

Big Picture

Q: What do you consider to be the three biggest challenges currently for the Grady Cluster?

The greatest challenge for the district as a whole and for the Grady cluster is continued financial support for our instruction and technology needs. For technology, we must continue to ensure that our students can compete on a national and international level by using smart boards, projectors, up-to-date computers, digital cameras, video conferencing, etc. We must also be able to provide adequate connectivity to support these instructional uses and we must make sure that our computers and other technology is working. All of this requires consistent funding.

Another challenge in these financial times is retaining the intensive professional development for teachers that we know is required for high quality instruction in the classroom.

Budget Concerns

Q: With the upcoming shortfall in the state budget, what areas will APS be looking at for cost savings?

For the 2010 budget, we anticipate that property assessments will be frozen at the 2009 level, that the state has scheduled two million five hundred thousand dollars (\$2.5 million) in cuts and that there will be a \$7 million loss in revenue due to the homestead exemption. We will not know the amount of property assessments for 2009 until the taxpayer appeals have been resolved. We have been told that will happen by March 2009.

We have just begun the budget process for 2010. I have asked the leadership team to review the entire budget to look for cost savings. Up to now, we have been able to protect the instructional program by taking cuts in operations and the central office. However, we are not confident that we will be able to continue not looking at schools if the trend continues. Yesterday you may have read that two bills will be introduced for a property tax cap. If passed, they will negatively impact our ability to collect revenue needed for our schools. Our challenge is to sustain the progress that we have made instructionally

by keeping the programs that we know work in tact, while thinking of ways to continue to fund the improvements that need to be made, and continuing to become more efficient so that we can save money where possible.

We are also looking at our student enrollment across the district. With the closing of many Atlanta Housing Authority properties and other properties that used to house our students, we are making determinations about school closings or consolidations. We anticipate approximately \$500,000 in savings by closing a school building. However our entire district population is increasing so we continue to evaluate where students are living and making decisions about what facilities we will need to accommodate that growth.

Q: Given the rise in gas prices, what is APS doing with Transportation to optimize routes, stops and vehicles to save fuel costs?

We have replaced a major portion of its bus fleet which will offer substantial savings (approximately 20%) on diesel fuel. A portion of the support fleet is also being

replaced. We are also evaluating the merits of a fixed price fuel contract. We are testing a pilot routing program using GPS. However, we have not yet confirmed that the system-wide investment in GPS could be cost justified. We continue to manually monitor routes with small student loads to take advantage of route consolidation where possible.

Facilities

SPLOST III

Q: We know that SPLOST III funds are being used to build the new NE elementary school and to renovate Grady and Lakewood stadiums. What other facilities improvements that impact the Grady cluster will be funded through these sales tax revenues?

Some improvements have been completed at Lin using SPLOST III dollars. We also anticipate additional renovations at Lin with work beginning no later than May 2010. However, we continue to review these plans and priority listings as we evaluate the student enrollment in the area.

Grady Stadium

Q: There are concerns that the needs of Grady High school, in terms of more space, different types of space and the needs of our student athletes, are not being considered in the stadium renovation. Why are the stadium renovation plans not being made in the larger context of a master plan for the school?

The renovation project involving Grady Stadium and Lakewood Stadium focuses on enhancements that will support the district-wide athletic requirements. For example, at Grady, it is proposed that we will build new home and visitor locker rooms, a girls locker room, upgrade the public restrooms, upgrade the electrical system, provide new ticket booth areas, complete ADA requirements and enhance the streetscape and existing front entrances to the stadium. These are all things that directly enhance the stadium regardless of who is using it. A project team has been meeting and representatives from Grady as well as other schools are on that project team.

In the meantime, there is also a district-wide assessment of all of the athletic programs in the district, including all of the high schools. We anticipate that the assessment will be complete in early spring. When we receive those recommendations, each school will have an opportunity to

provide input on how they will be implemented based on the particular needs of that school. The improvements being recommended to the Grady stadium through the stadium project will not impede the future use of available space. I have also been advised by facilities that they do not anticipate expanding beyond the existing footprint of the current Grady stadium, thereby leaving options for the school to decide appropriate uses of its athletic spaces.

Q: In 2006 Grady JROTC failed inspection by the Army and the issues were clear; the rifle range, offices and storage space were not in compliance with the contract Grady has with the Army. In response to Grady failing APS facilities and/or the Superintendents office was clear per the CINS meeting notes (2006/2007) that this current renovation was to answer those issues; "promises" which the Army accepted preventing termination of the Grady program. Now in 2008 contrary to previous "promises" facilities has excluded the JROTC space in this renovation. *So the question is...In lieu of being included in the stadium renovation process, what concrete "facility plan of action" does APS intend to submit to the Army on behalf of the Grady JROTC that will allow them to pass inspection on 12/3/08 and therefore prevent the program's termination at the end of 2008?* This program serves 13% of the students at Grady.

The portion of the Grady Stadium predominantly used by JROTC was renovated in 2004 as a part of the addition and

renovation project for Grady High School. However, when the area was inspected in 2006, there were certain deficiencies. We will have a plan in place to cover the cited deficiencies in time for the December 3, 2008 re-inspection. This plan will address the storage and range issues and will include modification of the area to separate it from the athletic portion in order to provide exclusive use and greater controls. In any event, all deficiencies in the space will be addressed separate from the Grady Stadium project.

Q: Grady has plans to add an engineering academy. At present, engineering and robotics classes and teams meet in an unfinished area under the stadium. This space is not slated for renovation in the stadium plans. How will these academic needs for space be addressed? Grady is currently over capacity and does not have classroom space for this program.

In the event that a decision is made to have an engineering academy, the space in the school will be programmed to support that academy and any other small learning communities that are chosen. Once the JROTC areas have been brought into compliance and the Grady stadium renovations list is finalized, we will be able to

determine what remaining space may be used for additional classroom needed in the stadium complex. We will allocate dollars as a part of high school transformation to meet these needs.

High School Transformation

Q: When will the small learning communities' model be fully implemented at Grady? How do you anticipate that this model will impact the current leadership structure at Grady?

The implementation year for Grady is the 2010-2011 school year. Planning for the transformation will take place during 2009-2010. The leadership structure in a small learning community configuration consists of a principal, an assistant principal, and an academy leader for each small learning community. (The new Maynard Holbrook Jackson High School has this structure.)

District Lines

Q: The sudden closing of Walden Middle School this spring impacted the CINS community. Are redistricting change other than the new NE Elementary School planned for the 2009-10 school year? Early notice of redistricting changes helps schools plan successfully for academic changes, leadership, and parent involvement.

We continue to examine our current and projected future enrollment patterns to make sure that schools are economically viable. With the elimination of several Atlanta Housing Authority properties and other private low income housing, we undoubtedly will have to close some schools. We will be prepared to notify schools and communities in early December regarding any school closings, mergers or modifications of any zones for the 2009-2010 school year.

Q: Given that the data produced by APS demographers shows that Morningside Elementary School (MES) will open at or near capacity in the Fall of 2009, even with the New Northeast school opening, what are APS' plans to relieve the overcrowding at MES? At Inman Middle School? At Grady High School?

Our data do not indicate that Morningside will be overcrowded after the fifth grade students, who will be grandfathered next school year, leave Morningside.

Our data do not indicate that Inman and Grady are currently overcrowded. Their current enrollment is below the planning capacity and we do not consider a school overcrowded until the majority of instructional spaces are used to full capacity. We continue to have our demographers monitor the growth projections in the area. We have retained the Walden facility in the event that future growth requires an additional school.

Q: Is the district boundary line for Grady in Kirkwood going to be re-drawn to include all of Kirkwood this year?

We are not looking at changing Grady's attendance zone for the 2009-2010 school year. Before considering rezoning, we would have to determine the effect on potential overcrowding at the school.

Academic

Q: What is the philosophy behind mid-year promotions of teachers to administrative positions with APS? This practice is disruptive to the students and highly qualified replacements are very difficult to find mid-year. Could these promotions be held until the completion of a school year?

On occasion positions that are integral to the instructional program become available during the school year. These

positions must be filled in a short time period in order for the district to sustain our instructional progress. It is not uncommon for the most qualified candidate to be a current employee of the district. While we recognize there is a transition period, the district works to ensure the least disruptive transition process.

Q: Are there plans for Grady get a full-time scholarship coordinator as other APS high schools have?

Full-time scholarship coordinators are a part of the Project Grad model. Other high schools provide that support in various ways. At Grady, instead of hiring a full-time scholarship coordinator, the leadership team decided to utilize funding to add an additional counselor so that there would be one per grade. All of Grady's counselors support scholarship related activities as does the graduation coach.

Legislative

Q: What are APS' plans to participate in the TAD for the Beltline District and how will this impact funding?

Our lawyers have advised us that the board will not have to reauthorize the Beltline TAD. Therefore, we will not receive any additional revenue from the TAD.

Technology

Q: Technology such as LCD projectors and Promethean Interactive Whiteboards have been implemented in some schools across our cluster. How are teachers being trained to optimize the investment in technology?

In 2006, a very detailed Promethean Board Implementation Plan including teacher training was developed. We are in the process of implementing that plan.

Teachers are provided initial training from the vendor for district purchased promethean boards. All APS Learning Technology Specialists have received training from the vendor and at least one member of each SRT technology staff has been certified by the vendor to redeliver the training. The district will provide additional training to the schools through the Learning Technology Specialists upon request.

Q: How do you equitably distribute technology resources to schools? Can you explain why some schools seem to have to raise their own funds in order to have new technology? This technology has become essential to classrooms as we veer away from standard textbooks.

There is collaboration between Technology and Instruction to understand the technology needs of schools. Each school develops a Technology Plan that provides an assessment of what's in their school. The budget dollars are then allocated to individual schools based on needs. There will sometimes be a gap between the budgets allocated and the "wants" of a particular school. The budget process tries to meet basic technology needs.

Q: Several schools in the CINS cluster have raised funds privately to purchase technology. How will this equipment be maintained?

The most important consideration for privately funded technology is to have close coordination and planning with the IT Department before the purchase is made. It is critically important that all technology purchases fit into the overall technology plan. IT will work with schools up front to advise them on how to allocate privately raised funds. In the past, IT did not support technology that was funded privately. However, going forward, we will provide support if the technology fits into the technology plan.

Q: Will parents have access to on-line grading and attendance information through Infinite Campus, as planned, in January? The grade reports from Infinite Campus are very difficult to read, could they be reformatted to be easier for parents to read and understand?

Student information will be available via the parent portal of Infinite Campus in January 2009. The rollout will begin in early January. Our goal is to roll-out 20 schools per week until the parents of all schools have access. This process will help us ensure data quality. We will work with the SRT Executive Directors to decide which schools are included in each wave.

The technology staff will work with instructional to ensure that the report card is user friendly for our parents.

Safety and Security

Q: We have a run off election on December 2nd this year. Voting takes place in several of our schools. What security measures is APS taking to insure the safety of our children during this event? (Extra resource officers, etc.)

Polling places will be staff by either off duty police officers or the district's school detective staff. Staff assignments will based on where high levels of voter turnout are anticipated.

Q: Grady received a large grant to purchase a new security camera system, but lacks the cable capacity to implement the system. Is this being addressed?

The issue is not cable capacity. The equipment purchased with grant funds of about \$25,000 was successfully implemented within the defined time frame of the project. The vendor who was selected to implement the system donated an additional small amount of wireless and video equipment that increased the overall scope of the project.

Additional support effort from IT has been needed because some of the equipment did not integrate effortlessly into our network. IT has addressed many of the integration issues and is continuing to work with the vendor to ensure that all gaps have been addressed.

Pre-K

Q: What changes in policy are in place for the registration of students to attend Pre K across APS in 2009-2010 to avoid the confusion that occurred at Mary Lin this past year?

We are looking at the process for pre-k registration district wide and will have a plan by the end of January.

Q: Will Mary Lin continue to have a Pre K program?

We are in the process of evaluating if Lin will retain the pre-k program next school year. We will have an answer by the end of January. We are trying to balance the space limitations with the desire of the community to have a pre-k program at that location.