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Kindergarten options

Children turning age five before December 1, 2006 are eligible for Kindergarten in the 2006/07 school year. Grosse Pointe Public School System offers two programs:

- Traditional half day kindergarten (a.m. or p.m.) at all elementary schools
- Extended Day Kindergarten (tuition-based program for the extra half day) at select elementary schools

For either kindergarten program, residency and enrollment must be processed by appointment at 389 St. Clair Avenue, Room 203. Students will not be officially registered/enrolled until an appointment has been attended and residency has been verified. Call Kathy Lynch at 313/432-3083 to make an appointment.

Watch for information regarding half-day kindergarten round-up and orientation meetings later this spring at individual elementary buildings.

An informational meeting on Extended Day Kindergarten will be held at 7 p.m., January 24 at Barnes school. Residency and enrollment for EDK must be established by January 31, 2006. The January deadline is because the extended day program is available through a lottery system, with the application due in February and drawing March 1. Notification to families regarding their EDK placement is sent in March. EDK packets are only available at 389 St. Clair at your residency and enrollment appointment.

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Expect change, don't let go of values

"If you were to take your arms and wrap them around all of the programs and services we currently provide, then move that forward to next year without any changes, that is where you would find the \$3.5 million dollar shortfall," Superintendent Suzanne Klein said to 75 parents, teachers and students assembled November 30 at the Middle School Options forum at Brownell.

funding levels for next year, we must gather data to make informed decisions. Since the state will not set its funding level until well into 2006, we are proceeding assuming we must meet that \$3.5 million target for cost reductions for the next school year. We also anticipate that same shortfall for the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years. This means we must expect change.

Dr. Klein was responding to a question raised by one of the parents in attendance, "Where did all the money go?"



While just as direct as the question, the answer is not as simple. It requires our whole community to be aware of changes in school funding by Proposal A, be knowledgeable about how state income tax fluctuations affect school allocations, and join the discussion in how to adjust to meet the demands of our current state economics.

As we approach budget decisions, we will do everything we can to protect the integrity of the programs that make our Grosse Pointe Schools what they are.

Digital imaging by Larry Peplin

Proposal A was passed a decade ago in an attempt to equalize spending on public school students. Since it was passed, local property taxes go to the state and are distributed back to districts on a per pupil basis. Some districts, such as Grosse Pointe, Birmingham and Bloomfield Hills, spent more per pupil before Proposal A, than the state formula rate would send back. Those districts, known collectively as 20J, were given an exemption to be "held harmless." This meant they could levy a local property tax (hold harmless) to keep their spending at the 1994 level. That amount (\$1,893 per pupil for GPPSS) has remained the same since 1995. In addition, state aid per pupil has not kept pace with inflation.

We need to be realistic in our planning. While we are still waiting for the state to set its

As we are in our fifth year of reduction mode, many of the "easy fixes" have already been made. Some of the budget reductions already implemented include:

- Used bond and sinking fund monies to increase energy efficiency by 30% and remove as many building and site costs as possible from the General Fund.
- Joined buying consortiums for supplies, technology, capital equipment and utilities.
- Instituted a participation fee for athletics and activities at the middle and high schools.
- Contracted out the school lunch program and received over \$100,000 in return.
- Continued investigating whether contracting for third shift custodial or technology support would be a savings.
- Increased fees for building use, student parking, Extended Day Kindergarten and Summer School.
- Completed a feasibility study which will come to the Board of Education in January with recommendations for revenue enhancement. This will give us a roadmap to increase revenue both short-term and long-term.
- Reduced administrative, non-instructional supervisor and support staff. We have also had to decrease the number of teaching staff.
- Continued to work with our legislators to find solutions to school funding issues.

We welcome the community to join in our budget dialogue.

Camp O'Fun Registration

The friendly neighborhood summer childcare program for students in Kindergarten through middle school will begin registration in February, 2006. Look for more information on the district web site www.gpschools.org and in school newsletters after the first of the year.

Feel welcome to call program director Cheryl Dorman at 313/432-3009, or e-mail her at cheryl.dorman@gpschools.org any time about Camp O'Fun, Kids Club (elementary childcare), and Pointe After (middle school childcare).

Code of Conduct

We hold ourselves to a higher standard in learning and in expectations for our students, as delineated in our code of conduct. To ensure we provide a safe and secure learning environment, we are required under MCL 80.1308 to report certain student offenses to the police. Administrative discretion is used on a case-by-case basis for other incidents when a school administrator believes a police report is in the best interest of the student, school, and community.

In judging whether to report an offense to local police, administrators consider multiple criteria including current law, severity of the incident, pattern of the student's behavior over time, and the specific context of each incident. Whenever police are contacted, central administration is notified and a record of the contact is kept at the school.

Offenses such as the following **must** be reported to the police and will carry a disciplinary penalty:

- Possession or being under the influence of alcohol or tobacco products
- Possession, use, or dealing of drugs or other controlled substances
- Possession of reportable weapons or causing an explosion
- Commission of arson, theft, robbery, vandalism, bomb threat, or criminal sexual conduct

Any questions regarding the code of conduct and reporting requirements may be directed to our principals. We appreciate your support as we work together to help all Grosse Pointe Public School students develop into lifelong learners and contributing members of society.

Provisions under the Student Code of Conduct Policy - JCD

By the numbers: our district report card

We have always taken pride in the fact that we are one of the top school districts in the state. We have highly trained and certified staff teaching in their content area. They are supported by a set of professionals who keep our buildings clean, comfortable and efficient, making it a healthy environment in which to live and learn. Data supports the fact that we are all working under the district vision of *Excellence in Education: Learning and Leading for Today and Tomorrow*.

Some of the measures by which we assess our academic programs include student scores on Advanced Placement exams, the

ACT, MEAP (MI Educational Assessment

Program), SAT, and the Grosse Pointe Writing Assessment. The most recent data available, with two years of comparison scores, are provided each fall in the school and district annual reports.

Those complete documents are available on our district web site www.gpschools.org

or by contacting your local school or administration building.

The percentage of students taking these tests makes a big difference when comparing average scores. For example, 26% of North's students took the SAT compared to 11% of

Michigan students, and 54% across the nation. Scores for North and the State were almost identical. That means the top quarter of our North students were the approximate equivalent to the top tenth of the state. Not bad.

As to the MEAP scores – they did drop significantly. We're concerned about it and working on it. However, as the high school principals said, we have clear evidence of students not taking the MEAP test seriously.

So, we need to address two components:

1) improve instruction and therefore student performance,

2) convince students to do their best so we have accurate measures.

ACT, which in contrast to SAT is taken by 80% of our students and is a better overall measure, is up at both North and South high schools.

As you can see, on ACT we test a larger percentage of students than either the nation or Michigan and significantly exceed the mean scores in all areas. This represented an increase over last year's scores in English, Reading, Science and the Composite. Math was stable.

Comparison of ACT Scores						
	% Tested	English	Math	Reading	Science	Composite
GPPSS	80%	23.0	23.8	24.2	23.3	23.7
Michigan	73%	20.7	21.2	21.8	21.6	21.4
Nation	44%	20.4	20.7	21.3	20.9	20.9

Comparison of SAT Scores			
	Math	Verbal	# Taking Test
North High School	572	567	26%
Michigan	579	568	11%
Nation	520	508	54%

Review the middle school proposal

One of the options proposed to help the district address the \$3.5 million shortfall is a change in the middle school schedule. Going from seven to six periods would save the district over \$1.6 million. As we researched this option, several key facts continued to surface. We will do everything we can to maintain student learning experiences, including elective options. We are not alone in our peer group for considering this option. And there are some silver linings.

Please keep in mind that the points below are part of the draft proposal submitted to the Board of Education. Because the length of the school day will not change, a revised schedule would increase time in core areas. This would mean approximately 20 hours more per year per subject. Additional support for students who don't meet Grosse Pointe standards in reading or math would be provided through an extra class in their needed subject area. A revised plan for

District in good position to meet new state graduation requirements

On Tuesday, December 13, the Michigan State Board of Education voted to approve Mike Flanagan's recommendations for a mandated high school curriculum. Flanagan is the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Michigan Department of Education.

According to Jennifer Rogers, Associate Executive Director of Public Relations and Communications for the Michigan Association of School Boards, the State Board's requirements mirror those presented in November by Flanagan, with the addition of two world languages credits, and the expectation that technology, including assistive technology devices and services, will be infused in program delivery.

Pending legislative approval, students will be required to earn 18 credits starting with the class of 2010 (four English Language Arts, four math, three science, three social science, one health/physical education, one fine visual and performing arts, and two world language credits). GPPSS graduation requirements meet or exceed these proposed state guidelines in most areas. Differences are highlighted below:

- Math - GPPSS requires two credits and does not require Algebra II, but 73% of students already take four years of math and 87% complete Algebra II
- Science - GPPSS requires two credits, but 91% of our students take three already
- Foreign Language - no local requirement now but 91% take two or more years

All of the above percentages were supplied by Dr. Susan Allan of the Department of Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction. She added that Grosse Pointe's requirements exceed the recommendations for arts and physical education, and meet those for English, health and social studies. We are also one of the state leaders in computers/technology and staff members are confident our students will meet or exceed the proposed middle school exit exam criteria.

According to Rogers of MASB, students will also be required to take elective courses that reflect teaching and learning of "21st Century Skills" (Global Literacy, Civic Literacy, Financial, Economic, and Entrepreneurial Literacy, Information and Communications Technology Literacy, Learning Skills and Accelerated Learning). Students must also take the Michigan Merit Exam or MI-Access the spring of their junior year and complete an on-line credit or noncredit course or learning experience.

Many students go above and beyond our own graduation requirements:

- 73% take four years of math
- 91% take three years of science
- 91% take two or more years of foreign language

support complimentary statutory language.

Jim Ballard, Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) was with the State Board of Education when they were discussing the proposal for new graduation requirements. Ballard said there is already another bill generated by Rep. Palmer that is dramatically different from the proposal passed by the State BOE. He also said the legislature will not engage in serious discussion of the graduation requirement proposal from the State BOE until mid-January. According to him, it is highly unlikely they will have agreement on any proposal by the end of March, meaning implementation will not occur for the class of 2010.

Most agree there are changes coming. Four years of math are pretty much a given, and Algebra II will be a requirement for the majority of students. This is because there is a concerted effort to push for more rigor, or college credit bearing coursework such as Advanced Placement classes during the 11th and 12th grades.

Our Board of Education is reviewing graduation requirements. Principal Diver asked families to consider this during the process: "Do you expect your kids to have at least Algebra II for the future work place? We must and will do what is right for students."

Senior Citizens: Call for Your Gold Card

Gold Cards continue to offer Grosse Pointe senior citizens the opportunity to attend, without cost, various school sponsored events throughout the year. Free admission to athletic functions and dramatic and musical productions is our way of thanking our local senior citizens for the many years of support they have provided the Grosse Pointe Public School System.

Gold Card newsletters are still available. These outline the dates, times and locations of available events. To obtain a calendar or a Gold Card, please call 313/432-3007.

Our Word is Our Bond

As a result of the successful bond and sinking fund initiatives approved by our community, we are pleased to report that over half the proposed projects have been completed.

Finished projects include:

- Flooring, ceiling and HVAC improvements throughout the district
- North and South high school science labs, including new construction and renovation
- South auditorium (\$1.3 million from the district, with \$300,000 match from the Mother's Club)
- North and Parcels multipurpose rooms
- New high school fields
- North pool retrofit

Projects in process include:

- Middle school science lab renovations and expansions (scope being determined now with renovations planned for this summer)
- A South gym conversion into a multipurpose room
- New South pool
- Brownell multipurpose room

The end result of these projects will be expanded and improved space for instruction, athletics, performing arts and special events, positively impacting the education of every GPPSS student.

- Christian Fenton, Assistant Superintendent

Jazz Band CD for Sale

The North Jazz Band just released their third CD entitled "Blue Skies." Copies of this recording can be purchased from David Cleveland in room C-101 at North High School for \$18.

Review the middle school proposal

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electives would mean more flexibility for scheduling. Students could take a full year or semester foreign language to align with proposed elementary instruction.

There would be the same structure for student advisory. Time for teachers to work collaboratively would be supported by delayed Monday openings similar to the high school schedule.

Some changes to the core and electives would have to occur in order to protect student options as much as possible. These are outlined by grade level below.

Sixth Grade Core Courses

Core course requirements for all sixth grade students would include:

- Language Arts
- Mathematics
- Science (Earth Science)
- Social Studies
- Reading on an every-other-day basis all year
- Additional requirement: Computer literacy on an every-other-day basis for a semester
- Honors Language Arts, Reading and Accelerated Math are available.
- Students who are not achieving at Grosse Pointe Public Schools' standards in reading or math take a Reading or Math Foundations course back-to-back with the regular reading class.

Sixth Grade Electives

Students who are not in a support class have five semester electives in addition to the

required computer literacy course. All electives meet every-other-day. Students have the option of a yearlong elective in one of the performing arts (chorus, band, orchestra, or creative drama) which would count as two elective credits. Students also have the option of a year long foreign language elective which would count as two credits. All other electives are by semester.

Seventh/Eighth Grade Core Courses

All students would take four core courses:

- English
- Mathematics
- Science and
- Social Studies.

Honors English and Accelerated Math would also be available.

Seventh/Eighth Grade Electives

Students have four elective semester options:

- Performing arts remain year long. Creative drama may be taken as a semester course.
- Foreign language classes may be taken for a semester or a year.
- There is no PE or health requirement but they would remain elective options.
- A list of electives is on the district web site.

Work to be done

To meet deadlines for a successful transition, the plan is to obtain Board of Education approval by January and make curriculum modifications by March in all areas in order to incorporate the increased time and the alignment with the high school curriculum.

Enrollment for New High School Students

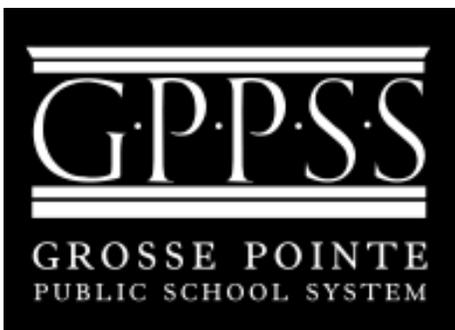
High school is one of the traditional places students enter our public school program and Grosse Pointe North, South and Community School welcome your student to the high school experience. Many families transferring into our district have questions regarding the residency/enrollment process and course selection procedures for incoming freshman. If you missed 8th Grade Parent Night held in December 2005, please use the following as your guideline to enroll and register your student as a freshman.

- First contact Kathy Lynch at 432-3083 to schedule an appointment for residency and enrollment.

- The *2006-07 Program of Studies* is on-line: www.gpschools.org/newpub/parents.htm Click the link for the 2006-2007 Program of Studies.

- Friday, January 6, 2006 – Private/Parochial Schools Course Selection will be held at Grosse Pointe North in the media center from 1-4 p.m., and Grosse Pointe South in Cleminson Hall from 8:30 a.m.-noon. Parents should arrive with their student to choose freshman year courses. Please bring the student's last report card.

- Those interested in learning more about Community School should call 313/432-3704 or visit www.gpschools.org/community.



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