Potential Reduction List

The Wauwatosa School District administrative team is fully prepared to address the possibility of an operational referendum not passing in our community *or* the possibility of the District seeking a referendum that does not completely cover the projected budget shortfall. Over the past two years, we have celebrated significant positive changes in academic achievements and student behavior. These advances will be at risk if reductions are implemented due to (1) lack of adequate public school funding by the state legislature and/or (2) the potential of an operating referendum not being passed by the greater Wauwatosa community.

Additionally, the mere mention of a reduction list may have a negative effect on the Wauwatosa School District community. To maintain the stability of our exceptional staff, District administrators have made a concerted effort to avoid announcing a list of reductions. School districts often use such lists as a strategic tool to provoke an emotional response from staunch advocates to prompt voting efforts in favor of an operational referendum.

Rest assured that this conceptual list is not meant simply to garner support for an operational referendum or to be leveraged as a scare tactic. Instead, in an effort to proactively address questions from the community, this document has been constructed to provide insight into the reductions that would need to be made to close the projected budgetary shortfall. If a referendum does not pass in November 2024, this conceptual list would be implemented over the next four years.

It is incumbent on District administrators to make difficult financial decisions - regardless of the outcome of the November 2024 referendum.

It is important to note that District leaders have made efforts to proactively reduce costs. In developing the 2024-25 staffing plan, the following FTE were reduced from the 2023-2024 SY to the 2024-2025 SY:

- 4.0 SpEd Teacher @ Eisenhower, Lincoln, Longfellow, and Madison
- 8.0 Elem Teachers - 2.0 @ Eisenhower (SK + Gr 2); 3.0 @ Madison (Gr 2, 3 + 4); 2.5 @ Underwood (0.5 JK, Gr 2 + 4); 0.5 @ Washington (0.5 JK)
- 2.0 FTE Secondary Teacher @ West (1.0 English, 0.5 Science, 0.5 misc.)
- 1.5 FTE Student Supervisor @ East (0.5) and West (1.0)

After the staffing plan was approved, the following positions have been unfilled positions for the

2024-2025 SY due to staffing challenges and to address our current budget deficit:

- 1.0 Academic Specialist @ East $60,131
- 1.0 Educational Assistant @ Lincoln $28,000
- 1.0 Educational Assistant @ Washington $22,000
- 1.0 High School Tech Ed $83,236
- 0.5 AP Teacher @ Montessori $31,897
- 0.5 Spanish Teacher @ East
- 1.0 Dean of Students @ Whitman

Additionally, the District has reduced substitute teacher costs, made health insurance modifications and implemented all other items in the July Reduction list.

District Office Administration and Staff
If reductions are made, the positive momentum that has been achieved through the District's innovative structure may be stalled. The development of the audious Strategic Plan, which was constructed with the active participation of the community, charted an ambitious vision for the District. It is unrealistic to assume that the significant changes necessary to achieve the vision that the entire Wauwatosa community articulated would not come with a cost.

At this time, reducing District Office staff is not suggested as it would be harmful to the academic and behavioral gains achieved over the past two years.

If an operating referendum is not successful in November 2024, the superintendent is committed to **reducing the number of district leaders from 19.0 FTE to 15.0 FTE by July 1, 2026. This will result in a reduction of 4.0 FTE**.

It is important to note that reductions will not be realized until the 2026-27 school year due to contractual obligations to current administrators.

District Curricular and Instructional Support
The District has grounded its continuous improvement efforts in supporting teachers and other educators through a coaching cycle model. District administrators constantly encourage educators to try new instructional methodologies and strategies to make learning experiences more engaging for children.

This philosophy includes providing instructional coaches to support educators in their implementation of new curriculum and instructional materials. With new curriculums slotted to emerge annually as a result of the 7-year curriculum cycle, the role of the coaches to ensure implementation integrity will be paramount. The support provided by instructional coaches allows principals to address acute and urgent behavioral issues, and provides the bandwidth for the principal to serve as a true instructional leader.

Simply put, in the best case scenario, the model that was in existence prior to the 2022-23 school year resulted in "just-in-time" principal leadership that paralyzed the entire organization and necessitated reactionary decisions. Typically, the model was unstructured, resulting in uneven implementation of new curriculum and siloed approaches to instructional methodology - depending on the school building. The strategic approach now in place allows content experts to support educators, the classroom, the school environment, and curricular implementation in a describable, predictable, measurable and effective manner.

Unfortunately, the model would be disassembled if cuts are made to staffing. This will again result in the uneven implementation of curriculum. In many cases, these reductions would also reintroduce the practice of every school operating independently from a curriculum and instruction perspective. The consistency and organizational obligation to ensure all our students receive the same educational experience would no longer be guaranteed.

As a result of this model, a student's learning experience would be completely dependent on the teacher and the school that they were assigned. This is the antithesis of educational equity.

At this time, reducing curricular and instructional support staff is not suggested as it would be harmful to the academic gains achieved over the past two years.

If an operating referendum is not successful in November 2024, **2.0 FTE in curriculum coordinators would be reduced**. This will result in curriculum revision cycles being delayed. As a result, educators would likely use dated materials to teach children in the classroom.

School Culture

A major concern expressed by community members and teaching staff was the perceived decline in student compliance and overall student behavioral issues in the schools. One strategy that was implemented was the introduction of Dean of Student positions, which have made a significant positive impact on the four secondary schools they serve. The model has been so successful that the role of Dean of Students has been implemented at Eisenhower Elementary School.

The Dean of Students positions have been lauded as allowing principals and associate principals time to complete teacher evaluations, which are central to providing valuable feedback and support to educators. The Deans of Students have also had a significant impact in introducing systems that establish greater order for student behavior.

At this time, reducing student support staff is not suggested as it would be harmful to the behavioral gains achieved over the past two years.

However, all four Dean of Student positions will be eliminated by the start of the 2025-26 school year if an operating referendum is not successful in November 2024.

Additionally, if an operating referendum is not successful in November 2024**, the ten (10) FTE for social and emotional positions that were initially introduced to the district through ESSER funding would be eliminated.** This recommendation is the antithesis of our standard of care for children in Wauwatosa. In short, if an operating referendum does not pass, we will be unable to adequately meet the social and emotional needs of our students.

Academic Programming

The Wauwatosa School District offers a robust menu of academic programs not mandated by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. A full accounting of academic programs offered in the District can be found here: Academic Programming Analysis Data.

While core courses are essential to each student's academic journey, elective courses are often a driving factor in students' daily attendance and engagement in learning.

District administrators' specific recommendations regarding academic programming can be found here. Please note this recommendation can only be implemented if the November 2024 operational referendum is affirmed by the Wauwatosa community.

If an operating referendum is not successful in November 2024, **District administrators would assess and consider for reduction all currently-offered programming that is not required by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction** (identified in column B of the Academic Programming Analysis Data document).

At the secondary level, all electives not required for graduation would be assessed and considered for elimination, and graduation requirements would be reduced from 24 (the requirement for the class of 2028) to 15 (the minimum required by the Department of Public Instruction).

Educational Experience

If there is a need to reduce expenditures, the final lever the district can control is to increase the student-to-teacher ratio in classrooms. **While this is not recommended**, should the November 2024 operational referendum fail, the District would **increase class sizes.** Additionally, the District would be forced to **modify the school day schedule to facilitate staffing reductions (e.g. block scheduling), which would also increase the workload of staff members**.

The increase of class sizes and workloads would surely have a demoralizing impact on the District. However, these increases would be necessary to meet the financial shortfall caused by the current level of state funding.

One of the goals the superintendent had upon the start of his tenure was to lower class sizes. Dr. Means has stated that, "It is no secret that when there is a lower class size, students are able to be seen by their teacher, teachers are able to address the needs of students more effectively, and the school-home partnership is more connected."

Employee Compensation and Benefits

Employee compensation and benefits represent approximately 80% of the annual expenditures in the District.

Wauwatosa School District employees must have reassurance that their salary and benefits will continue to be a priority for the community. Recognizing that Wauwatosa teacher salaries benchmark at the median of Milwaukee Metro school districts, any consideration to freeze salaries or to reduce benefits will undoubtedly harm the District's ability to attract and retain high-quality employees (as noted in *Strategic Goal #4: High-Quality Staff* in the District's Strategic Plan).

At this time, freezing salaries and/or reducing benefits is not suggested as it would reduce the District's ability to attract and retain high-quality educators.

Summary

Proposed Reduction FTE Approx. Potential Savings
District Leadership 4.0 $400,000
Curriculum Coordinators 2.0 $200,000
Deans of Students 4.0 $400,000
Social Emotional Specialists 10.0 $1,000,000
Optional Curricular Programming (Electives) 90.0 $9,000,000
Schedule Modifications 30.0 $3,000,000
Employee Compensation + Benefits N/A $0
TOTAL $14,000,000

Conclusion

At a time when the District has witnessed such promising positive improvement in both the academic and student behavioral aspects of the organization, it would be difficult to implement any of the reductions outlined in this proposal.

To be clear, this proposal is not preferred by district administrators. We believe that implementing any aspect of this proposal would adversely impact children. Further, the proposal falls short of supporting our educators. This proposal does not lead us forward in realizing the vision or fulfilling our promises outlined in the strategic plan. More importantly, we are unable to meet the covenant that we have made to the children of Wauwatosa.

At a moment in time when it is difficult to recruit and retain quality educators, this proposal would tarnish the reputation of the Wauwatosa School District. Educators have the ability to work anywhere. It was the goal of Dr. Means to make Wauwatosa a distinction district for educators based on the compensation package offered, working conditions, access to high-quality curricular materials, and strong district support.

In short, it would be a disservice to the team that we have assembled, the progress we have made as an organization, and our promise to the students of the Wauwatosa School District to implement any element of this proposal. We would revert back to an inconsistent, inequitable, District that promotes islands of excellence and denies students the opportunity of academic and social success.