

Community Forum I Summary

October 28, 2010

1. Honors Programs at Islip Middle School

Currently, Islip Middle School has students enrolled in core subject areas with an Honors designation. We wish to continue with the Honors offerings and are investigating expanding the rigor at the Middle School with the potential offering of a Regents class – Integrated Algebra. This is being examined with regard to staffing and costs.

2. National Standards

In 2012-13, districts will be trained on the implementation of ELA and math curriculum models aligned with the Common Core Standards, as well as training on the use of the new ELA and math formative assessments aligned to the new standards. The National Standards or Common Core Standards are not far from existing standards; however, the curriculum models that we will be receiving from the state are proposed to be rather rigorous. In meetings with the Commissioner of Education, he noted that AP curriculums and International Baccalaureate curriculums should be the standard. To date, the state is putting together teams to begin to create the new curriculum models.

3. Benchmarks and Independent Reading

Having begun work on Response to Intervention, the District began to put together benchmarks for all grade levels K-12. In grades K-3 we are utilizing Fountas and Pinnell as a research-based program to identify reading levels. Two years ago we developed a series of uniform assessments to help us better understand what students know in the area of word study. Last year, many of our students in the Middle School were benchmarked using this tool to help identify reading needs. In 2009-10 our secondary classes utilized standard quarterly, mid-term and final exams to have a better understanding of student achievement across subject areas and grade levels. This work is being done this year at our elementary school level with the help of our Department Chair, Mr. Ferrito. More importantly, by collecting the data from assessments, we can build a learning profile of our students.

In regard to independent reading, we are working with even our youngest learners to build stamina with independent reading. When analyzing past state assessments, students did well with the first two passages and the questions; however, more errors occurred as the test continued. This coming year, our students at the elementary level will be required to read more in less time. It is a common practice to see our first graders engaged in sustained silent reading to build confidence and stamina.

4. High School Writing Support

Most freshmen are required to take a writing course called “Writing for the Future.” This course instructs students on grammar and composition, essay writing and informational writing. Research methods and summary writing are also included in the curriculum. Students exiting this course have demonstrated excellent proficiency. When this course is completed, students may opt for another writing course called “The Imaginative Writer.”

5. High School Literacy Support

At the High School, support in literacy is also offered through lab classes in ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade. Students in these classes receive 80 minutes of instruction rather than 40. Lab classes are offered every other day.

6. Class Size K-1

Due to several retirements over the past summer, we were able to add an additional teacher to grade 1 with an average class size of 21-22. As we move forward in the budget process for 2011-12, we will need to monitor spending, which may affect class size.

7. RtI – Response to Intervention

Response to Intervention will be mandated for all school districts in the near future. Two years ago, Islip began putting the framework together with staff, and the Board of Education has adopted an RtI policy. RtI is a philosophy and process which targets student learning and academic and behavioral interventions that will help students succeed. The process includes three, tiered levels of service utilizing different strategies and programs. We have established an RtI Districtwide committee, as well as a building level committee to examine and monitor student progress utilizing data. This is in close alignment with the new regulations for Race to the Top. To see the policy, please check the website under Board of Education, click on Board Policy Manual, click on Policy Plus, click on Table of Contents, click the “+” sign on Section 4000 – Instruction, then go to Policy 4325.1.

8. Leveled Libraries

With its commitment to have all children reading on grade level by grade 3, the District has allocated funds to be utilized for the purchase of leveled readers. Leveled readers provide students with the appropriate text to reinforce reading strategies and comprehension. In 2010-11 we began our first year of a three-year plan and allocated \$55,000 for the purchase of these readers (both fiction and non-fiction) for our elementary classrooms. The building administrators purchased books for either a bookroom where books could be shared by all staff or for classroom libraries. With grant funding from our Title I monies, we added \$20,000 to the purchase for additional reading

materials and bought books for the middle school. It is our commitment to continue to purchase books so every lending library and classroom library is fully equipped.

9. Increased Mastery

When reporting results for state assessments, there are four levels of achievement generally noted as Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4. A student who receives a score of 4 is considered to be at Mastery. Islip has been very successful in having the majority of our students at Levels 3 and 4, which indicates on or above expectation. We would like to provide our students with the skills to move from 3 to 4, thus securing more success as they move through high school into higher education. When the Commissioner of Education altered the scoring grid in tests in grades 3-8, many of our students who would have been in the lower range of 3 if the grid had remained the same, now fell into Level 2. By increasing mastery, we will have provided our students with depth of knowledge.

10. Teacher Accountability

The new federal grant called Race to the Top required districts to have in place accountability measures for teachers which permits student growth to be used in evaluating teacher performance, tenure decisions, and promotions. New York State adopted a series of reforms, including establishing a “new teacher and principal evaluation system that makes student achievement data a substantial component of how educators are evaluated.” The law provides for a “phase-in” of the new comprehensive evaluation system, including prescribed student achievement measures, beginning with the 2011-12 school year. Recommendations will be coming in the spring of 2011 from the NYS Board of Regents. Teacher and principal effectiveness is to be rated under 1 of 4 categories: highly effective; effective; developing; and ineffective, based on scoring ranges in the Commissioner’s regulations. The composite score is broken down into 20% on student growth data on state assessments, 20 % on local, rigorous measures, and 60% must be based on locally selected measures developed through collective bargaining. This will change to 25%, 15%, and 60% in the following year. For more information, please go to the NYS Department of Education website.

11. 8th Grade Foreign Language Proficiency Exams

New York State did eliminate the 8th Grade Foreign Language Proficiency Exam as a cost savings measure. However, Islip will continue to assess student learning through a local assessment that mimics the NYS assessment.

12. Middle School Foreign Language – Can We have French?

With the elimination of the Italian Regents by New York State, Islip will continue to assess students so they may receive the equivalent credit towards graduation. The District is investigating other scenarios for foreign language offerings. Again, selections will be based on availability of staffing and funding. There is a program being offered

through BOCES for Mandarin Chinese which is considered the language to be learned for the future. Again, we are looking into this program as it is web-based distance learning.

13. Athletic Fields

The Board of Education and the central office team are aware of the need to upgrade our athletic fields. It should be noted that not all of our fields have irrigation systems, but all are cared for with a regular maintenance program. We are currently involved in a state mandated Five-Year Building Survey in which the architects are performing a thorough evaluation of our facilities, both interior and exterior. Their recommendations will be prioritized and addressed by the District. We do understand that this will be a costly fix and await the final report to see how and when this can be addressed.

14. Elimination of Sports

About one third of our students are engaged in school-sponsored sports. Research indicates that those who are involved in sports have better attendance rates and stronger academic success. We do understand the need to educate the whole child and at this time do not anticipate eliminating sports. It must be noted that this is a monetary issue as well, and we will need to see what happens with state aid.

15. Class Ranking

There has been a shift in identifying student achievement at the high school level in accordance with the needs and wants from Institutions of Higher Education (IHE). Over the past several years, school districts have moved away from ranking by number (1st, 25th, etc.) to position in the whole (5th percentile). IHE no longer look at ranking as the primary factor for acceptance. They are looking at SAT and ACT scores, the number of Advanced Placement classes taken and extra-curricular involvement. It should also be noted that when using class ranking, the ranking can change easily by each quarter which makes the accuracy a small snapshot.

16. Race to the Top

Race to the Top is a federally funded grant program with the purpose of advancing educational reform around four specific areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around our lowest-achieving schools.

The Islip School District applied for and will be receiving \$23,366 spread over four years. Although the intent of the grant is admirable and we all want to improve education, the reforms will cost districts more than the funding allows. It should also be noted that the Governor of New York State passed a law that will revise how teachers and principals should be evaluated and that student achievement will be linked to the evaluations. There is a four-year plan to roll out the initiatives which will include negotiable items with unions. If you would like more information, you can search Race to the Top on the internet or visit www.nysed.gov.

17. Elementary School Clubs

Two years ago it was decided to eliminate the after-school clubs at CRES and SES to save the District \$46,000. Although the principals and central office staff understood the value of the programs in keeping students in the school setting in worthwhile extra-curricular activities, the desire to maintain instructional support was a priority. Should funding be available in the future, it could always be restored.

18. AIS Cut Scores – 2009-10 vs. 2010-11

Below is a chart depicting the change in the cut scores. The change by the Commissioner identified more students to receive support services. It should be noted that the Commissioner offered districts not to give service; however, Islip used savings from retirements to add some personnel to work with students.

CUT SCORES

	2008-2009		2009-2010	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math
<u>Grade 3</u>				
Level 1	475-615	470-623	475-642	470-660
Level 2	616-649	624-649	643-661	661-683
Level 3	650-719	650-702	662-693	684-706
Level 4	720-780	703-770	694-780	707-770
<u>Grade 4</u>				
Level 1	430-611	485-621	430-636	485-635
Level 2	612-649	622-649	637-667	636-675
Level 3	650-715	650-701	668-719	676-706
Level 4	716-775	702-800	720-775	707-800
<u>Grade 5</u>				
Level 1	495-607	495-618	495-646	495-639
Level 2	608-649	619-649	647-665	640-673
Level 3	650-710	650-698	666-699	674-701
Level 4	711-795	699-780	700-795	702-780

Grade 6				
Level 1	480-597	500-615	480-643	500-639
Level 2	598-649	616-649	644-661	640-673
Level 3	650-695	650-695	662-693	674-698
Level 4	696-785	696-780	694-785	699-780
Grade 7				
Level 1	470-599	500-610	470-641	500-638
Level 2	600-649	611-649	642-663	639-669
Level 3	650-704	650-692	664-697	670-693
Level 4	705-790	693-800	698-790	694-800
Grade 8				
Level 1	430-601	480-615	430-626	480-638
Level 2	602-649	616-649	627-657	639-672
Level 3	650-714	650-700	658-698	673-701
Level 4	715-790	701-775	699-790	702-775

By raising the cut scores, New York State could account for more students who did not meet the standard, thus having New York qualify for federal assistance – Race to the Top.

19. AIS Math Support for Kindergarten and Grade 1

Although we understand the importance of early intervention, we cannot support extra math support for our kindergarten and first graders at this time. Again, there are other priorities ahead of this additional staffing need.

20. Unfunded Mandates

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
2010-2011 ESTIMATED COSTS OF MEETING UNFUNDED AND UNDERFUNDED STATE MANDATES	
NYS Assessments (Grades 3 – 12) and NYSESLAT	
Assessments/Scantrons	\$ 32,000
Training	\$ 2,400
Substitutes	\$ 8,000
Student Reports	\$ 2,450
Calculators	\$ 13,500
Saturday Scoring	\$ 750
Total State Assessments	\$ 59,100
NYS Data Collection	
Software (BARS, Infinite Campus)	\$ 86,000
Staff	\$ 50,000

Total Statewide Data Collection	\$ 136,000
NYS Mandated Academic Intervention Services (AIS)	
Reading and Math Certified Staff and Teaching Assistants	\$ 962,885
Total Academic Intervention Services	\$ 962,885
ESL Services	\$ 441,000
NYS Mandated Business Expenses	
Auditing Services	\$ 103,000
Building Survey	\$ 15,000
SAS 112	\$ 7,000
GASB 45	\$ 8,000
Total NYS Mandated Business Expenses	\$ 133,000
Special Education	
Substitutes for CSE Meetings	\$ 10,000
Student Management System	\$ 20,000
FBA, BIP, Parent Training, Consultants	\$ 150,000
Services, Programs, Staffing, Specialized Placements	\$2,800,000
Total Special Education	\$2,980,000