

WOODSTOCK PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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To the Parents/Guardians of Woodstock Public School Students:

During the late winter and early spring of the 2010 – 2011 school year, the certified staff and administration of the Woodstock Middle School undertook the task of studying the middle school daily schedule. The staff and administration had three concerns related to the school's daily schedule:

1. The large number of students being pulled-out of both academic and encore classes in order to attend instrumental band classes.
2. The large amount of time (30 minutes per day) being devoted to deliver the mandated implementation of Scientifically Research Based Instruction (SRBI) to the approximately 80% of the student body not in need of the focused time.
3. The shortened class time (41 minutes) being devoted to academic instruction.

SRBI is both a federal and state mandate required to identify students potentially in need of special education services. No longer can a school district use the previous method of comparing a student's cognitive ability against his/her academic achievement in order to determine eligibility for special education services. SRBI is a procedure for assessing a student's ability to achieve over three tiers of instruction. Tier 1 occurs in the regular classroom setting. If a student is not achieving appropriately with regular classroom instruction, that student is placed in a small group setting (4-6 students), Tier 2 instruction, for approximately six weeks. The Tier 2 instruction occurs simultaneously with continued Tier 1 (regular classroom) instruction. If after the six weeks of Tier 2 instruction, the student is making appropriate progress, the Tier 2 instruction is discontinued. If after the Tier 2 focused instruction, the student continues to struggle academically, he/she is placed in Tier 3. Tier 3 consists of individualized instruction or instruction delivered to two or three students at a time for a period of approximately six weeks. Once again if the student demonstrates adequate academic achievement, he/she may be returned to either the Tier 2 setting or to the regular classroom setting. If the student, after Tier 3 instruction, continues to struggle academically, either the Tier 3 instruction will continue, or the student is recommended for further evaluation and, potentially, special education services.

The committee studying the schedule quickly realized that the school was trying to fit more things into the daily schedule than could be accommodated, given time and staffing constraints. In addition to delivering the academic classes of Language Arts, mathematics, social studies, and science on a daily basis, the school was also delivering instruction in Spanish at grade 8, physical education, art, technology, general music, life

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skills, library skills, SPICE art, SPICE chorus, and a variety of specialized offerings associated with the Gifted and Talented program. As the staff and administration worked to incorporate the mandated SRBI process, the daily schedule situation became more exasperating, thus the three concerns listed above.

In order to address the situation, the committee decided to recommend that SRBI instruction be offered in specific time slots only to students at the Tier 2 and/or Tier 3 levels, that the 30 minutes previously devoted to all SRBI instruction be added back to regular classroom time, at grades 5 and 6 the encore classes of life skills and technology be reduced or eliminated, and at grades 7 and 8 art classes and library skills be reduced or eliminated.

The new daily schedule was approved by the Board of Education at its regularly scheduled meeting on May 26, 2011 and implemented at the start of the 2011- 2012 school year. The new schedule has addressed the three concerns listed above as follows:

1. Students are no longer being pulled-out of either academic or encore classes in order to attend instrumental band classes.
2. SRBI is being offered in discrete scheduled classes to students in Tier 2 and Tier 3 settings only.
3. Academic class time has been increased to 47 minute time periods.

As I mentioned early in this letter life skills and technology classes in grades 5 and 6 have been reduced or eliminated and art classes and library skills classes in grades 7 and 8 have been reduced or eliminated. To be precise, 29% of grade 5 students have been scheduled for life skills and 27% have been scheduled for computers. In grade 6 51% of the students have been scheduled for life skills and no students have been scheduled for computers. In grade 7, 47% of the students have been scheduled for art with 20% scheduled in regular art and 27% scheduled in SPICE art, while 51% of grade 7 students have been scheduled for library skills. In grade 8, 49% of the students have been scheduled for art, with 28% scheduled for regular art and 21% scheduled for SPICE art, and 0% of the grade 8 students have been scheduled for library skills.

We realize that some members of the Board of Education and the community at large are concerned with the loss of some encore classes for portions of the students in grades 5-8, and we are committed to further study of the situation with the goal of delivering a rigorous and extensive set of curricular offerings, given the time and resources available.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me at 860-928-7453 or Mr. Gamache at 860-963-6575.

Sincerely,



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Superintendent of Schools
Woodstock Public Schools