

Questions Raised at the November 24th Board of Education Meeting Open Topics Forum and Board of Education/RCSD Answers

Q. Are the class sizes in the Middle School too big this school year?

A. The District's goal for the Middle School is classes of 25 students, plus or minus 2 students. The District and Administration believe that class sizes of no greater than 26 or 27 students are acceptable for core classes. The average core class size is 23 students in 6th grade, 22 students in 7th grade, and 25 students in 8th grade.

After reviewing the individual class sizes at the Middle School, the District found a small number of art and foreign language classes comprised of 28 and 29 students. While not ideal, these are not core classes. The District has found only one science and two ELA (English Language Arts) classes that are larger than optimal. The administration agrees that these particular classes are too large and is looking at staffing for the next school year. Our staffing decisions have already been made for current school year, so the classes will remain their current size.

Q. Shouldn't Middle School foreign language classes that appear on H.S. transcript be smaller-sized classes?

A. The District makes every attempt to plan for appropriate staffing for foreign language classes but cannot predict with total accuracy which foreign language classes students will choose. The Middle School offers Spanish, French, Latin, Mandarin and American Sign Language, and the number of students who elect to take one or more of the offerings fluctuates from year to year. Our staffing decisions have already been made for the current school year, so the classes will stay at their current size. The District is looking at staffing for foreign language classes as it prepares the 2016-17 school year budget.

Q. Is the team structure in the Middle School a problem in scheduling?

A. The team structure in the Middle School is reflective of best practices in the field of education. Teams came about as a means of breaking up the traditional junior high structure into smaller units so individual students became well known to a group of core class teachers. Each team has four

core class teachers. The core class teachers from each of the teams meet on a regular basis to integrate the students' curriculum, allowing teachers to make connections among the four disciplines (science, language arts, math and social studies). The team structure also enables the core course teachers to align students' testing, project and homework schedules to ensure students are not overburdened.

Q. Why are there 2.5 teams in the 8th grade Middle School? Shouldn't there be 3 per grade?

The number of teams is based on the number of students per grade. The size of the current 6th and 7th grades, at 281 and 271 students respectively, warrants three teams. The current 8th grade, which is the smallest class by approximately 20 students, does not. That grade has 2.5 teams this school year. For scheduling purposes, it simply does not make sense for the District to split that particular grade into 3 teams.

Q. There were some parent complaints around the film crew that was on the Middle School/High School Campus. What is the District doing to alleviate those concerns?

A. Many years ago, the District served as a location for a number of movies. There followed a lull during which the District was not approached by location scouts to act as a location. That seems to have changed this last year, when the District has been approached by several film and TV production companies. The District is learning how best to manage these production crews, who provide welcome, non-tax revenue based income in a time of extreme budgetary belt-tightening.

The first two production shoots seemed to have gone smoothly, but the District has received several parent complaints about the last shoot. The District believes that careful evaluation of future productions and better communication to parents and staff prior to filming will help alleviate parent and staff concerns.

At the Open Topics Forum, one Board Member recommended that future productions be required to provide the District with an educational component that might benefit students. For example, a production crew might allow teachers and students from an appropriate class to visit the set.

In addition to communications expressing concerns about the most recent film production, the District has received several letters from parents in support of future productions on campus.