

WILLOW RUN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
Ypsilanti, Michigan

WORK/STUDY SESSION

December 16, 2006

The work/study session opened at 8:30 a.m. in the Media Center of Willow Run High School, 235 Spencer Lane, Ypsilanti, MI 48198.

Those present were:

- Claudette Braxton, President
- Andreas Blakita, Vice President
- Brenda Clay, Secretary
- Clifford Smith, Trustee
- Dorothy Stewart, Treasurer
- Sheri Washington, Trustee
- Scott Wilson, Trustee
- Travis Greer, Student Representative to the Board of Education

Members of the Administrative Council Present:

- Ron Ciranna, J.D., Superintendent
- Melvin Anglin, Principal, Willow Run Middle School
- Chester Carter, Principal, Willow Run Alternative High School
- Karen Cumming, Supervisor, Food Service
- Don Goven, Principal, Kettering Elementary School
- Karyn Goven, Supervisor, Adult Education and Child Care
- Dr. David M. Houle, Controller
- Dr. Walter Jenkins, Principal, Willow Run High School
- Todd LaPrairie, Supervisor, Buildings and Grounds
- Laura Lisiscki, Principal, Kaiser Elementary School
- Bryon Schroeder, Assistant Principal, Willow Run Middle School
- Mike Schubart, Athletic Director, and Assistant Principal, Willow Run High School
- Kimberly Searcy, Supervisor, Transportation
- Katie Smith, Director, Technology and Community Services
- Shannon Smith, Assistant Principal, Willow Run High School
- Lana Tatom, Director, Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
- Regina Williams, Curriculum Coordinator

President Braxton called the meeting to order at 8:37 a.m.

Dr. Ciranna said this Administrative/Board Retreat is being held in public, so everyone can be involved. He then reviewed the information in the meeting packet, which is attached.

Dr. Ciranna addressed flyers distributed recently about the Town Hall meeting scheduled to be held at Kaiser Elementary, saying these flyers lead people to believe this is their only option to have input on the Deficit Elimination Plan (DEP). He explained this is a draft document for the State to review and is changeable. He said this draft will be reviewed every month at a board meeting, and then filed monthly with the State for their approval.

Dr. Ciranna then introduced Dr. Mike Wilmot, Michigan Leadership Institute, who acted as the Meeting Facilitator. Dr. Wilmot has more than 30 years experience in education, along with experience with DEP's, and who was here to hopefully bring us to a consensus mode. Dr. Ciranna said the DEP forces us to reevaluate what we are doing in Willow Run, what is working and how to increase enrollment. Dr. Ciranna said he would like an open forum and dialogue.

Dr. Wilmot said he was impressed by the number of people at the meeting to work on the plan and then explained the context for the meeting and addressed that fact that Dr. Benit was brought here through a search conducted by the Michigan Leadership Institute. Dr. Wilmot explained the process his firm followed in conducting the search including the use of Willow Run's points-of-pride in advertising for applicants, and inclusion of the board's wants for the unique, skills, qualifications and characteristics in candidates brought to them for consideration.

After a candidate pool was assembled, the board received a list of candidates to choose from of the applicants closest to the profile they wanted. The board selected six candidates, and then narrowed it down to two. Stakeholder meetings for the Willow Run Community to meet with both Dr. Benit and another candidate were then held and the board subsequently hired Dr. Benit.

Dr. Wilmot said the Michigan Leadership Institute guarantees that if a new-hire does not work out in the first 12-months, another search will be done for free. He said during the second year of Dr. Benit's superintendancy, he was contacted to help develop a Strategic Plan for the District and all board members, the entire administrative team, and community members were invited to participate in the Task Force.

The Task Force developed a Strategic Plan, which included a vision statement, a mission statement and guiding principles, which were adopted by the board, but the Strategic Plan as a whole was not adopted.

Mr. Smith said several people were invited for the Superintendent search, and that Dr. Wilmot did the search. He said Dr. Wilmot is telling us he did not have any responsibility for checking Dr. Benit's background and was then brought

back by Dr. Benit to help develop the Strategic Plan. He added he does not like the part where he said he has no responsibility, because there could be a convicted felon out there.

Dr. Wilmot said at the time the search was done no federal investigation was underway and that Ann Arbor and Ecorse schools both commented on Dr. Benit favorably. Mr. Smith replied there was an investigation underway at that time.

Mr. Smith said he is disturbed our own administration cannot present their work to the board. He said we can hear a whole lot of things, but we need to cut to the chase. Ms. Stewart said she does not want to spend a whole bunch of time going over old things and asked if we can cut to the DEP right away. She said information was asked for, but not received until the very end, so it is hard to formulate intelligent questions.

Dr. Wilmot said the purpose of the meeting was to look at the planning document again, but has now been changed to walking through the DEP step-by-step. He said the DEP is required to be filed through the Department of Education when a deficit is reported or expected and that anything taken out will hurt and cause damage. He explained once the DEP is filed the State will review it and make determinations about if it will get the District out of its deficit.

Mr. Stanley Stewart asked what the protocol would be for participation by members of the audience. Dr. Wilmot said as he goes through the plan he will solicit questions from members of the audience.

Dr. Houle explained a DEP is required when a negative fund balance is occurring, and the State allows districts two-years to demonstrate they can remedy the deficit. He said we lost about \$2 million a year, for the last three-years and that a year ago the District took the proactive action of developing a draft DEP and this will be presented using current numbers.

Dr. Houle continued if you fail to demonstrate a commitment to fix the problem there will be sanctions including: withholding of State Aid, which is \$1.5 million a month; no borrowing from the State, and a State-appointed fiscal manager, who will run the District to balance the budget. He said the plan being proposed for filing next week is only a beginning. The DEP is on the District website and the State website. He then walked the group through page seven (7) of the DEP, which encompasses years 05-06, 06-07 and an estimate of 07-08, and explained the answers at the beginning of the document are answers to the questions listed in the back of the document.

Dr. Houle said we currently have a \$1.8 million deficit, with enrollment down 117-120 kids this year, the deficit will go up to approximately \$2.8 million. Other factors impacting the deficit are:

- Retirement costs continuing to increase – expected to increase over 19% from the current 17%, which means a dollar amount increase of \$200 thousand dollars, which brings the deficit closer to \$3 million.
- The sale of the Administration Building, which brought in \$.5 million dollars, but leaves us with no other buildings to sell.
- Looking at a \$3.5 million challenge.
- Collective-bargaining agreements.

Dr. Houle said we are telling the State we believe we are on the road out of this, beginning with a change to the health care plans, which could save almost \$1.2 million if we are able to do that. He said the 07-08 assumption is receipt of an increase of more than \$210 to the foundation allowance per student, which would equal more than \$.5 million.

Dr. Houle said State Bulletin 10.14, which the State uses to demonstrate per pupil spending by each district in the State, shows our instructional expenditures are high, because of teacher salaries and benefits combined with low enrollment results in these numbers being higher than others. He said there is a potential savings of \$800,000 there. Dr. Houle said Bulletin 10.14 also shows our maintenance costs, on a per pupil bases are high.

The State is recommending reconvening the Budget Task Force to look at where money can be saved.

Mr. Clay Bell asked how the board is addressing the continuing decline of students in the District. He said this needs to be done, or we will be back in the same situation we are currently in. He asked if there is a plan to recruit new, or to get back exited students. He said this would be better than cutting stipends and teachers.

Dr. Houle said if this could be fixed based on enrollment we would need close to 400 students by the 07-08 school year. He said we are looking to the principals, community and parents to advise us on a process. He said the State will not approve the plan if we say we are going to grow our way out of this. He added the District is set-up for 3,500 kids.

Mr. Stewart said in the budget plan presented there is no budget for marketing and that in one-year when we spent money on marketing an additional 100 students came here. He added there should be monies to help grow the District.

Dr. Ciranna said we need to balance the budget to grow and this is a double-edged sword; with low enrollment at the elementaries and fifth-graders leaving. He said the District is looking at reconfiguring grade levels to keep and attract students. Dr. Ciranna added six other districts in the county have

stabilized their teacher/student ratio, as well as others throughout the State by going to grade level buildings.

Dr. Ciranna said they are looking for the least disruptive way to balance the budget, and changes in health care could save \$1.2 million. He added they are looking for a way to not close a building. He said exploration is being done about moving fifth and sixth grade student into their own wing of the middle school, as well as ninth grade. He said they are looking at ways to fix the situation without closing an elementary school, which would provide a \$.5 million savings to the District and added if you do not cut somewhere, you will have to cut somewhere else.

Dr. Ciranna said there needs to be agreement on two basic assumptions: 1) we have to balance the budget, 2) the least disruption to the District. He said we will work with a facilitator to do this.

Mr. Smith said some of us live in and know the District and some of the things he has seen- particularly in the reconfiguration of the elementaries will not save us one dime. He said the community schools being cut will cause us to lose students. Mr. Smith pointed out that Cheney is achieving on the MEAP with a high minority rate and is also the only school with increasing enrollment around here. He said we will lose 200 students, like other districts did when they went to grade level buildings.

Mr. Smith said there has been talk about cutting insurance for a \$1.5 million savings and of closing a building, but asked how do we get there? He said you can't just throw numbers at people; you need information on how we can get there.

Dr. Ciranna said the District has worked with insurance representative and made presentations to each union leader over the past year. He said closing an elementary at \$.5 million represents the maintenance and upkeep of the building, along with the salaries of people who work there.

Ms. Robin Hines said she is curious about how to keep kids in the District. She said no one could tell her why she should not take her kids out. She said no one from administration talked to her.

Ms. Kathleen Miller said there has been a 117-120 student loss this year for a budgetary loss of \$1 million and asked what figure is being used for per pupil funding. Dr. Houle asked if she meant the current funding numbers. He said they are assuming losing 120 students and this equates into roughly a \$1 million loss, with 07-08 down \$1 million, then an increase of \$.5 million with an increase in the foundation allowance.

Ms. Miller said her figures show a loss of \$300,000 and Dr. Houle's shows a \$1 million loss. Dr. Houle said his shows \$.5 million loss when the \$500,000 gain in state-aid is factored in.

A District employee said Cheney Academy is working very well and if buildings go to grade-level, this will be a problem for parents with kids in different buildings. She requested Cheney stay K-6, since it works so well, so parents can have their kids in one building.

Another member of the audience asked how we got here and how many board members are getting raises, when teachers have to beg for money for books. She said no person should feel shunned when asking a question and that the District is now asking for their input and questioned if it will really impact their decision.

Ms. Braxton said the communities' presence at the meeting shows they really care about District. She said there are two jobs here 1) the DEP and 2) turning into a District we can all be proud of. She said we may not do a grade-level system; we are just looking at options. She urged everyone to get about the business of working together and not taking potshots at one another. She said we are here today to address this, so let's do this.

A citizen said the board, the superintendent and the people of authority are not listening. Ms. Braxton said the purpose of this meeting is to go through this process, so we can work together on recommendations.

An audience member said they realize there is a budget, but does the board realize if the kids don't come, there will be problems. She said she is a real estate agent and when she finds the perfect house for clients, they do not want it if it is in Willow Run. She said the budget has no money in it for books and if we have no teachers and no books you have no school.

Another citizen said there is a safety issue at the middle school and when she walks into it nobody asks her who she is or why she is there. She said she will not send her son there due to safety concerns.

Ms. Carol Blackburn said the numbers reflecting general administration costs are the highest and questioned what general administration is. Dr. Houle said general administration includes the superintendent and the business office and for most of the 05-06 year the position of business/finance director was part-time services purchased from the WISD. He said the position is now filled for a full-year on a full-time basis, which is reflected in the higher costs.

Ms. Barbara VanHorn said in looking at the expense of contracts and the 58.81% increase at general administration, with instructional staff showing a decline of 2.21%, it appears it takes more to run administration than

classrooms. She said they have worked without a raise since 2004 and looking at 58.81% makes her wonder. Ms. Braxton said nothing is cut in stone, it seems like salaries and raises of the past year can be put on hold to balance the budget.

Ms. VanHorn said if she gives up \$6,000, so the administrators get \$6,000 that is not nice. She added if we do not get a raise everybody that did should put it back in the pot. If everyone brings the company up to where it should be, then they should get a bonus. She said she is not saying the administrators do not deserve it, and she is not saying they do not work hard, but everybody in here works hard.

A citizen in the audience asked if administrators are taking pay cuts and added she would not have know anything about this meeting if her daughter's kindergarten teacher had not told her. She asked how you can get to this point and if administrators got raises, why are teachers taking cuts when they are bending over backwards teaching our kids. She added kids do not see administrators, they see their teachers.

Dr. Wilmot said he hopes people have had an opportunity to raise questions and that there will be an option to ask questions as they go through the plan. He said the concern of the school district needs to be about teaching and learning, as well as how to keep kids here and bring kids back, while at the same time recognizing this will not happen overnight. He said the District needs to stabilize to get kids here. He said Proposal A in 1995 created nightmares across the State and Willow Run is feeling the pinch.

He then suggested the group look at each individual component of the DEP.

Ms. Blackburn said this has not been brought to the table for over a year. Dr. Houle said this has been an on-going process even if it has not been actively brought to the table.

Ms. Stacey Donahue said in talking about attracting students, we need to look at other district's offerings and that we are only offering one advanced placement course. She asked how that compares with other districts. She added the District has not followed the High Schools that Work recommendations for improvement.

Regarding point one of the DEP, Ms. Deb Swanson said the State needs to know that prior to the teacher's contract being sent to fact-finding, it did go to mediation. She said the teachers and the District are only \$70,000 apart and there were four mediation sessions. Mr. Wilson questioned if is really true that they are only \$70,000 apart.

Dr. Ciranna said everyone needs to understand these are recurring costs, so without revenue each year, you cannot settle the contract. He said there is talk about the State decreasing, or freezing funding next year. He said these pages, in the DEP, are a narrative of what is currently going on in the State.

Mr. Smith said he does not understand what the \$70,000 difference is. He said we need every group behind us to get where we need to be. We need to know where we are as a board.

Mr. Wilson said as a board member he got all of that information and he is not going to negotiate in public and violate the law like that. He added it is now 10:00 and the group needs to focus on what they are here to do.

Ms. Swanson said her point is to include the fair statement that the teachers did not demand fact-finding immediately.

The group then moved onto discussion of point two. Mr. Wilson said negotiations should not be included in a public document. Dr. Wilmot said they are gathering suggestions on how to modify the document prior to submission.

Ms. Miller said the teachers' contract expired on August 31, 2005, not June 30, 2005 as stated in the DEP. Ms. Blackburn said the Para Educators contract expired on July 1, 2006 not June 30, 2006.

The group agreed with points 3 and 4 of the DEP, and had already discussed what ongoing negotiations in point 5 mean.

Regarding point six, Mr. Smith said we know we have to do savings in health care, but he does not know what plans were looked at to come to these numbers. He asked if it would be appropriate to have the plans presented to the board. He said maybe we could come to an agreement, if the companies presented plans to at least two members of the board. Dr. Wilmot said this could be done in a closed session as part of negotiations.

Ms. Patrice LaGrand said if we already know health care is expensive, can the District say we are going to use a particular health plan, because health care is hurting everybody. She said employees need to choose a plan, either A or B. Dr. Wilmot said this would have to be agreed upon between the District and the employees. Mr. Dean Johnson said this should include the Chief Stewart and Executive Officer from each bargaining unit. Ms. Blackburn asked if this would mean health care concessions by all staff.

Dr. Houle said when the budget was put together the presumption for 06-07 was minor changes for all staff to healthcare for a savings to the District. Dr. Ciranna added a Collective Bargaining Agreement was achieved and central

office and the Administrative Unit went on MESSA 2, for a savings of about \$260,000 for 40 people.

Ms. Blackburn questioned if everyone is going to the same health care plan. Dr. Ciranna said yes, that is question 7.

Ms. Miller said regarding point 6, the \$70,000 difference, an agreement was reached on the health care plan, which was conceded over the summer.

Dr. Wilmot moved onto point 7. A teacher asked which deductible it is assumed the District will go to. Dr. Ciranna said a flex plan owned by the District has to be agreed upon by the union. This plan would have a \$1,250 single and a \$2,500 family deductible. He said this will result in a \$1-1.2 million savings each year, if agreed to in negotiations. It was then asked if employees would have to pay a monthly premium and also the deductible. Dr. Wilmot said this is dependent upon negotiations.

Ms. Fawn Martin requested units be brought in and the plans explained to them, so they can make a sound decision.

Mr. Bell questioned what is included in the \$1,500, higher than average, maintenance costs. Dr. Houle said that particular category includes utilities, custodial staff and supplies, continuing repairs, building repair parts, maintenance staff and the director. He said this can be viewed in Bulletin 10.14 on the State's website. Dr. Wilmot said the District spends roughly \$400 per pupil more than other districts on non-instructional costs.

Mr. Stewart asked about a pay freeze for all employee groups. Dr. Houle said the only increase is the known increase from State Retirement costs. Dr. Wilmot said salary freezes for everyone, may be in the increase in the cost of healthcare and retirement.

Ms. Blackburn asked if the reduction of cash-in-lieu of health care insurance would really result in a savings to the District. Dr. Houle explained if an employee is interested in our plan with a deductible or a co-pay and the employee can use another plan, the employee could do that in their best interest and that of the District.

Point 8 – A teacher said it is her understanding that not only teachers were able to participate in the buy-out, but administrators too and requested the DEP reflect this. Ms. Miller added the people at the top of the salary schedule were bought out and replacements were brought in at the bottom of the salary schedule, and asked if this should reflect a savings. Dr. Houle responded in theory somebody lower paid should be brought in, but sometimes that does not really happen.

Ms. Miller asked if the District ended up making no money on the buy-out package. Dr. Houle said a buy-out usually affects those at the end of their career, so it affects the time-value of money. Dr. Wilmot said the savings became diminished when the bought-out employees were replaced. Mr. Stewart requested the number of employees who left are included in the DEP, along with the savings realized as a result of this and also the number of replacement employees and their cost.

Ms. LaGrand said there has been consistency on the school board, and they are the ones who are supposed to be keeping an eye on this, so she has questions about why they were not keeping track of this. Dr. Wilmot said the board is made up of lay-people, who depend on those whom they employee for information, but clearly the final responsibility rests with the board.

Ms. Martin said in the history of the District the ability to do things is grant associated and asked if there is a number to show the actual loss in grant funding. Dr. Houle said the 07-08 projections presume the same level of funding for non-categoricals, which includes grants.

Ms. Stewart asked if we are planning on asking for additional grants to help us with our financial situation. Ms. Tatom said we are always submitting grants as they become available. Dr. Wilmot said the problem with grants includes the requirement that new services are being provided, most grants require not replacing services or require a match from the District, which sometimes can cost more than they bring in. Ms. Tatom said our grants are posted on the web-site and includes pending, received and available grants.

Point #9 – Dr. Houle said to clarify the statement at the end of the first paragraph, to build a \$6 million fund equity is not included in the 07-08 plan-the point is down the road, we need to build a fund equity as a source for our working capital and savings of approximately \$200,000 in interest.

Mr. Stewart questioned the target \$1.8 million balance deficit and trying to reduce it in one-year, when other district have gotten more than two-years, and asked why we are not looking at that. Dr. Wilmot explained that typically the State requires deficit elimination in two-years, not for it to be gone, but for a plan leading to it. He said if this is not done, the State would ask for another plan. Dr. Houle said as he has stated previously, he can't imagine how we are going to eliminate the deficit by 08 and he is sure we are going to be asking for an extension.

Mr. Stewart said his question is why we have to take on the whole deficit right now, give that we may need to spend some money on marketing and such? He added you have to spend money to make money. Dr. Wilmot said the District needs to communicate with the State to explain the timeline, but that the State ultimately decides the timeline.

A citizen in the audience said it took five-years to get here, so realistically it will take more than two-years to get out of the deficit. Mr. Smith said he does not think the State wants to dismantle the District. He said it is good to put numbers in that are realistic, and if the State buys this, they will buy anything. He said we need to get input from people and do it properly.

Mr. Blakita said realistically, the Department of Education needs to accept we cannot do it in a two-year timeframe. He questioned if we should put together something we cannot do in a two-year timeframe. Dr. Houle explained the initial submission will carve out a thumb nail plan, with a clear understanding that we will be asking for an extension. He said this plan will show the Department of Education we are serious about our DEP.

Mr. Ed Moore questioned if we have borrowed from the State and how much. Dr. Houle said we borrowed \$6.5 million in October, with a year-long loan that will need to be renewed in August. Dr. Wilmot said when school districts borrow money from the State it is a cash flow borrowing, from money set-aside from monthly state aid to repay it and it does not increase the total dollars, you are just getting access to the money sooner.

Point 10 – Ms. Beth Vonck said she is disappointed in the elimination of advanced placement courses, because it is very difficult for some students to get to the community college to take them there. She asked if we have explored the option of using Willow Run as a site for our students and others to take these courses, or of offering transportation to Washtenaw Community College for our advanced placement kids.

Dr. Ciranna said we are the only district that pays for tuition and books. He added that the District is already meeting with Eastern and Washtenaw to do this and they are also looking at offering virtual courses. Ms. Tatom said we are looking at online programs, along with credit recovery, GED and advanced placement courses.

A citizen said it is easier to take foreign language in high school, rather than in college and asked if you take these electives out of school what is left if there are no books, no teachers and no fun things. Ms. Tatom said we have purchased textbooks. Mr. Greer said the board purchased approximately \$40,000 worth of text books, so everyone has a book for each class.

Dr. Wilmot said the dilemma is a major portion of the budget has to go to salaries and benefits for employees, and reductions come from the biggest areas, so kids end up going without.

Ms. Renita Gibson said she has a senior student here, and is disappointed with the elimination of advanced placement classes. She asked why

advanced placement classes were eliminated before online classes were researched. She said we have failed kids because we have taken away the criteria colleges require to get in.

Ms. LaGrand said before cutting electives; think it through, not just at the high school, but at the middle school too, because it is very key to high school success. She said make sure you have input from parents and students.

Dr. Wilmot summarized these comments into 1) modification of district expenditures, 2) solicit parent input and 3) make equitable cuts across the board, not just advanced placement classes.

A citizen said she is concerned about counselors not preparing kids for college, trade school, whatever. Dr. Ciranna said we do research other districts for cuts. Dr. Wilmot said the Budget Task Force needs to be reconvened to look at this.

Ms. VanHorn said we have computers, but they need to be reconfigured for compatibility and added it will look good if administrators do not take a raise.

Mr. Stewart said it is likely the Budget Task Force will reconvene and requested language be put into the DEP stating this. Dr. Wilmot said it might help the State to know the community has been involved and will continue to be involved.

Ms. Smith said the computers Ms. VanHorn referred to were from a computer program class that was eliminated. Ms. Anna Darty said word about our computer lab was put out in the community, but when people came to see it, it had been closed. She added Ms. Dakesian presented a credit recovery program to the board and was told we do not have the money for it. She said we paid Ron Clark \$10,000 to speak and spent \$2,000 on his books, which was money that could have been put toward the \$15,000 cost of the credit recovery program. Ms. Tatom said the \$10,000 for Ron Clark came from a Professional Development Grant, which was approved by the State. She said this money is not usable for classroom supplies or books.

Dr. Wilmot said the District needs to look at options for people to have dialogue with the District about decisions and to receive explanations about decisions.

Point #11 – Mr. Smith said we need to look at this- there is no reason to subsidize child care. He said we need to look at an agency doing this on our premises. He also said we need to look at the number of employees and money collection. A citizen said taking away child care may hurt more than it is giving. Dr. Wilmot said any DEP will hurt more than it gives, and as Mr. Smith says you have to look at the cost.

Ms. Goven said there have been many changes to the child care program- it has been moved to the middle school, which resulted in a reduction in the number of workers, and is a wrap-around service that is low-cost and affordable.

Point 12 – Ms. Ellen Gorbaty asked if the anticipated loss of students should be considered in cutting the budget. Dr. Houle said we have been losing enrollment, while maintaining the status-quo. We are at a point where if the losses continue, we need to talk about another plan. He said if we plan for decreased enrollment, we have to ask the State for more money. Dr. Houle said we did budget for a 2% decline as forecasted by Middle Cities and our decline surpassed that.

Ms. Stewart said we shot ourselves in the foot with no advertising. She said there is not enough recruitment and we need to reflect in our plan a desire to attract students. She added we have to actively work on keeping our students, put advanced placement classes back and develop plans to attract and to improve. She said we need to fix this plan to reflect more hope and plans than it shows right now.

Mr. Wilson said we need to start working aggressively on marketing. He said we do have it in our budget- money set-aside for marketing. He said it says in here an increase of \$210 to the foundation, but it looks more like a mid-year reduction. Dr. Houle responded that this is because of problems with the State budget. He said he is presuming the State will live up to the funding promised, because we cannot be punished in the DEP by the State's failure to provide minimal funding. If the funding is taken away the District can request an extension for the DEP.

Dr. Ciranna said the State of Michigan's budget is down by \$100 million dollars in their General Fund and \$100 million in the State School Fund. Mr. Smith said over the last two to three years we had an increase in students from marketing, and we don't do any of that now and we need to.

Ms. Carrie Rhodes said when you talk about grade-level buildings; she thinks you will lose more people. Ms. McGill said if student are in different buildings, parents will have a hard time being involved at all buildings. Another parent said it is hard enough when you have kids in different buildings (high school, middle school, elementary), based on age, but if you separate at the elementary level you might as well close-up now.

Ms. Marlo Bearman said the keywords are community relationships. She said K-5 buildings help build relationships and if you are in building only two-years it is hard to do. She said when people run this district that do not even live here, it is hard. She added when she hears the board's bargaining team has not even told them how much they are apart it is sad.

Mr. Stewart said he researched other districts that went to this plan and several lost a lot more than they projected. He said we are teaching economically

disadvantage and minority students very successfully and the elementary schools are working very well. He said he is not so happy with the middle and high schools and that sixth grade needs to be brought back to the elementary schools.

A citizen in the audience said she thinks it was a mistake to take kindergarten out of Thurston and she thinks elementary schools should be grade 1-6 and the middle school 7-8. She said a lot of parents stop getting involved at the middle and high school and if you want to fix it you need to bring your parents into the middle and high schools.

Dr. Ciranna said the input received at this meeting is what we are looking for. He said we have to put a figure in there – Pre-k – 6 or K-6 at the elementaries. He said he will look at the Task Force recommendation to close a building and added the State needs a figure in there too. He said we are currently at a 24:9 student/teacher ratio. Dr. Ciranna said he would like a consensus about what to do, so the District can give the State a dollar amount. He asked if the preference is Pre-K or K-6 and close a building, or to increase the student/teacher ratio?

Dr. Ciranna said there will be a Town Hall meeting on Tuesday night at Kaiser Elementary school, and a student meeting on Wednesday. He encouraged everyone to think about it, to talk about it and to let him know.

Mr. Smith said looking at the \$800,000 figure, if we send this to the State it is misleading. He said as far as closing a building we have 1,800 new buildings in Superior Township. He added we need to take that section out (closing a building).

Dr. Wilmot thanked everyone for coming out and giving their input. He said it is community involvement that will save the District.

President Braxton declared the meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.