

November 2, 2010
PTO Meeting

A.. Stacey Mari - Introductions

B. Guest Speaker, Adams 12 Superintendent, Chris Gdowski
Previously Submitted Questions were answered.

1) I've heard that Colorado ranks #46/50 in national funding per student, which is close to last. What can we do as parents and taxpayers to improve this ranking and get more of our tax dollars to go toward the ever-important education of our kids?

Colorado ranks low on the list of funding nationally. Refer to handout.

He explained that Colorado has low tax rates, and that income taxes are down and stimulus dollars are going away, and a decline in property tax revenue are all factors in the decreased funding for Colorado schools.

1.1 B deficit in Colorado this year.

He indicated we will have to start looking at taxes and revenue.

Problem in Adams is that we have a high property tax rate in Colorado, but little business in Adams County

Increasing property taxes on people adversely affects property values, and discourages business to come in.

2) Does the district have a guideline or policy on "optimal class size" at the Elementary level? Is there any research that the district has found that correlates class size and learning?

4th and 5th grades are large at Meridian. His personal view is that class size matters a lot.

It's challenging for teachers with more kids in the classroom.

It's likely that class sizes will grow next year at every level.

25M budget shortfall next year.

3) How does the district determine the yearly schedule? It seems pretty "choppy" with several three and four day weekends. Can parents submit feedback/requests on this schedule? Have you considered a "fall break" like many of the other districts around the state?

District Policy Council, teachers and staff make up the board that decided the calendar, along with input of a group of parents and students. A sub-committee makes recommendations to the calendar.

This falls calendar did not do a great job. New recommendation for school to start 1 week earlier. Currently the 1st semester is 11-12 days shorter than 2nd semester.

Parent feedback for a fall break was no positive. The idea was not accepted for the next school year.

Chris said he would not support a fall break and does not think there would be support for it.

4) I'm curious about charter schools, in particular, Prospect Ridge. If we lose students to PRA, does that mean we also lose money to our home school? My initial hope was that this new school could help keep our numbers at Meridian more reasonable, but if we lose kids to that school (and money) could that mean a reduction in our staff here?

Has been a lengthy process. One issue is, would it offer something new from the other charters.

A majority of people interested in Prospect Ridge come from outside Adams 12. State wants the school approved, saying that only 50% of students from Adams 12 are enough. The district wants that level to be 79%. Third hurdle for the school is related to the site. 144th and Zuni site fails because there is not infrastructure, size of lot, traffic, oil & gas well on property. Board voted 4-1 not to approve the site for the school. In regards to the question about "would Prospect Ridge drain any money out of Meridian". Says it will not drain \$. Reduces funding to same degree. He says there is an economic drain on the district to some extent, but not a specific school. K-5 schools or K-8 are indeed cheaper to educate than older kids. So in that regard, the charter school concept is a disadvantage to district funds.

5) A question as it relates to a previous election. Since the mill levy passed (and now we are paying extra taxes on that) where is that money going? Since the bond didn't pass, what does that mean for us?

Mill levy passed. Was really to keep the status quo going. Bond piece...he feels pressure to better utilize facilities district already has and gave examples of that. It is possible to have a bond issue on the ballot this fall. The board will make that decision by August. This would possibly provide new schools in Anthem, the NW area, and Thornton at York St. May need to do boundary adjustments as a result of budget cuts, and the decline in property values.

6) Have you heard any news on how the budget is looking for the 2011-2012 school year?

For the next school year there will be a 25M reduction in the budget. There will be a 2.9M savings in healthcare coverage...by going to one carrier.

7) Any great teaching techniques at other charter schools that can be used district wide? STEM has some good techniques. Need more STEM opportunities due to the huge demand at that school. Studio school also has some good ideas.

8) Why cannot schools fundraising efforts result in hiring of staff.

When there are many schools with different income levels, they are not all affluent schools, so their fundraising levels are much lower than Meridian. Would create inequality between schools and income levels.

C. Financial Update by Steve DiRose was given

D. Presentation by each funding requestor

Funding Request: Handwriting Without Tears curriculum

Request submitted by Kindergarten staff.

Amount requested: \$2,680.70

Funding Request: Electronic Book hardware and software (Kindles)

Electronic book hardware and software (Kindles) to help challenge above-level readers as well as help the below-average readers get up to speed with various books that can be tailored to their individual level. \$300 of PTO funds has already been used to purchase two Kindles. Kelley would like an additional \$300 for books, protective covers, and headphones.

Request submitted by 3rd Grade Teacher Kelley Randall.

Amount requested: \$300

Funding Request: updates to computers throughout the school.
Requested Science and Technology Teacher Lisa Meier and
Principal Jerry Weese

Amount requested: \$5,000

E. Vote on funding requests
All approved

F. Meeting adjourned