

TOWN HALL MEETING
OCT. 5, 2006
AURORA FRONTIER K-8
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

Questions and Answers

1. Question: What is the district's hiring practice?

Answer: Barry stated that the district is doing aggressive hiring and has a strong commitment to exercise diversity. Cook stated that we need to reach out to the community to attract the best candidates.

2. Question: Security-What plans, long and short-term, does the district have.

Answer: Barry stated that the message is very clear: Security is by far the first and foremost priority in the district. The teachers and students must feel safe and there are aggressive security measures in place. All entrances to all schools are to be locked except for the main entrance. All visitors are required to sign in. There are full background checks being completed on every employee as well as volunteers. The district is working closely with the police and fire departments, as well as making sure each school practices their plans for evacuation and violent scenario plan as well. The schools have an outside plan that permits entrance only one way; through the front doors. The children must be counseled to not open doors. There is a security and evacuation plan in place in every building.

There will be random entry attempts planned by the superintendent and each school will be held accountable. Barry is meeting with Chief Oats and the superintendent of Cherry Creek Schools to discuss the security issues. He also reported that the security cameras have been revised and the alarm systems are operating at the highest levels.

3. Question: Why is the district promoting pre-school and full-day kindergarten?

Answer: Barry stated that the hope is to exercise the number of students who can attend and increase the number of full day kindergarten, K-8 and K-18. With the addition of P-16, which is pre-school through college, all students exercise the right to graduate and the next step is a college degree. He stated that there are currently forty-four full day kindergarten classes, seventy-seven half day classes and fifty-three pre school classes.

4. Question: What about the cultural challenges?

Answer: Barry stated that there will be challenges and will require an outreach to all parents.

5. Question: How do we inspire teachers?

Answer: Barry stated that APS has a reform oriented board of education with the true interest of the children at heart. He also reported that the district is in good financial condition, with good facilities and all of the schools are now air-conditioned. He states that the teachers show passion, excitement and have a fire for success.

6. Question: What are the challenges and how will the teachers remain focused?

Answer: Barry stated that the integrated enterprise is focus on the children. Barry stated that our magnetic north is student achievement and that the teachers show passion and inspiration when talking about the kids.

The challenge is retaining qualified teachers. Barry reported that the district hired over 300 new teachers last year and as we improve student achievement, we must remain more excited than ever. We can become the lead district in the state of Colorado.

7. Question: How can we increase the graduation rate?

Answer: Barry stated that this is a national issue and with the new system being put in place, would allow us to have more data four years from now. We are closer to a 40-50% graduation rate with the national average being 65%. It is our obligation to the children to improve this. We need to find triggers and find out what keeps the children excited about school. We need mentors to talk to kids and we need parents as team players.

8. Question: What is the plan to raise test scores?

Answer: Barry stated that student achievement is the pinnacle of the strategic plan and will be rolled out to the community on November 21st. CSAP scores are not where they need to be and even though we have made progress, they are still below state standards. He gave examples of Norfolk, VA., Garden Grove, CA. and Boston, MA. and with the proper tools and budgets, we can obtain the same success story as they have achieved.

He also stated that the plan is to individualize instruction and realizes that every child is different, especially the cultural differences and that the gap needs to be closed between minorities and whites. The district is obligated and committed to making sure that every student reaches grade level proficiency and we will provide teachers and administrators all the support they need..

9. Question: Are you aware that most students do not know their multiplication tables?

Answer: Barry pointed out that he had visited a school just today and that the children in the fifth-grade class knew them very well. He stated that kids are exposed to grade level standards and these gaps must also be closed. We are trying to increase skills and expose kids to these standards. We will become better at knowing what levels students are at much earlier.

10. Question: What are your strategies and the district's plans on the following?
Class size, new schools, and new high schools

Answer: Barry stated in the next twenty years, there will be twenty-two new schools. There are plans for more 6-8 schools, more K-8 schools, and two more high schools. He stated that with the E-470 plan upcoming, the future growth will dictate the rate the schools will be built.

11. Question: Why the focus on K-8 and not K-5?

Answer: Barry stated that the classrooms are reaching capacity and that by building K-8 schools, relationships are built not only between teachers and students and the curriculum but between students as well. He stated that the transition between elementary to middle school is a challenge as well as middle school to high school. It is felt that the transition from K-8 to high school is less traumatic. He stated that the housing market has slowed down and in order to build more schools, we have to reach a certain point in population growth.

12. Question: What about the amendments on the upcoming ballot? Amendment 39 and Referendum J: what affect will they have on the schools?

Answer: Amendment 39 would require that 65% of every tax dollar be spent on support. We do currently meet the 65% rule but amendment 39 excludes food service workers, and counselors and the board of education passed a resolution to oppose amendment 39.

13. Question: What about the vision for the schools.

Answer: Barry stated that no visions are beyond reach and we must set our visions high. With the no child left behind, and the special education challenges, we must give every child a choice to go to college without remediation. The element of expectation should not be limited and if it is not set high enough, we will never know what we can reach.

14 Question” What about sports and arts programs?

Answer: Barry stated that with the readopted budget, more money is going for arts. The board of education is working to get more programs.

Barry also stated that there will be an academy awards program for students; i.e.: best band, best stage, best art, etc. There will be nominees and winners in several categories and that when students are recognized, there will be celebrations.

He also stated that there will be a change in the grading system and referenced standard based grading.

15. Question: What is being done about the libraries?

Answer: Barry stated that they are evaluating the library programs and media centers and trying to improve them but cautioned that it would take several years but that they are definitely an area of focus.

16: Question: What about a year-round calendar?

Answer: Barry stated that there are challenges with the year-round calendar. He stated that the multi-track calendars are more for space purposes but that he is looking at another type of calendar that would possibly work. He stated that these are going to be discussed in the near future.

The following list contains additional questions not read and the department(s) responsible:

QUESTION

RESPONSIBLE

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| 1. How can we get a before & after school activity at Aurora Frontier? | Instruction & Frontier K-8 |
| 2. K-8 Students, especially K-4, get cheated out of holiday parties because of the mix of students; is this just K-8 | Instruction, Aurora Frontier, Murphy Creek |
| 3. You are focusing on community. Can you elaborate more on your vision to get parents involved? Also, our youngest children, kindergartners, are coming to school not ready to learn. Do you plan to address this issue and if so, how? | Communication, Instruction and Superintendent's office |
| 4. APS provides a list of supplies they say the student needs, when in actuality, they are waiting for us to purchase extra for the have-nots. Whose idea? We disagree! | Instruction & Aurora Frontier |
| 5. New schools are K-8 so no middle school philosophy-what are your plans to convert your older elementary schools and middle schools to this new configuration and philosophy? | Support Services |
| 6. Everyone's mind is on security. What plans does the district have to improve security at the middle and high school level? (short and long term) | Support Services |
| 7. What are the district's plan for a new high school to serve the growth in the eastern part of the district? | Support Services |
| 8. When will there be a new high school built to accommodate all of the high school kids? | Support Services |

9. What is going to be the situation with the drastic situation of the high schools? There needs to be at least one or two new ones or there needs to be a restructuring of boundaries. **Support Services**

10. You are losing students! We will not have our child bused to Gateway. It seems very odd that we will bus kids 20 miles instead of changing the boundaries to have kids that live closer to that school go there. Our honor roll student now attends Cherry Creek Schools! And if things don't change in 4 years, so will our son! **Support Services**

11. Regarding safety and security for students brought to school on buses. Drivers do not know what child is on the bus except for the name list at the beginning of the school year. To be safe, could it be possible to have an ID for students, perhaps a photo ID or one with a different color background to help assure every child's safety? **Support Services**

12. When and where do you plan to build the new high school? Do you plan to have any courses like sewing, wood shop, printing, cooking in middle school (K-8) or 6th, 7th, and 8th? **Support Services**

13. What strides is APS going to take to reduce child obesity and "sitting time" and increase physical Activity which also results in increased brain activity? **Support Services**

14. How would a year (year round) calendar benefit students, parents and staff members: **Human Resources**

15. There is a huge problem in Aurora with kids skipping school and nothing is being done about it by the schools and these kids are failing because of attendance not grades. What are you going to do about this? **School Services**

16. How is the district's calendar established? Why do the kids not have the week before Christmas Off? What "family" value is there to having the week after New Years off? **Human Resources
School Services**

17. I would like to know when APS became a money making business. My child can't go to public school even though she has completed the previous grade because you don't get money for her because her birthday is one month off. This is supposed to be some new state legislature yet no other district follow it except Aurora, I thought public schools were free. I pay my taxes yet my child isn't allowed in your schools because of money! **Legal Office**
18. What is your plan to control the excessive growth and teacher to child ratio increase? **Human Resources**
19. There have been many opportunities for hiring recently. What is your plan to hire adverse staff that reflects the demographics of our student population? **Human Resources**
20. As a district, how do we/you inspire the passion in teachers that is required in order to embrace new instructional programs and strategies? **Human Resources**
21. With the two new ballot amendments affecting school budgets, how will these affect the implementation of the strategic plan? **Finance Office**
22. Have you evaluated the investigations math program: Are you aware that most 5th graders (including AGATE) do not know their multiplication facts? **Instruction**
23. Are you going to evaluate the library programs in the district and provide extra money to schools with older, inadequate collections? **Instruction**
24. Will APS revive and expand its sports and arts programs as part of an enriching education? **Instruction**
25. Can the grading system go back to the traditional (A-B-C-D-F) grading system? **Instruction**
26. When you say all students will graduate with the ability to go to college, are you considering the 2% of the population with severe physical/cognitive delays that are an expended benchmark? This seems like a very unattainable, unrealistic goal for this population. **Instruction**

27. Size of class rooms, recesses, bring back K-8- how many classes of each grade high schools-why two K-8 and are any more being built? **Instruction**
28. Children who reach 1st grade and have attended full-time kindergarten, parents are told their child is reading below grade level. No other help is provided since he is not in an IEP! What are we as parents supposed to do to help our child? **Instruction**
29. What will you do to increase awareness of and participation in the IB program at Hinkley High School? **Instruction**
30. Core 1 math, a relatively new math program in Aurora high schools, relies on a strong literary understanding. How will ESL kids succeed if they don't have a grasp on the language? **Instruction**
31. I've heard about the "100 acre site". What is it and what are the plans? **Instruction & Superintendent**
32. Why doesn't the district teach traditional math? The touchy-feely approach to math doesn't serve our students well. (K-5) **Instruction**
33. What is your plan for retaining qualified teachers? How will you make Aurora "the place to work"? **Instruction**
34. Testing scores have always been our concern. What plan do you have on raising the test scores in general? **Instruction**
35. How will you increase the graduation rate-especially for Hispanic students? **Instruction**
36. What are the best ways for children to learn how to read sooner? **Instruction**

37. What is the district's policy on class size for kindergarten and primary grades?
What is the district's plan to manage class/school size and/or build new schools
(all grad levels) in light of the heavy residential development occurring and expected
to occur in southeast Aurora?

**Instruction
Support Services**

38a. Why are A students being penalized with the new grading system?
Why were the current books chosen for the core math programs and why is the core program
being used in the 1st place?

Instruction

38b. When will learning styles and brain (right & left) preference be addressed to help children learn
quickly and more effectively?

38c. Why are standards taking precedence over basics?

38d. Elementary report cards – how can they be changed to mean something?

38e. When are you going to teach children how to take tests, take notes & study for tests?

38f. Standardized testing does not tell what a child knows – it only tells how well a child can take
a test. How will you address this issue?

38g. How do you have your child put in traditional math at the high school level?

38h. When will respect for the teachers and the students be put back into the schools?

39. How do you feel about coaches being absent from CORE curriculum subjects at the
expense or loss of valuable instruction to our students?

Instruction

40. What is your plan to individualize instruction to meet the needs of a diverse student population?

Instruction

41. We have requested an opportunity twice to Mr. Barry with an impacting, cost effective idea that would unite the parents with the teachers and students and improve the motivational and moral climate of the students. We request again 30 minutes of your time to listen as you have asked to listen to the parents.

Superintendent

42. When are we getting a new high school? Where will it be located?

Support Services

43. Please discuss plans for a high school to serve Aurora Frontier and Murphy Creek. Please discuss your feelings about letter grades for 6th – 8th grade students in K-8 schools.

**Support Services
Instruction**

44. You commented that we need to be honest. On the turn out tonight, how many of tonight's guests are PARENTS vs. teachers/staff? How many of our 31 thousand students are being represented? Is the number of parents a concern to you?

Communication

45. My child is to be bused 20 miles to Gateway as a high school student. When will the APS help us get a new high school? Soon, by the way we are not having Gateway as a high school.

Support Services

46. Even if you have healthy food choices and you still offer unhealthy options, kids will generally not pick healthy and we can't be at school to help with these choices. My daughter only has gym 9 weeks out of the whole year. There is also the issue of students not having enough water or time to get water during the day.

Support Services

47. Why are children with severe needs in the general ed classroom without enough support?

Instruction & Diverse Learners

48. Why did the district (board of education) abandon traditional curriculum and move to integrated math?

Instruction