsdale, and Chappaqua with Rhinebeck. Scarsdale and Chappaqua are larger districts, but Bronxville is similarly sized and Haldane slightly smaller. Overall, it seemed that the Westchester districts had larger class sizes (20+ students) than both Rhinebeck and Haldane (14-18).

Generally, there is a belief that smaller class sizes in the Primary (K-2) and Intermediate (3-5) grades are favorable, but as students age and are better able to focus, class sizes can increase. The group pulled a Brookings Institute report from 2011 (<https://www.brookings.edu/research/class-size-what-research-says-and-what-it-means-for-state-policy/>) which referenced a study in Tennessee showing that a major reduction from 22 to 15 students had a significant, positive impact on achievement but mainly for students in the earliest grades and those from disadvantaged families. However, there is limited information about whether the additional cost of maintaining smaller class sizes has enough benefit when school finances are constrained.

ESSA Reporting

With the advent of the new reporting directives from the ESSA plan, Tom explained the variety of ways a particular employee could be “coded” in the budget and is awaiting guidance from the Federal and state governments regarding how particular staff members, in this instance teacher aides, should be accounted for in school spending accountability.

Out of District Tuition

A CAC committee member shared her own research about out-of-district tuition in our area. Tom has spent some time reviewing that document, and the committee agreed that he should reach out to her directly for a meeting about her research and the practical reality in most districts in the county. For instance, some schools may post a tuition figure on their website but don't accept out of district students at all. Others may list varying tuition rates for students with different needs though it is best practice, and in line with a student's FAPE (Fair and Appropriate Public Education) rights, to charge all students the same tuition regardless of need.

Preliminary Budgeting

Tom reported that the initial budget binders have been provided to the Principals for input from their staff for the 2019-20 budget. He explained that, since our schedule had been tightened in years past, it didn't allow for Principals and staff to undergo multiple planning discussions throughout the process. Department heads would submit their needs for the coming year, and, through a number of iterations, items would necessarily be cut to stay in line with the tax cap. By the time a more finalized budget came to the Board, what was in it bore little resemblance to the initial requests of the departments thus breeding a sense of disenfranchisement among staff members. For this year, because a first draft budget won't be presented until later in February, the Principals and grade-level and/or Department chairs will have a reasonable amount of time to review what's best for student program. For next year, with the new accounting software in place, Tom and the Principals will be able to use the internal budgeting feature to improve this process further.

Next Meetings

December 6, 2018 - 8:30 am (note change from original 12/4 date)

December 18, 2018 - 8:30 am

Respectfully submitted by Laura Schulkind