

SYNOPSIS
URBANA SCHOOL DISTRICT 116
BOARD OF EDUCATION
BUSINESS MEETING
APRIL 18, 2006

Two years ago, the Urbana High School administration came to the Board of Education with a proposal for early release time once a week, allowing for UHS staff to collaborate, build curriculum, improve both teaching methods and student performance. Last year, the Urbana Middle School staff brought forth a similar proposal.

Building upon the success of these programs at the secondary level, it was time for the elementary staff to make their pitch.

While UHS and UMS release school one hour early on Wednesdays, the elementary proposal focuses instead on already-existing staff development days in the school calendar. They want to increase the ½ day-long staff development opportunities to full days, creating six full days in the calendar for collaboration, both within the school (vertically) and across schools lines (horizontally). The committee, proposed of elementary administrators and staff, have been examining the possibilities during monthly meetings this school year. They want to use banked time – time we are in school beyond the state’s minimum school day requirements – to add the three extra days to the calendar.

Because of state legal waiver deadlines, the elementary staffs could begin the development days in the spring of the 2006/07 school year. By 2007/08, they would be able to use all six full days.

But all was not rosy for the proposal among board members. John Dimit, who was not fully supportive of the UHS and UMS plans and citing the issue of less classroom time for American students compared to other countries, wants some kind of compensatory time for missed instruction time for the students. He also expressed his concern about increased use of personal leave among the elementary staff during the in-service days. He wants personal leave “off the table” during these inservice days. Dimit did say though, “We have marvelous teachers from whom other teachers can learn a great deal.”

Also Tuesday night, the board formally approved the appointment of UHS English teacher Greg Johnson as assistant principal at UHS, replacing Laura Taylor who becomes the new principal upon Dr. John Woodward’s retirement this summer. Johnson should complete his administrative certificate requirements at the UI in May.

The school district’s tax rate is down 16 cents from last year and the lowest since 1985, at \$4.32. The district does not set the rate; the county clerk, based upon the tax levy, does that. In the complicated world of school finance and real estate taxes, because our EAV’s have increased, the school district will see an increased income of \$1.2 million over last year. Our loss of possible income this tax year from tax caps is \$800,000. The accumulated loss of income since tax caps went into effect in 1996 is \$5.9 million.