

District-Wide Consultation Committee Meeting  
(DWCC)

Minutes of the Wednesday, February 17, 2016 Meeting

The District-wide Consultation Committee (DWCC) met on Wednesday, February 17, 2016, at 4:15pm, in the Crockett room at One AISD Center. The following committee members were in attendance: Traci Yandell, Cindy Boyd, Linda White, Roy Dudgeon, Roger Thomas, Tom Tomaras, Jessica Melson, Elizabeth Wagstaff, Dr. Joe Alcorta, and Phil Ashby. Also in attendance were Dr. Audra Ude, Mark Neal, Sondra Cox, and Debra Stevens. The following members were absent: Christy Young, Steven Shinkle, Kay Loftin, Carey Kitts, Charlie Thyne, Charlene Richardson, Dr. David Young, Summer Anders, and Tracy Howle.

Roger Thomas opened the meeting. He informed those present that committee member, Christy Young, has asked for prayer for her husband, Larry. Medical tests show that he has spots that are deep in the brain and will be having more testing. Mr. Thomas then turned the meeting over to Dr. Joe Alcorta.

Dr. Alcorta informed the committee that Dr. David Young would not be at the meeting due to personal medical issues. He reminded the committee members that the Board of Trustees has already approved a school calendar for the 2016-2017 school year. If a new calendar is presented to and approved by the board, the extra minutes may be utilized for tutorials, enrichment, and to make up the time lost to the mega lunch program.

A handout was presented to the committee members containing examples of the emails received concerning the proposed calendar and the additional minutes to the daily schedules. Mr. Ashby stated that the district has received approximately 200 emails, of which 75% were against the expanded school day. Most of the negative responses were from family and/or teachers at the elementary level. The most common responses were the additional time at school would be too hard on the children and the parents, it would shrink the preparation time for teachers and a 7½ hour school day was too long for the district's youngest students.

Many committee members voiced concern that the many parents, especially low income parents, have not responded to the proposed calendar because they do not have access to a computer. It was suggested that a survey be formulated to determine the preference for the adopted calendar or the proposed calendar that would be easy for parents to respond to including a take-home paper survey, making an announcement on the campus marquee, encouraging parents to come into the school to use district computers in conjunction with school events, such as PTA and special programs, or after normal hours. It was also suggested that a public service announcement would be beneficial.

Cindy Boyd had received feedback on the proposed additional minutes from teachers. She stated that many teachers feel that they would be getting ripped off financially by the district and wanted to know if they would be compensated for the additional instructional time. Those teachers believe that their contractual compensated work day is from 7:45am to 3:45pm. Teachers at the high school level want to keep the two early release days during final examinations. Concerns were voiced about when the Zero Period would start and the impact on UIL events, band, athletics and students who have to work to support themselves and/or their families. Additionally, teachers were concerned that there would be less time to prepare for classes and it would be difficult to handle the number of students in tutoring and enrichment without additional staff. Many teachers were concerned about childcare facilities not accommodating the additional time for their own children. It was noted that the additional minutes will replace the five minutes that was taken from instructional time with the implementation of the Mega Lunch at the high school level.

Suggestions were made to scrap the Memorial Day graduation and add days to the calendar to meet the new minute requirements of the state, to build a model school day to show teachers how the proposed additional minutes could be used, and to increase the elementary teacher's "work" period to an hour to improve teacher morale.

It was noted that most children arrive at school at 7:15am for free or reduced breakfast. It was proposed that all elementary campuses adopt the breakfast in the classroom program to utilize the time normally spent in the cafeteria or gym waiting for instructional time to start.

Dr. Audra Ude informed the committee that the state is moving away from granting waivers to districts that do not meet the minimum instructional time requirements. In the past, Abilene ISD has been granted a waiver for up to four days. Next year's adopted calendar will include a four day waiver. She stated that those type of waivers will not be issued in the future. Under the proposed calendar, there would be enough time built in to provide two inclement weather days. There will still be waivers issued for catastrophic events such as tornadoes, fires, etc.

Elizabeth Wagstaff asked about reducing the amount of the proposed additional minutes at the elementary level. She had calculated that adding 20 minutes to the elementary level's schedule would meet the minimum requirements of the state; however, would be no allowance for inclement days. It was also noted that elementary students would not have the early release days for finals as do the high school students and those minutes could be added to the total.

All committee members agree that teachers, parents, and the general public do not understand the purpose of adding minutes to the school day. Too much misinformation is being circulated via social media. Many teachers fear retaliation for voicing their opinion. It was suggested that a "Frequently Asked" question promotion be

constructed as soon as possible to address the lack of understanding and misinformation being circulated throughout the district and community.

The committee agreed to meet on March 2, 2016, to continue to review the proposed calendar and feedback from faculty, staff, parents, and the community.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra Stevens