

ANWSD BUDGET FAQ's

Dear JoAn,

As the Superintendent, I trust that you have the best interest of our students in mind and there was considerable thought and care behind any of the cuts or changes which have been proposed in next year's school budget. Many of us have just become aware of these changes, however, and we are struggling to understand the reasoning behind the cuts and how the cuts are equitable across the district.

I've compiled a list of questions which I hope will allow you to help us better understand why these changes were made and what options, if any, we have moving forward. If you could take the time to answer these questions in as much detail as possible, I will forward your responses along to the parents at FCS. Although this document is long, it's my hope that sending you these questions in a consolidated manner will reduce the number of questions you will have to field from individual parents and allow you the opportunity to explain your rationale to the broader community.

As the Superintendent, you are tasked with the impossible job of finding a way to maintain and improve our educational system without increasing the burden on tax payers despite annual salary increases, rules around special education and the need for continual building maintenance and upgrades. I expect that we will see many changes in our schools over the next few years as we struggle both locally and at the State level to find ways to reduce or maintain our school budget. There will, undoubtedly, be decisions made that parents and community members won't like that are deemed necessary to achieve this goal. This is inevitable, but I think changes are easier to accept when people feel they have been involved in the process and are armed with the facts. I appreciate your acknowledgment that this piece was missing this year and I look forward to working with you to find a way to improve this in the future.

Sincerely,

Melanie Clark

FCS PTO Co-Chair

Dear Melanie,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address these questions.

I will do my best to clear and concise.

Before I begin to answer the questions below I do want to clarify a position that I took at the Budget Meeting. A few Addison parents expressed concern that while we have an intra-school choice policy, creating a large class size inhibits students from moving into the grade ½ combination classroom at ACS. I would like to clarify that we will accept school choice requests for any grade in Addison. If we have a larger class size in that grade we will work to accommodate those requests by re-allocating resources to ensure student needs are met.

1. Do you feel that there are inefficiencies in the Principal positions right now that will allow the Principals to do their current job at .8 rather than 1 FTE?

A full year, full time employee works 260 days. We budgeted a 210 day contract for the ACS and FCS Principal. That is 25 days over the student and staff days. This should allow enough time to end a school year and be available for getting the school year started again. I conducted research about the FTE's of Principals in the neighboring school districts. In Addison

Northeast, all Principals work 220 days. In the next year budget two of these positions will work less days than 220 (I have not been able to get the exact number of days). In ACSD, the Ripton Principal works 150 days and the rest work 250. I am not sure the word inefficiency is a term I would use to describe why I believe we can make this reduction but there is no local summer programming at FCS and ACS and no need to have an administrator on duty. There is summer programming at VUHS and VUES and therefore a need to have an administrator on duty. What I have come to conclude is that we can report to the retirement office and Agency of Education that our positions that work less than 260 days can also be considered full time. I expect the insurance benefits for both positions will also be consistent with a full time position.

2. If there are inefficiencies, are these inefficiencies across the board? If so, why weren't all the Elementary Principal positions cut to .8 FTE?

See number 1

3. If there are no inefficiencies, what aspects of the Principals' jobs will go away to make up for the .2 FTE decrease? Who will take on these responsibilities?

In the summer, the Central Office staff will make sure that mail is opened, bills are paid, students are registered and phone calls are returned in the month of July at two schools. The Principals and JoAn will work out a mutually agreed upon work schedule for the 2018-19 school year mapping where the 210 days will be distributed.

4. Is there a specific state-mandated ratio we are required to follow that dictates how many hours a Principal should work? If so, what are these?

Principals work many hours beyond a 40-hour week. Other administrators in the district who make a salary do the same.

The Secretary of Education in a memo dated October 4th, 2018 asked school districts to increase student to teacher and student to administrator ratios. She went on to report that the average size school for a full time Principal is 179 students.

The Governor has also communicated to Superintendents and School Boards that school staff to student ratios are extremely low as compared to New England states and across the country. When we receive warnings like this early in the school year, it is not uncommon for this kind of information to be included in legislation that is enacted upon after budgets are voted in. We have been given spending caps in the past and now the focus is on student to staff ratios. Our per pupil cost butts up against the highest limits that are set. We spend more per equalized student than any other school district in Addison County. I am charged with making sure our students get a quality of education, to keep our district out of fiscal jeopardy and also to meet our local tax payer's expectations.

5. What is the justification for maintaining both the FCS and ACS Principals at .8 FTE when there are twice as many classrooms at FCS?

I understand that one school has more students than another. I was trying to be humane and not reduce one person more significantly than another in this first year.

6. I believe there is some frustration around the fact that an Administrator has been added to the high school despite declining enrollment, yet positions have been reduced at the elementary schools. Can you better explain the need for this and what requires this new position to be full-time?

There were two secretaries in the Guidance Office up until this last summer when one retired. Upon reviewing her responsibilities, we determined that many of the job functions that she has taken on over 30 years of her employment were administrative and required the skills of a person overseeing the entire Guidance Department. We decided to replace the Administrative Assistant with a Director of School Counseling and Student Programs. The salary differential would be paid for by hiring a 10-month Assistant Principal (reduced from full time) and a reduction in a support staff position in RRC. Student schedule changes happen all summer long. Students have needs to meet with a school counselor over the summer as they continue to work out plans for next steps after graduation. Creating a leadership position in the guidance office will allow us to provide better counseling and services to students especially in light of a new personalized learning environment and to set goals around increasing the number of students who are going on to post- secondary environments. We are also in the process of developing an agreement with an organization that will allow us to bring in students from Asia. These students would be tuition paying students. Other schools have been enriched by this partnership because visiting teachers accompany these students, giving us an opportunity to expand world language options such as Mandarin Chinese. The new position will be key in this new endeavor.

7. What are the distinct differences between the High School and the Elementary Schools Principal positions that warrant keeping the two high school Principals full time? What additional duties do they have during the summer months?

I believe I answered this question

Additional duties for VUES and VUHS include summer programming for students. Parent and student need to change course schedules and make plans for the future.

8. From what I have gathered, most FCS parents were not impressed by the pool of candidates during the last Principal search. There is some concern amongst parents that reducing the Principal positions to .8 FTE will further impact the quality of the Principal we are able to hire if either the FCS or ACS Principal leave. Can you address this concern?

The number of candidates for the Principalship really depends upon when the search is undertaken (what month of the year), the reputation of the district and the salary. I have not heard that the quality of candidates was of concern. All I know is that I am committed to ensure that we get quality candidates for any position we have available. The last time we advertised for a Principal at ACS it was a .8 Principal. The board approved of a full time contract because they wanted to add additional responsibilities to this position that was not currently covered in the school. It was around the integration of technology. The reason the position remained at full time in the following year is because I promised the board in the unification year that we would maintain all staff and programs so that we gave a positive message to the community about unification. I also mentioned to the individual Principal (ACS) and the board that we may not be able to support this going forward due to declining enrollment.

9. What are the number of contracted hours for a .8 FTE Principal and how does this compare with the contracted hours for full-time teachers?

Teachers work 185 days and a 36.25 hour week and Principals work 210-260 days and many of the weeks are over 40 hours a week.

10. What is the projected salary of the FCS and ACS Principals and how does this compare to the highest paid teachers working 1 FTE? (Will we see teachers working as many – or fewer – contracted hours making more or similar salaries? We are trying to gauge if the transition to an Administrator is enough to entice people to want to apply for the job vs. staying in their current teaching positions. Again, this may be a factor in getting qualified candidates).

The highest paid teacher makes \$77,312 in the current year. We have 12 teachers making a salary in the \$70,000 range. A teacher average daily salary at the highest salary is 418.00 a day.

Comparing this to the highest paid Principal is 375.00 a day and the Superintendent is 479.00 a day.

11. What other schools have Principals at a .8 or .6 FTE? (Perhaps we can contact the PTO leadership at these schools to see if they feel like having a Principal at less than full time impacted their ability to hire a good candidate.)

I think I answered this. Let me know if you need other district information

12. At one point, ACS did have a part-time Principal but then transitioned back to full time. What was the rationale for both reducing the position initially and why was it moved back to full time? What has changed to lead you to believe this position can once again be reduced?

**In 2011, ACS's enrollment was at 90 with a 1.0 FTE principal.
2012 – 79 with 1.0 FTE
2013 – 69 with .60 FTE principal (+.40 Interim Superintendent)
2014 – 75 with .80 FTE (+.20 curriculum)
2015 – 71 with .80 FTE (+.20 curriculum)
2016 – 62 with .80 FTE (+.20 curriculum)
2017 – 61 with .80 FTE (+.20 curriculum)**

13. Do you have a long-term plan for consolidating the ACS and FCS Principal positions? If so, why are we prolonging the pain instead of ripping off the band aid and moving to that model now?

If we continue to have a significant declining enrollment we may need to look at alternative leadership structures. The school board is meeting in the next couple of months to discuss strategies to deal with declining enrollment. I understand the interest in ripping off the band aid. But given what we have been experiencing recently with our staff changes, I don't think severe cuts would serve us well. This is our first year of unification. We are all trying to figure out how we will work together. This will be a process not a race.

Could another position be reduced or eliminated to solve the perceived Principal issue or have contracts already been given to staff?

Reduction in Force deadline is in April. Contracts are also out in April. I would still be open to a discussion about what parents' value before we make final decisions.

14. We understand that the budget is set and that if we want to reinstate the Principals back to full time we will either need to find additional grant funding or make cuts elsewhere? Do you have any options you could put forward to the group of cuts that could be made elsewhere? Are all positions currently at the state mandated hours or are there any we are hiring above those required by the State that we could reduce?

I would need to reduce music, physical education, art, library, guidance, and possibly literacy in the elementary schools. I have mentioned that there MAY be some grant opportunities to pay our 2 Principals to oversee additional initiatives. This would need to be matched to the district need and their strengths. To provide equity across our schools our special area teachers will be working above the Educational Quality Standards for those positions.

15. The Secretary at FCS is at .9 and the one at ACS will be reduced to .8. What is the justification for the difference in hours between the two positions?

The ACS has less students, fewer bills and smaller facility.

16. As it stands right now, it appears the Secretary at FCS is slated to work more hours than the Principal. Why is this and who will supervise her?

I cannot answer this question at this time.

17. It is proposed that a nurse be shared between FCS and ACS and that a LPN fill in during the hours the Nurse is at the other school. If an LPN is adequate some time, why isn't it adequate all the time? Are there state mandates around this?

We used to have a model in the district where each school had an LPN and a district nurse who supervised people at the building level. We could go back to this model at some point. It would take more time to explore and evaluate this model, review what the student needs are (thinking they have changed since the inception of the previous model). A district nurse model is acceptable to the Agency of Education however, I am not sure it would be appropriate for our needs. It is a future consideration.

18. Is there anything else you think we should know that played a factor in influencing any of cuts or changes made to the budget next year?

In December, 2017 I was asked by the school board to bring several versions of a budget to them including a level program budget, level funded budget (2017-18) and then a budget that was below the level funded budget. The level program budget that was representative of new health care plans and increase of teacher and support staff salary was close to a half a million dollars over the current year. We simply could not bring this to the voters. The legislature was already anticipating 7-8 cent increases on the tax rate to adjust for the unfunded teacher retirement short fall.

I proposed a budget that was \$15,000 less than the current budget. If I presented a budget that was consistent with the guidance provided by the Secretary of Education in October of 2017, we would have needed to reduce 24 positions in the district. I could not do this and meet the expectation that this budget should meet the vision of the school district. When we unified our schools, I promised that we could be more efficient and cost effective. We have a significant declining student enrollment. We simply cannot continue to do things in the same way that we have. I have adhered to our class size procedures. I am also committed to being creative in meeting the needs of our students in different ways. I am also committed to equity across our schools and to support our students in any way that we need to consider.

Please know I have always had the best interest of our kids and our communities in any decision that I have made. I am disappointed that my efforts with the board has created this frustration and fire storm. I commit to you that I want to rectify this going forward. Please work with me. I value the uniqueness and individuality of all our schools.

Thank You,

JoAn Canning, Superintendent of Schools