



Special Board Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 5th, 2013 5:15 P.M.

John Adams Academy Campus

One Sierragate Plaza, Roseville, CA 95678

Slogan

Developing Servant Leaders....Restoring America’s Heritage

I. PRELIMINARY

- A. Call to order:
- B. Pledge
- C. Roll Call

Dean Forman	X	_____
Cindi Sherrod	X	_____
Norman Gonzales	X	_____
Bryan Favero	X	_____
Tricia Nielsen	X	_____

II. THOUGHT OF THE DAY – Dean Forman

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

This is the time in which anyone in the audience may address the Board for two (2) minutes on any item that is not on the agenda. (The Board has the discretion to restrict public comments to those matters it deems relevant to its subject matter jurisdiction. Govt. Code Sect. 54954.3)

Vicky Busby, parent of a John Adams Academy 7th grade scholar thanked the teachers for working through the pioneering years of the academy and asked if P.E. could be included for the upper grades because of the importance of movement for learning.

Sara Dildine, 11th grade scholar, suggested that P.E. could be included in the mentoring program with older scholars mentoring in P.E. for younger scholars.

IV. ACTION AGENDA

- A. Approval of 2013-14 schedule format

After participating in the Town Hall with John Adams Academy staff, parents and scholars, Chairman Forman asked Deans to address the boundaries regarding the following:

- Feasibility of 4x4 block scheduling,
- Possibility of making Fridays full days,
- Possibility of instituting different schedule for 6th -8th grades and 9th -12th grades,
- Reserving Fridays for a lab day,
- Using a semester system with scholars having fewer subjects a time

Deans Happoldt and Brophy explained the following:

The small number of scholars in the 9th – 12th grades makes running a separate schedule and instituting a 4x4 block for high school grades only impractical because of the staffing needed to maintain classes with only a few scholars in each. That option may become a possibility as the numbers grow or as the larger classes move up. Currently several classes include scholars from both the middle and high school grades and several teachers cross over, teaching classes for both levels, which could not happen if the middle and high school grades were on separate schedules. The 2013-14 schedule will require an additional two staff members who would cross-over.

Friday lab day – Courses have academic minute requirements of five-hours per week. There are academic minutes for current classes built into Fridays and graduation requirements have to be considered as courses to be taught are planned. Teaching a single class on Fridays would require extending the day to accommodate a five-hour class and that is a significant amount of time. Also, reducing the classes taught to allow for more minutes in one instructional area may jeopardize meeting the 240 credit graduation requirements. Scholars who failed a class would then have to take summer school in order to graduate.

Board members clarified that the proposed daily schedule for 2013-14 includes seven classes per day. The Deans explained that under the proposed class level configuration that was designed for the daily schedule, scholars would take six (6) core classes and an advisory class each day. Under the block schedule scholars would have a 55-minute advisory class and three (3) additional classes each day. The advisory class would count as an elective credit. On both schedule options, daily and block, Fridays would begin with a check-in advisory and mentoring with classes alternating every-other-Friday, as they do now. Keeping study halls and math labs while maintaining the core, rigor and meeting graduation requirements would require additional funding.

Board members expressed the need to address the study skills with both scholars and staff and asked what is being to address it now. Dean Yniguez explained that the proposed advisory classes are a comprehensive program designed to address those needs and give scholars the skills they need to survive in any academic rigorous environment. Dean Happoldt explained that the staff has already started by putting benchmarks in place and checking more often.

Board members asked if it would be feasible for scholars to choose six classes rather than seven with AP classes. Dean Brophy explained that when the high school enrollment increases it may be possible to offer both AP and non-AP options. She also explained that with only six classes the seniors would not have the opportunity to take an internship. The possibility of offering credit for internships was mentioned with the answer that it would depend on the details of the internship.

Board member deliberation included:

- The need to separate the organizational and workload issues from the daily versus block schedule question because those issues have occurred with both schedules.
- The desire to support the recommendation of the teachers and that they have endorsed the daily schedule.
- That the comment cards collected from attendees favored the block schedule
- The concern that we may not have given the block schedule a full try yet.
- That the concerns discussed this year as the burden of the block schedule are almost the same concerns presented last year with the daily schedule.
- The need to identify which schedule works best for the model and delivery of a classical leadership education.
- The need to select a format providing for the best outcome for scholars and staff now and in the future, although the two may not be the same.
- The need to stick with the same schedule for a longer period to determine what works.
- Financial and enrollment realities that limit the ability to offer multiple solutions.
- The attraction of the block schedule was/is the ability to provide for more depth of discussion and learning.
- A negative of the daily schedule was the number of transition times that took time from each class making it hard to get into the depth.

Upper grade teacher, Rosemarie Groth addressed the concern of shorter class periods limiting the ability reach the depth of discussion, reporting that she has learned to do the seminars in a shorter time and a Paideia seminar can be done in 40 minutes. She reported that she learned in her training class for teaching AP that many schools have gone back to daily schedules because students weren't passing the AP tests. She also reported that the last time the college entry tests were high was before the block scheduling trend. She pointed out that with Friday as minimum days the course have only a two day block rather than three. She reported that she give less homework now than she has given in 30 years and still the scholars struggle because they can't keep track and expressed that core teaching is successful because the daily reinforcement works with the brain. She expressed that even the blocks with fewer subjects at a time, such as the 4x4 block, pose difficulties for retention of material due to gaps up to 13 months between courses of the same subject.

Upper grade teacher, Jason Turner commented that while the block schedule does favor science, the other subjects require the repetition and that while the block schedule can help prepare for students for college, we are not able to run a full block schedule right now.

Parent Angie Gardner expressed that she doesn't think scholars are getting the education they were getting last year. She reported that her scholars come to school even when they are sick because of the fear that they won't be able to catch back up.

Board members asked teachers present to compare their scholar's results in grades and performance this year on the block schedule versus last year with the daily schedule. Teachers reported that their scholars were further ahead in the subject matter last year, that grades are lower this year in some subjects and about the same in some, but that teaching style has had to be altered and there are fewer opportunities to dig deep and that the middle grade scholars are not prepared for a 90 minute class. They pointed out that there are many variables and that the scholars come from many educational backgrounds and have varying abilities.

Chairman Forman addressed parent concerns about homework and lifestyle changes explaining that classical leadership/Thomas Jefferson education is a change of lifestyle and change of who you are and who your family is and that getting families to adopt this in a public format is the grand experiment. He clarified that minimum- day Fridays aren't free days and that when we say America is in decline, it is because we are inherently lazier than we were. He stressed the importance of repetition with our children and the things that we do and at night when we gather around the table and talk about great ideas instead of letting them off the hook. He advised that this education is a family choice and that if we want greatness that is the price we have to pay. He pointed out that although John Adams Academy may not have many electives, the school's mentoring program provides something better every 10 weeks with the mentoring program. He quoted a passage from A Thomas Jefferson Education, "How does a generation not raised with the classics educate a new generation in the classics?" He advised parents who want to help kids with their homework to get in the classics. He also expressed his support for the teachers who are professionals and experts in their field.

Board Member Sherrod emphasized that the classical leadership education is for everyone and that all children can be educated in this way.

The Board also discussed the need to have the collaboration skills amongst staff ensure academic rigor and teach scholars the tools to meet those higher requirements.

The motion to adopt the 55-minute daily schedule as proposed by teachers was made by Board Member Sherrod and seconded by Board Member Gonzales. The vote to approve the motion was unanimous.

Ayes 5

Nays 0

V. NEXT MEETING – Thursday, March 14th, 2013 4:00 p.m.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made by Board Member Gonzales and seconded by Board Member Nielsen. The vote to adjourn was unanimous.

Vision

The John Adams Academies are restoring America's heritage by developing servant-leaders who are keepers and defenders of the principles of freedom for which our Founding Fathers pledged their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor.

Values

John Adams Academy is preparing future leaders and statesmen through principle-based education.

Our core values include:

Appreciation of our national heritage

Public and private virtue

Emphasis on mentors and classics

Student-empowered learning

Fostering creativity and entrepreneurial spirit

High standards of academic excellence

Modeling what we teach

Abundance mentality

Maintaining a culture of greatness