

BEVERLY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Committee of the Whole Meeting
Citizen Questions / Response from Superintendent

Class Size

1. The NEA supports a class size of 15 students per teacher. I also understand that class size reduction programs are underway in many states. Yet, we are proposing to double the number of students recommended by the NEA. How can you defend class sizes of 30 students or more?

Research on class size generally shows that for class size to make a significant difference in student achievement, the size needs to be in the range of 12-15 students. That is probably the basis for the NEA's position. It would be a rare occurrence to find a public school that has that as its standard class size. I would much prefer lower class sizes than what we are proposing, but the alternatives are worse. A class size of 30 students certainly presents challenges for our teachers and students, but they are not insurmountable. We would absolutely prefer to have smaller class sizes to diminish that challenge, but the best use of available resources led the School Committee several years ago to set that number as the maximum class size guideline for grades 3-12. Class sizes shown in the budget proposal are projections; situations of more than 30 students in a class will be addressed if they actually occur. The staff cuts at Briscoe lead to projected class sizes of 32-33 students; restoring those cuts before we actually vote an FY09 budget is our highest priority.

2. How do you purport to achieve educational and curriculum goals in class sizes of 28-33 students while teachers try to attend to the social, emotional and learning needs presented to them in large classrooms?

Our elementary teachers have received and will continue to receive professional development in assessment, analyzing data, and grouping students based on those assessment findings. This allows them to make greater strides in addressing individual student needs, to work with smaller groups of students with focused instruction, and to take advantage of instructional strengths of our staff members.

3. Small children require special attention, and I am worried that one of my children will 'slip through the learning cracks,' which is directly against the national 'No Child Left Behind' campaign. What do I do as a parent when this happens and you have taken away my resources?

Support services for struggling learners are still being provided in our schools. Our teachers and support staff certainly work to prevent your child from falling through the cracks. But if you feel that is happening, your first step is to communicate with your child's teacher. Share your concerns for what you are seeing and strategize with the teacher as to what can be done to change the situation. This may lead to other support staff becoming involved as well. If you can't seem to find the right solution at this level, be sure to speak with principal.

Briscoe Middle School

4. What is the committee's current thinking about Briscoe class size?

The School Committee and Superintendent are unanimous that restoration of the four-person team at Briscoe is our highest priority.

Early Childhood Center Concept

5. You cite the belief that an Early Childhood Center will reduce the costs for providing special education services and that a more effective early childhood program will reduce referrals to special education. Please explain in more detail, especially given your announcement to cut several full-day K teachers.

I am confused by your comment about cutting full-day K teachers. I have proposed the same kindergarten program in effect this year – no change in staffing.

We know that the underpinnings of reading and literacy need to be developed early. Like language, that is when children are the most able to learn quickly and efficiently. An ECC provides opportunities socially, emotionally, culturally, and academically to gear the entire experience to young learners under one administration and one clearly defined focus.

"Approximately two million students identified as Special Education students have been labeled

simply because they have not learned to read. (The President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002).

6. Can Beverly afford to provide a school for the purpose of Early Education?
 What we are proposing is moving all of our current early childhood programs (preschool and kindergarten) from the six schools into one building. In doing so, we become more efficient in our use of staff and actually reduce costs.
7. With the proposed ECC plan, (whether it be Hannah or Cove) what programs will the children be left with. At the ECC & 1-5 will they have art, music, computers, science (1-5) and library? I am unclear as to what classrooms will still be available for such services and if they vary by plan.
 All programs currently available to students will be provided next year, including art, music, computers, science, and library. That has been a key part of decision-making. With an ECC at Cove, we project using the science room as a classroom. With an ECC at Hannah, we will need to use the art, music, computer, and science room at that school for regular classrooms.
8. How will pick-up work if we have a student at each school and they are released at the same time?
 We acknowledge the problem this presents for parents and are working on a schedule under which the ECC start and end times are fifteen minutes later.
9. Have our public safety officials been consulted? Are you familiar with the traffic, parking and safety concerns that currently exist during these times?
 We are well aware of the traffic issues at all of our schools. In each instance, we provide supervision to ensure student safety, and we encourage parents to follow our instructions for preserving that safety on-site. We do not see traffic issues as changing significantly from what we experience today. Because there is little busing for the preschool-kindergarten programs, parents who transport these students will only be going to the ECC and not going to our other elementary sites. Our transportation director has looked at this issue; it has not been brought to the City's traffic officer.
10. Can savings be realized and classrooms opened up by going back to a half-day model until such time the budget stabilizes? How can you support sending our youngest students – kindergarteners to one school one year and then moving them the next? Also, in the economy we are now experiencing what makes you think that parents are going to be willing and able to spend \$4,000 for public school kindergarten and especially this model of public school kindergarten? Have you thought of surveying the current population regarding kindergarten placement (full-day versus half-day) for next year?
 We currently have twelve full-day kindergarten classes in our elementary schools, and our plan for next year is to continue with that same number. While it is state law that we offer half-day kindergarten for free, full-day kindergarten brings in tuition and grant revenue that greatly offsets program expenses.
 Next year, we will be charging the maximum tuition that the state will allow, \$4,000 per student, an increase of \$400 over this year. The cost is still competitive in relation to private kindergarten, and students experience a curriculum that is aligned very well with our grade one program. We have already conducted kindergarten registration and do not intend to resurvey parents. Some have suggested to "just offer half-day kindergarten". This approach would represent an estimated net loss of \$152,833 that would have to be made up in other ways in the budget. On a purely educational basis, moving away from full-day kindergarten is also a step backwards.
 Transitioning students from school to school is always a concern. With preschools currently located at Ayers and Cove, many students transition to another school for their kindergarten. Also, each year we have found it necessary to locate some kindergartens at a school other than their "home" school. Establishing an Early Childhood Center in one building leads to only one transition.
11. Will the kindergarteners still be grouped with others from their district, so they will be with kids from their neighborhood?
 No.
12. You cite the 23-year old *Bercutte/Clement 1985* in support of Early Childhood Centers – please cite other more recent studies, referencing their sources.
 A recent article on this topic in the Educational Leadership (ASCD) was distributed to our School Committee at a recent meeting. We will post that to our website and provide further information as well.

Hannah as an Early Childhood Center

13. I would like to know, is this something that is on the table? If Hannah is on the table, what would have to be cut to pay for the increased costs?

This possibility is still under consideration. Information about what this would mean, both to the budget and to the program, was provided in a handout presented at the April 1st public meeting and which is available on our website.

14. Has a redistricting map been done for this scenario? Could you present that at the meeting on Wednesday?

A map for this redistricting would be too much of a rough estimate and thus very misleading. We do know that it would add a significant number of walkers to Cove and that splitting transported students between Cove and Centerville is not easily determined. We would need to wait until we actually assign students to find out where the split would best make sense.

The map generated with having Cove as an ECC is purely an estimate by our Transportation Director based on his knowledge of bus routes and overall numbers of students in the various neighborhoods. It should not be interpreted as a definite assignment area for any particular school. That will be determined as we make actual assignments. Once we are certain of assignment areas, parents will be informed.

Redistricting

15. How will the redistricting be determined? How can we ensure that all classrooms across the city remain at the lowest class size possible? Will this be done street by street? What if expected enrollments are lower than projected, will there be adjustments made to ensure all schools remain at the same level? Will this be done on a yearly basis?

Students from the Cove and McKeown schools will be assigned to their new schools based upon 1) proximity to the new school; 2) balancing enrollments/class size; 3) balancing F & R populations; 4) bus routes; and 5) neighborhoods. This will be done street by street. We aim to have the lowest class sizes possible and to assure families that there would not be changes in assignment in the future. In the future, however, the School Committee will consider a protocol under which students could be reassigned to balance class sizes or Free & reduced Lunch populations.

16. I would like to see the free and reduced lunch issue addressed. Dr. Hayes has stated that to even this population out would not be cost effective in terms of bussing. The current proposal really puts Ayers and North Beverly well above the other two schools in terms of F and R lunches.

This concern will certainly be addressed as we assign students from Cove and McKeown to their new schools. We have published projected data as an estimate, but we hope to achieve an even better distribution when the assignments are made. The "Report of the Advisory Committee on School Redistricting" published in October 1996 laid the basis for assigning students to our six elementary schools. Even that report projected a wide range of F & R percentages (Ayers, 23.5%; Centerville, 15%; Cove, 23.2%; Hannah, 29%; McKeown, 27%; North Beverly, 24.3%)

Transitions

17. How you will ensure that each individual child impacted by the close of their school will be placed appropriately in a new school? Will there be teachers, administrators, specialists who know them, who will advocate for them? Who will take the time to read each child's individual reports and take the time to assess their needs? Will they be able to stay together or only absorbed into existing groups of children?

We recognize the need for students to have a smooth transition. Principals and other district administrators have already started planning transition activities that put "kids first". They will meet with their PTO's and Site Councils to discuss and plan closing activities with a theme of "kids first" and positive transitioning. Letters will be sent to parents to encourage them to assist us with making the transition a positive one for students – putting "kids first." We hope to create "field trips" for students to their new schools before the end of this school year. Before the start of the school year, principals will hold an Open House the week before school opens for students, one grade each day, to visit their new school. I am sure that principals, staff, PTO's and Site Council's will plan other activities for the opening of the school year that will help to ease this transition and welcome students to their new school.

Placement of students in classrooms will be handled in the same way as we currently do, that is, in consultation with current teachers placing students based on student learning needs and the instructional style of the various teachers. Integrating students from various neighborhoods is preferable to creating classrooms by neighborhood; however, students will be in classrooms with classmates from their previous school. We will try to assign teachers to schools such that students new to a school will see teachers from their old school.

18. The Edwards School families have already faced the closing of their elementary school and now in a matter of 5 short years, you are asking them to go through this turmoil all over again. I just don't think it is fair or advisable to make these families carry the burden of a budget deficit by disrupting their school community again. They are established in the Cove School community and that is where they should stay. Why would you disrupt the Edwards School families again?

When we consolidated the middle schools, we changed the placement of students whose earlier years had moves to and from the McKay School. While we would rather not bring such change into their school lives, the need to reconfigure our elementary schools is essential to our future and transitions for some students are a necessary part of achieving that goal.

19. What will the hours of the proposed Early Childhood Center be?

While the schools with grades 1-5 would remain in the 8 AM to 2 PM time slot, we are seriously looking at a 15 minute shift for the ECC, i.e., from 8:15 AM to 2:15 PM.

20. Suppose we have to face the proposed cuts, what happens to the materials and equipment at both Cove and McKeown schools, specifically the computers and other things donated by PTO's?

Materials, furniture, and equipment will be moved to schools where they are most appropriate. Specifically for the computers, the ones at Cove will still have value for an ECC. It is yet to be determined what would happen to the computers at McKeown.

21. Many questions keep arising about the logistics of a 4 elementary school model - for example, lunch, parking, assemblies, and drop-off/pick-up. Parents who are well aware of the very limited parking and traffic issues at our schools. There is concern for very small cafeterias that schools must deal with at assembly and performance times. Parent gatherings are usually SRO.

As is the case now, these are administrative issues for which the principal and staff must plan. They may need to change the way we do things now to comfortably accommodate such programs.

22. Why is the Language-based program located at Hannah being moved to another school? This program is where the students are in the classroom for reading/math and then mainstreamed back.

Ayers Ryal Side Elementary School has been involved in an intensive program of professional development over the past two years to implement a new model of reading instruction, and the school has shown very promising results. With this program and the additional reading support at Ayers, we believe it is the best location for the language-based students, and that is why we placed the program there.

23. Are you moving the autistic program to Hannah due to the new principal's request, because it is her program? Would you consider moving the Autistic program to another school that could accommodate it and leaving the Language-based program at Hannah?

The program for autistic students, currently at Ayers, serves students in two groups: primary (grades K-1) and intermediate (grades 2-5). It made great sense to include the primary group in the ECC school; this will be an improvement over what we currently do. The intermediate program was placed at Hannah for two reasons. The principal who already works well with those students is being reassigned to Hannah. This intermediate program is the only district program that would require only one classroom, and by assigning it to Hannah, we leave a classroom open for other uses at that school.

Staffing

24. How will teachers from Cove and McKeown be reassigned?

Teachers in the other four schools who will continue in our employment will remain at their current schools. Teachers from McKeown and Cove who will continue in our employment will be assigned primarily to the two schools where their students will be going; however, that is not true for all teachers. As much as possible, we aim to have teachers working in the same grade level so that they will not have to adjust to a new curriculum.

25. You cite a dramatic increase in the enrollment of elementary SPED students, yet you talk of teacher cutbacks at this level. How will you adequately address their specific SPED needs ensuring the typical students' needs are still met?

The only dramatic increase in SPED students that I have referred to has been in the preschool. It is the reconfiguration of our elementary schools that allows us to be adequately staffed to meet all student needs while doing so with less staff.

26. I have heard that our autism population is 'exploding.' What about the population of students who are in traditional classrooms but are on IEP's? How has that population changed in recent years? How will the ability of those children to learn be affected by larger class sizes? How will they be accommodated if they are unable to make adequate progress in that environment?

We have continued to provide the needed supports for all the special education students, the majority of which are in the general education class. In some ways, the consolidation provides more opportunity for flexible grouping which benefits the special education students. The programs that focus on our separate autism programs are intact, and the support staff such as our ABA providers will not have to travel to six schools. They will be primarily housed at the ECC because that is where the bulk of services are given. We anticipate that with the appropriate supports in place, this population will continue to thrive in our system. Large class size does not impede a teacher's ability to do small group instruction and make the best use of the resources available, including paraprofessionals, therapists, reading specialists, title one teachers etc., or cooperative learning which maximizes learning for many children.

27. Please explain your reasoning behind the laying off of *qualified* teachers and then using 'paraprofessionals' if the need arises to split off new classrooms in order to resolve enrollments that rise slightly above the maximum; and please explain the background and education of said 'paraprofessionals'.

Paraprofessionals are a valuable part of educational program. Adding one to a classroom cuts the student to adult ration in half, and the paraprofessionals can work under the supervision of the teacher to provide instruction to students. Paraprofessionals must be "highly qualified" as well. All paraprofessionals we hire are "highly qualified". That is, they meet the standard requirement of NCLB: they have an associate's degree; have completed a minimum of 48 college credits; or have earned 360 hours of professional development. Paraprofessionals can also earn this distinction by completing a program such as "Para Pro". Qualifications for kindergarten paraprofessionals are even more stringent in order to comply with kindergarten accreditation requirements. A significant difference between teachers and paraprofessionals is their salary, and it is salary that must be cut in a big way if we are to close the budget shortfall.

28. People are curious about the process for assignment of specialists (art, music, PE, library) to the 4 elementary schools if all are of professional status.

Some art, music, PE, and library positions are cut as a result of this reconfiguration (total FTE = 6.5 positions). Since teachers in these areas interact with all students in a school, it is in everyone's best interest to reassign Cove and McKeown specialists to the schools where those children are being assigned so that students can see a familiar face.

29. How was it decided that Karla Pressman would be moved to Centerville and Colleen McBride would be moved to Hannah?

The starting point for these decisions was in assigning Susan Snyder to be principal of the Early Childhood Center. She has considerable experience and expertise in early childhood education, and it was very important to have the best person to lead that new school. Colleen McBride and Karla Pressman were assigned to Hannah and Centerville respectively because the Superintendent felt that their leadership and expertise would be put to best advantage at those schools. Principals were given no choice in the matter; the decision rests with the Superintendent.

Alternative Program at McKeown

30. Why does Beverly need an Alternative Secondary school? Isn't there one in the area? Wouldn't it be less expensive to pay the tuition to send the students there?

The students served by this program generally have social / behavioral disabilities such that they cannot succeed in the regular school setting. We have alternative programs at both the middle and high school for such students. In these programs, they are kept substantially separate with some regular ed integration where appropriate. Even with this level of structure, some students are not successful. Currently those students are sent to an out-of-district placement, perhaps at the Northshore Education Consortium, at a high tuition cost.

The Consortium and the school district have talked for several years about the need for a program "in between" these two options. Placing a student out-of-district is a big leap in programming, and we have felt that an in-district program that offered more structure, but still less restrictive than out-of-district, would serve these students well at a lower cost. There will be some other aspects to the program, but this is the biggest piece. We have students in mind at Briscoe and the High School for whom this would be a good placement, and we also predict there will be out-of-district students who will be better placed at this program. Thus this should be looked at as a cost-saving measure as well as a program improvement.

31. If the school is entirely special ed, then how will these laws be satisfied? What ages are you expecting to be placed in the building?

It may take a year or more to have all the intended programs in place. Once that happens you can expect students who are in their teens and even some students up to age 22 (as the law requires). Placement of students into our programs can only occur following all applicable laws and protocols for placing students and is the result of a team meeting involving parents, student, and all appropriate staff members

32. When the plans for the new high school facility were developed, was an alternative high school model considered as part of the building? Could Memorial have been employed as an alternative high school? The students in out-of-district placements could already be back in their home school district.

The topic was discussed for possible inclusion with the new high school facility, but it was determined that it could not be fit into the footprint for the news school. When Memorial was closed, it was viewed as the site for school district offices as well as some municipal offices. The aim was to rent the existing space for rental revenue. The building is almost fully utilized, and our estimate for rental income for FY09 is \$335,000.

33. What dollar figure is being estimated as the cost to renovate McKeown to become an alternative school?

We anticipate no need for renovations at McKeown to serve these programs.

Implementing the FY09 Budget

34. I feel there is not enough time to implement the proposed changes and still give these children the education they deserve. I understand the money situation is bad. There really is no money, and I do accept the fact at some point 1 or 2 schools may have to close, but I feel the proposed plan is too much too soon.

The administration has confidence that there is adequate time to plan and implement everything that needs to take place for a smooth opening to the 2008-09 school year. Such planning has already begun in anticipation of a change. The School Committee will be asked to approve two budgets, one with and one without a successful override vote. We will be ready to implement either scenario.

35. The YMCA has provided after school child care for my family for the past four years, allowing me to work full-time. They are licensed for 39 or 52 slots/children at each school site and at the Cove School there were waiting lists for some days of the week. How will they accommodate the extra students in the Hannah and Centerville, Ayers, North Beverly schools if they are already at the capacity of their license? Have you consulted with the YMCA about the impact? What is the capacity of the YMCA after school program at the remaining elementary schools? I am hearing that the Ayers after school program is already full.

The administration has contacted the YMCA and has been assured that the Y will make whatever licensure changes necessary to accommodate the increased number of children. Most recently, the Y increased their capacity from 52 to 65 children at both the Ayers and Hannah Schools. The

Cove is currently at 52, and the Y is in the process of increasing the capacity at Centerville to 52 children. Linda Berger from the YMCA has promised to work with the administration to accommodate all children wanting to participate in their after-school program and from her perspective the sooner a decision is made the better so that they may begin to plan.

Override

36. If the override passes, would the schools remain as they are now?

That will have to be decided by the School Committee. I expect they will make that decision before an override vote is taken.

37. In February, you proposed a series of cuts which included reducing the 4th and 5th grades at Cove School by one class each, which I believe reduced our gap to the \$2.6MM we now face (and put 30 students in each of those classrooms). Even if the override passes, would those cuts still be made?

You are incorrect. The cuts you refer to were as a result of a proposal to increase the class size maximum in grades 3-5 from 30 to 35 students. The cut closed the shortfall to approximately \$2.3 million. The School Committee rejected that proposal, and when the positions were restored, the shortfall grew to the current \$2.67 million.

38. If there is a successful override vote, will there be any significant changes in September?

With a shortfall of \$2.67 million, a successful override would add \$2.5 million in revenues. The remaining \$167K has yet to be determined and, as noted above, the School Committee will need to determine how to use the revenue from the override.

39. Is there a way to make sure that the \$2.5 million from a successful override will go to the school department each year? If not, why?

The override permanently adds this amount to the City's tax base for subsequent years. However, in subsequent years, all funds are available for use anywhere in the City budget. I am unaware of a way in which the funds can be permanently applied to the schools. However, Mayor Scanlon has always provided funds for the operation of the schools by looking at the amount that was given in the previous year and determining the amount of new revenue that can be directed to the schools.

Vision and Long Range Planning

40. I am unclear as what our vision is for our community and children's education in the Beverly Public Schools. Can you speak to this?

The School Committee has operated for years as a very student-centered decision-making body, maintaining a mission statement of "To enable all students to reach their potential through an academically challenging and diverse education." In addition their decision-making has been guided by the following goals that make up their core vision:

- Ensure student safety.
- Maintain class size levels consistent with research on good instructional practice.
- Provide a strong curriculum that is aligned with the state standards.
- Provide appropriate support services.
- Conduct as many special education programs as feasible "in-house", so that Beverly students attend Beverly schools.
- Allocate sufficient funds to building level budgets to support instruction.
- Employ staff who are appropriately licensed and "highly qualified" in their subject area.
- Provide instructional materials and professional development on a districtwide basis to advance student and teacher learning.
- Maintain facilities conducive to learning.

We are gaining ground in achieving some of these goals, most notably developing a strong curriculum, bringing special education "in-house" providing adequate building budgets, instructional materials and professional development, and maintaining facilities. We are losing ground in maintaining good class sizes.

41. I know that it is Governor Deval Patrick's vision is to create Free Full Day Kindergarten across the State. How does this fit in to our plan of creating Cove (or any one school) into a Preschool and Kindergarten Center? Are we working towards our Governors vision or are we dependant on the Kindergarten program income?

There has definitely been discussion at the state level and even the federal level about improvements to early childhood education, including full-day kindergarten and even universal preschool. However, more information needs to be provided from those levels about specific initiatives before we can talk about the impact on Beverly.

42. What can we be doing at the state level to make a change for our school district?

Communicating your concerns to both state and federal legislators is always a good idea. They want to hear from constituents. It is expected that in the next month or two, you may see a call from the Governor's office (look for information about the "Readiness Project") for dramatic changes that could affect education in Beverly. Calls for change, however, must be acted upon by the legislature. Another area where changes could positively affect Beverly is in changes to the state's funding formula for education. We are caught in the middle, not too poor and not too wealthy, such that we don't get the state aid that such other communities qualify for. Changes in this formula should only help the aid situation for our schools. Lastly, please know that the Mayor, Superintendent, and School Committee are advocating on behalf of the schools at the state level, both through personal advocacy and through the state associations to which they belong.

43. What specifically is being done to manage the costs which are "out of our control" (sped, utilities, insurance) so that we can gain some control over them and not be in this position every year? For example, everyone says we can save a lot of money if the teachers move to the state insurance plan – what needs to be done to make that happen? Can we be working with the state to re-examine the sped laws and funding? How does the community help take control of these costs?

Steps have been taken and more are in development to reduce expenses in these areas. In the area of special education, an in-district alternative school at McKeown will ultimately reduce costs in meeting the needs of some of our students. The preschool program serves special education students ages 3-5. By consolidating into an Early Childhood Center, we reduce the costs for providing those special education services, and we believe that a more effective early childhood program will reduce referrals to special education.

Regarding utilities, work has been done in recent years to upgrade our boilers and heating systems. The burners at both Memorial and Briscoe have been converted to gas heat, which we expect to bring savings. An energy audit will soon be conducted at Briscoe, and we expect it may point the way to efficiencies not only at Briscoe but at all our schools. Simultaneous to the High School Project, Mayor Scanlon is actively pursuing an upgrade to our solar and wind renewable energy systems at that site. If the Mayor is successful, we will certainly see savings through renewable energy.

Over the past four years, successive increases in employee contributions to health care have resulted in a 10% increase to the employee's contribution. Joining the state's GIC health insurance program is another possibility for reducing health care expenses, and Mayor Scanlon is exploring that topic with all the unions in the City.

44. Has the City explored our state's GIC Health Insurance Program for its employees. Over the years and throughout the Mayor's long tenure, I have heard of such proposals but never learned whether it was actually pursued. If not, why? Isn't this a viable option for cutting expensive healthcare costs? What about bundling benefits with neighboring communities who face the same budgetary challenges as Beverly to bring down costs?

Current legislation requires that a municipality's unions be supportive of participation in the GIC program. Mayor Scanlon is holding meetings with our City's union leadership on this topic. In any case, such discussions would have no impact on next year's budget because of certain requirements in the legislation.

45. Is this proposal the best possible education we can offer the children of Beverly? Or are we just trying to put a square-peg into a round hole? Six Elementary Schools? Four? EEC? Class Size? Special Education Center? What does the best education system for our children look like? And does this proposal get us moving towards that goal?

We are seeking to create the best possible school system that our resources can provide.

Unfortunately, our resources are limited and that limits our vision of the education system we would like to have.

46. I'm concerned we're going to vote on a prop 2 1/2 override, close schools, lay-off employees, see a decrease in property values and still not educate our children.

We will continue to provide our students with a quality education, though it will not be the level of quality education to which we aspire. The class sizes we will be implementing are not ideal and will be making the job of teaching that much harder. Our staff will rise to that challenge, and we will continue to prepare students well for the academic challenges that they face.

47. I have heard a few people talk about moving 7 and 8 to the new BHS. It seems that the notion of updating Memorial as a future Middle School is not realistically going to happen for many years, and Briscoe is not a building that should be renovated. If we have too much in the way of elementary schools, moving 6 back and looking at the district lines might work. Then we could add the middle grades to the new high school building. If this is not even being considered, what is the plan for the Middle School going forward?

Over the years we have looked at moving sixth grade back to the elementary schools but that was not seen as a viable option for a variety of reasons. Including grade 7 and 8 at the current high school was even briefly looked at when we consolidated the middle schools. That was also not viable, and it certainly would not be viable to include those grades in the new high school as designed. Since the consolidation the School Committee and the City has lived up to its commitment to maintain and improve the Briscoe Middle School building so that it can serve as our middle school until the community is ready to consider a new middle school. Using memorial for that purpose has been in the Mayor's long range capital improvements plan for the past couple years and represents the best plan for our middle school needs in the future.

48. One of my visions is to create Intergenerational opportunities whenever possible. Creating a Preschool and Kindergarten Center takes this opportunity away. Has anyone thought about putting the preschool program in the Senior Center or creating a space for them there? Creating a preschool center within a senior center benefits everyone. There is lot's of research on this that I am willing to share.

The district would welcome opportunities for intergenerational programs. If anything, the early Childhood Center would enhance such a partnership. Locating a preschool classroom at the Senior Center would separate that class from the central support services that are necessary and thus would add more cost to the program.

General

49. What is the fate of the elementary instrumental music program? Will eliminating it at the elementary level automatically eliminate the strings program in the middle school, since there is currently only one strings teacher for the entire district?

There are ongoing discussions that we think will lead to a continuation of an elementary instrumental program, just not a continuation of the way we do it now. It's a little premature to talk specifics, but initial reactions to the ideas discussed give administrators reason to be optimistic.

50. Please provide the breakdown of the savings from going to a 5 elementary school model (repurposing McKeown only) for the next year. This assumes the remaining 5 schools are pre-K through 5. Also, what does this reconfiguration do to the free and reduced percentages?

Information on this scenario will be prepared and presented to the School Committee as soon as possible. When this was considered in 2004, the estimated savings was approximately \$560,000. Even extending that savings for reasonable increases over the years, it will not produce the \$1.8 million savings generated by the proposed elementary reconfiguration.

51. How did the city agree to allow 19.5 hrs to be classified as "full-time"...to be given full-time benefits? I understand that the government is not the same as a private company however, it is pretty standard to provide "full-time" benefits for employees working more than 37.5 hrs (at least). "Part-time" benefits...those with increased premiums for health care/life/etc... are often only provided for employees working more than 20 hrs.
It is state law that employees who work 20 hours or more are entitled to benefits. Nearly all of the employees who work 20 hours or more and members of bargaining units in which benefits is a subject covered under their contract. These employees are eligible to the benefits defined in the contract.
52. Is there an accountant or financial consultant (other than the superintendent) who has looked at the school budget and its costs to run the school department and/or reconfigure it?...doing such a drastic move should involve professional consultation...it may cost a bit in the short run but may save significantly in the long run.
The district employs a Director of Finance & Operations as well as an Assistant Business Manager. Management of our financial operations necessarily involves finance-related personnel at City Hall, thus providing additional oversight and consultation. The School Committee actively oversees implementation of the district budget. Outside consultants who have looked at our practices give us high marks for our financial management.
53. How does School Choice work? How will school choice be affected if the current proposal to close two elementary schools work? Will students still be allowed school choice to a different elementary school as they have been in the past? Will it affect students who are currently using this program? Are they "grandfathered" in? How much does it cost the district to school choice "out" to a different community? How would it affect new students who want to school choice out to Beverly? How would it affect students who have been on school choice all along? Would they still be able to do that?
Essentially, being a school choice district, as we are, enables students to both "choice in" and "choice out" of the school district. The School Committee annually sets limits by grade on the number of school choice students we accept. Once accepted, we are obligated to educate the student through to high school graduation. While students at the elementary level may be accepted, they are not guaranteed a particular school, only a seat in an elementary school. Funds for school choice pass through the Department of Education. The City pays out money for students who choice-out and the district receives money for the students who choice-in. Over the years, the funds that go out have exceed the funds that come in. In FY08, the City paid out \$578,690 for approximately 108 students while the district received \$424,066 for approximately 71 students.
54. What percentage of the schools is using the Rigby Reader program?
All our elementary schools use this program.
55. What specific grant sources are being looked into at the present time?
In approving the FY08 budget, the School Committee was informed that the district planned on \$4,838,800 in grants and special funds. Such sources included No Child Left Behind grants, Special Education grants, revolving accounts, and other grants and special funds. These programs fund essential services in the district. We are just now starting to get preliminary notices of what grant funding we might receive for next year. We aggressively apply for grants throughout the year that fit with our goals and objectives.
56. Dr Hayes states that Mayor Scanlon is willing to cover one time costs for building extra classrooms at the Hannah building. The estimate in the response was a cost of \$700,000. If the restructuring should go forward as initially proposed, with Cove as the Early Childhood Center, for 2008-09, would the Mayor still release these funds to eliminate the cuts at the Middle School and High School levels?
While the Superintendent presented a realistic cost for adding two classrooms at Hannah at \$600,000 to \$750,000, he did not realize that Mayor Scanlon was considering bonding that construction over a period of years and thus reducing the annual commitment. While there is some ability for the Mayor to cover one-time costs, the level of available funds is realistically not that high.
57. How many employees (in total) are employed by the Beverly School system?
736 individuals comprise a total full time equivalency (FTE) of 659.98.
58. How many class room teachers are employed by the Beverly School System? By this I mean those that stand and deliver 5 hrs per day or 6 periods per day.
332 full-time and 18 part-time

59. How many non-teaching, "professional staff" are employed by the Beverly School System?
34 full-time and 3 part time
60. How many "professional" administrators are employed by the Beverly School System?
27
61. Why has the Mayor had such a voice in the details and decision of this new ECC proposal?
Though a member of the School Committee, Mayor Scanlon is the chief executive for City affairs. While the ECC is clearly a School Committee matter, the financial situation that has led to cutting the school department budget and thus an elementary reconfiguration and an override election is a City problem. He rightly needs to be a leader in working out this problem.

Questions for Annemarie Cesa

62. You are not bound by the number given to you by the Mayor. In fact, your duty, as prescribed by your own Policy Manual, is "Establish and transmit to the Mayor and the City Council an annual budget sufficient to adequately meet the educational needs of the students enrolled in the Beverly Public Schools."
We believe that it is our fiscal responsibility to live within the means that are available to us. The SC was told by the CC and the Mayor that the schools needed to live with a 3 ½ % increase yearly as the city moves forward in building the new HS. I feel we would be doing the community injustice if we submitted a budget that could not be funded fully. These are very difficult times fiscally for the country as well as our community. All of the city's departments know that it is their responsibility to submit a realistic budget.
63. I have heard of many requests to have a citizen committee formed in order to review the entire FY09 budget – to date I have not heard of its inception. I ask that you and our elected committee members please draw on the professional expertise of our willing and interested citizens during this time. Yes we have an elected school committee, but your proposed changes and budget cuts are far greater than the present committee is equipped to process.
I plan to ask the School Committee to vote for the approval of an advisory committee. I think it is important to get community input and involvement about the "Reconfiguration Plan". Jim Latter will be the chair person of this committee. We are hopeful that the group will work efficiently and will make a non binding recommendation to the SC within a few weeks. I am not looking to form a committee because I believe in any way that the SC is incapable of making this type of decision. Over the last few years your elected SC members have worked diligently to developed and implemented new curriculum programs, consolidate the middle schools, and presented balanced budgets.
64. If an override vote is successful, would a citizen group be formed to work with the School Committee to work on plans for next year? When would this group form? When would they begin working?
School Committee President Cesa will address this question in our meeting.
65. School Committee President Annmarie Cesa has stated that various cost cutting proposals have been considered and rejected in the past. She also stated that the first time the School Committee was apprised of Dr. Hayes' proposal was on 3/27/08. I have heard from various city officials and from committee members in the past week such phrases as "this is not a done deal" and "this is just a starting point." My question is: When, if ever, will other proposals be presented and considered beside the two extremes presented by Dr. Hayes? The school committee has very few meetings between now and the time that the budget is to be approved and I have yet to hear what follows the 'starting point' or what else will be considered.
I think that there are only 2 options available. The first is to move forward with the Reconfiguration plan as suggested by Dr. Hayes whereby 1 of our current elementary schools will be used at an ECC and another as a Alternative Secondary Program. This plan would change should the override pass in June. As has been reported in the press and publicly stated by myself and Dr. Hayes, the SC has discounted the other options that were discussed earlier this year.

Questions for Mayor Scanlon

66. How much revenue from the Mass Lottery was received by Beverly and what portion was used for the school budget last year?

Lottery Aid is part of the total Local Aid received by the City. Lottery Aid for this fiscal year is \$4,815,000 and is expected to remain exactly the same for next fiscal year. The new additional money provided by the city to the schools is based on total revenues available and projected expenses.

67. Why is Mayor Scanlon so adamantly against prop 2 1/2??? Does he not see the need and benefit of gaining 1 year to go back to the drawing board and create a more carefully thought out plan? Also, how can he not see the direct effect a school system has on a community? There are studies galore!!!!

Mayor Scanlon is neither for nor against an override. There are compelling arguments for and against the override. His recent talk to the community was to be published on April 24th in its entirety in the *Beverly Citizen*. Please also take the opportunity to read it on the City of Beverly website at www.beverlyma.gov under News and Announcements – Mayor’s Address on School Budget/Override.

68. What about implementing the proposal in steps beginning with the change at McKeown. Would Mayor Scanlon be willing to give "one-time funding" as a way of stepping into this change, and at the same time identifying what cost savings there may be with the health care change, or the revenue projected from the special ed programs at McKeown, for 2009-10?

Mayor Scanlon is open-minded to any approach that moves the school budget significantly toward sustainability. He is concerned about postponing inevitable actions and prolonging a painful situation.

69. City pensions...after 10yrs of employment?... Has the city considered 401K/403B or other less expensive options? As our population ages, we simply cannot afford to continue to pay our city workers indefinitely...as much as we appreciate our employees, they are certainly getting paid competitive salaries as it is and, just like the rest of us, will need to plan for retirement without relying on a pension...look into Verizon and what their company has done as a guideline regarding eliminating pensions...sure, not everyone will be happy but our children cannot continue to suffer to fund pension plans...it will only get worse from here if we continue at this rate.

The rules governing benefit eligibility are not made by the city. They are state law and apply equally to communities throughout the entire state. Perhaps they could be changed over a period of time, but in the short run the only improvement would come from hiring part-time workers, without benefits, whose work would be limited to 19 ½ hours per week. Investigation indicates that this practice could be successfully used on many new hires.