

H-B WOODLAWN

STATUS REPORT

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I. Formal Board Actions Concerning H-B Woodlawn

In April, 1971, the Arlington School Board was presented with a proposal by the "Citizens Committee for the New School". The proposal was that the former Woodlawn Elementary be used for an alternative program for students in grades 11 and 12. On May 27, 1971, the School Board accepted the recommendation of Superintendent Robert Chisholm to adopt the Committee's proposal. "The basic philosophical assumption underlying the creation of the New School is that some high school students are capable of assuming primary direction over their own education." (from the Woodlawn handbook, 9-7-71; see Attachment #1)

"The New School hopes to meet its main objective through a variety of specific methods. These include an attempt to continually recreate democracy through a General Assembly, which shall be composed of the students and teachers of the New School, each having one vote. A second technique is the abandonment of the rigid period structure of the traditional high school . . ." (Philosophy statement, handbook)

The specific nature of the design of the program was left up to the students and teachers at Woodlawn, with the Head Teacher being responsible to inform the Associate Superintendent on a regular basis about the operation of the Woodlawn Program. At the end of the first year (71-72), the School Board received a report from Woodlawn explaining the operation of the Program and recommending that it continue (Attachment #2).

In the fall of 1972, the School Board approved the creation of the Hoffman-Boston Program for grades 7-9, and

directed Woodlawn to add a 10th grade. Woodlawn's enrollment became 237 (79 per grade level) and Hoffman-Boston's was set at 180 (60 per grade level). These two programs operated independently until 1978. During that time the School Board took no further formal actions to approve or amend the two programs. The Associate Superintendent provided general supervision over the actual practices of the programs.

For the fall of 1978, the School Board decided in 1977 to move the 9th graders into the high schools and close two of the six junior high schools. Since reducing Hoffman-Boston to two grades would not have been viable, instructionally, the Board chose to merge Hoffman-Boston and Woodlawn. During the 1977-78 school year, the parents, teachers and students of the two programs discussed the nature of the new program to be created. The result was the "Merger Report" (Attachment #3), which was submitted to the School Board and accepted in the spring of 1978 as the plan for the newly-merged programs. At the same meeting, the Board accepted the name of the new program (revised by the Associate Superintendent from H.B. Woodlawn to H-B Woodlawn).

Since that time, the School Board has not received or requested a general statement of the purpose or operational practices of the H-B Woodlawn Program. Rather, Board members have individually become informed about the Program, and the entire Board has at times made formal decisions which affected H-B Woodlawn. Usually, no specific reference to H-B Woodlawn has been made; rather, the Superintendent has

provided an explanation of how the decision at hand would affect or be implemented at H-B Woodlawn. The Superintendent and his central staff have provided day-to-day supervision over its instructional and administrative practices.

One example of how the Board has made specific reference to H-B Woodlawn is in the Budget Planning Factors document (see Attachment #4). Where no specific reference is made to H-B Woodlawn's operation, the Superintendent and staff assume the supervisory responsibility for the practices at H-B Woodlawn. This system provides the necessary review to ensure compliance with the general goals of the Board, while also permitting some flexibility in the implementation of the instructional program in conformity with the basic charge of the "alternative" program.

II. Curriculum at H-B Woodlawn

The current curriculum includes most courses offered in grades 6-12 in the following departments: English, PE social studies, foreign language, mathematics and science. In addition, there are limited offerings in art, music, business education and special education. Finally, there is a separate HILT program for students aged 17-20. The attached list of courses indicates those taught at H-B Woodlawn (see Attachment #5).

What should be noted here is that it is the delivery of the curriculum where major differences are noted between H-B Woodlawn and the middle and high schools. Throughout the past twenty years, the delivery of instruction has been

left largely to the students, teachers and parents at H-B Woodlawn to select. The central administration has provided general review and supervision of the instructional program in a variety of ways, including: the annual review of the Program of Studies; the textbook adoption process; and in the regular meetings between Curriculum Supervisors and the subject matter teachers at H-B Woodlawn.

Because H-B Woodlawn is a "program" and not an accredited school, there is no formal or "outside of Arlington" review to which the regular schools are subject. Instead, the principal of H-B Woodlawn asserts to the principals of the several middle and high schools that the H-B Woodlawn students have met the same academic standards and requirements, through an alternative delivery system. Independent verification exists through the state standardized tests given to all students, through the pre-and-post tests given to measure achievement of Arlington students, through the pattern of acceptance of H-B Woodlawn students to colleges, and through the general acceptance of the clients of H-B Woodlawn (the students and their parents). Should H-B Woodlawn not provide a satisfactory education to the clients, they will not remain, or will not apply for future classes, and the program will reach a natural conclusion.

One example of the variation in delivery is in the time spent in formal classes. The state defines 150 clock hours of instruction as the requirement for one graduation credit.

During the early 1970's, most Woodlawn academic classes met twice a week for formal classroom instruction. In addition, students spent much time in self-directed education through individualized assignments and independent study.

Currently, each course in grades 6-12 is scheduled into a "schedule block" which meets four times a week, for just under 160 clock hours for the year. However, the use of the time in the block is determined by the individual classroom teacher. There is a general pattern that courses for students in grades 8 and 9 use the four meetings for classroom instruction, which can include teacher-directed lab work. In the upper grades, some courses use only three of the blocks for formal instruction, providing more time for student-directed work. Thus the state standard of 150 hours is met, but in an alternative manner dependent the course, the teacher, and the student.

The Master Schedule is also an alternative to the regular schools. Students in grades 6 and 7 are scheduled into Core and Humanities times, with teacher-supervised activities throughout the day (see the middle school schedule for 90-91, Attachment #6). In grades 8-12, students have an eight period day (or eight "schedule blocks"), with the opportunity for a ninth time at 8:30-9:25 a.m., prior to the start of the official school day (see the Block Schedule for 1990-91, Attachment #7).

When the School Board adopted the 7 period day for high schools for 1989, it approved the staff report, which made

the 7th period optional at H-B Woodlawn. A recent analysis of the actual course load of H-B Woodlawn students showed a range of courses was being taken (see Attachment #8). Since students sometimes have one or two unscheduled blocks (called "free blocks"), we say that the students at H-B Woodlawn are not under "continuous adult supervision".

This phrase reflects two parts of the triad of student independence that is central to the structure of H-B Woodlawn. Students must learn to exercise appropriate control over their free time; students must accept the responsibility to participate in academic goal-setting in each class, rather than always depending on the teacher for direction. The third part of this system is the responsibility the students must take individually and collectively to participate in the governance of the school.

The English "Elective Program" illustrates how the delivery varies, more than the content, when compared to the standard course design. Students in English 10, 11 and 12 use the adopted textbook for the proper grade level during the first semester. The teacher capsulizes the year-long program into a semester's length through the use of the study of representative genre and other means.

Then students and teachers propose elective courses of nine week duration, which are put on a ballot and voted on by the students. Those courses most desired by the students are then taught by the teachers. Another variation in the delivery is that a portion of the H-B Woodlawn teacher

allocation (between .25 and .45 of a FTE) is converted into funds placed in an hourly teacher account. Sometimes, an "outside teacher" is selected to teach one of these elective classes. Although not formalized in a policy document, this method of providing funds has been accomplished each of the past twenty years in a memo from the principal to the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel, who manages this alternative practice. Students from English 10, 11 and 12 are mixed in these classes; the grades they earn in the 3rd and 4th grading periods are applied to their individual course enrollments (English 10, 11 or 12).

In social studies the U.S. History and U.S. Government teachers condense the year-long survey into the first three grading periods, and a similar elective program is offered during the 4th quarter. The history and government students are mixed in the electives, but receive either history or government credit on their report cards.

Since each elective class stands alone, the student must pass the elective or take an additional elective in a future quarter, in order to receive full credit in English or social studies for the year. Since the student may have several teachers for the year, no final grade is given. Instead, each quarter grade stands alone for credit, and when the home high schools do the class rank for their students at H-B Woodlawn, they average the four quarter grades in the absence of a final course grade.

Many more examples of variations in delivery can be

presented. Perhaps of particular interest is that H-B Woodlawn does not offer differentiated instruction at the basic, regular and intensified levels to the extent offered at the home schools. This is, in part, a reaction to the limited number of students per grade level (66 per grade level has been the planning factor enrollment projection for the past eight years); it is also a philosophical preference to provide individualized instruction for ALL students. The current exceptions are: resource for special education students; the accelerated math sequence; A.P. classes at the upper grades; basic English classes for grades 8-12 students requiring this level of remediation; and basic skills instruction in English and math for students in grades 6-7.

III. Governance

The Town Meeting is the formal decision-making body for H-B Woodlawn. It has been so since 1971, and is supported in this role by the parents, students, teachers and school administration. This system of participatory, or pure, democracy is an essential part of the structure of H-B Woodlawn. The "TM" provides each student, teacher and parent with one vote, and with the opportunity and responsibility to participate in the management of the school. The role of the school administration is to provide leadership to the H-B Woodlawn community through the Town Meeting; formal decision-making responsibility rests with the School Board, and then through the Superintendent to the principal.

When possible under Personnel Office rules, a committee of students, teachers and administrators interviews prospective teachers. The administration then makes the formal recommendation to the Personnel Office.

The administration asks the Town Meeting each year to establish a committee to recommend teacher allocation by department to the TM for a final vote. The Town Meeting votes each year on the master schedule format for the upcoming year. The TM approves the expenditure of all funds raised by students and parents. For major fund-raising projects, it has created a Finance Committee (2 students, 2 parents, 2 teachers and 1 administrator) to plan fund raising activities and to recommend large expenditures. The administration, in consultation with the staff, manages H-B Woodlawn's School Board accounts.

The Town Meeting is responsible for approving school activities, such as the Yearbook Proposal, and the Dance Schedule. At times the TM forwards requests from the H-B Woodlawn community to the Superintendent and School Board. At the request of H-B Woodlawn, the Superintendent recommended to the School Board that the "7 period day" requirement not be mandatory for H-B Woodlawn students. The School Board accepted this request, although their approval was granted in the acceptance of the staff report, not by formal Board resolution.

Likewise, the Town Meeting requested, on behalf of the H-B Woodlawn students, teachers, parents and administration,

that H-B Woodlawn remain on a later starting time. The Superintendent again recommended approval to the School Board, which accepted this request and made it part of the formal Board resolution.

The Merger Report of 1978 puts the responsibility for curriculum matters with the staff, and for teacher evaluation with the administration.

IV. Student Rules

All student rules created at H-B Woodlawn are interpretations and/or applications of the Arlington School Directives. Student disciplinary rules follow the procedures set forth in the Policy Information Handbook for students and parents.

Attendance at school is reported by the student's Teacher-Advisor (TA). Each TA develops a system for attendance, and communicates it to the TA members. All TA's report attendance to the Registrar once a month.

Attendance is expected in class by all students. Teachers take attendance in all classes. Teachers set rules for credit in each class, and report these rules to the students.

When the School Board first approved the "loss of credit" system about 1980, the report on which the Board acted specifically recommended that H-B Woodlawn not be included. However, the actual resolution made no reference

to H-B Woodlawn, either inclusive or exclusive. This followed the general pattern of not modifying all secondary policies with statements of exception for the alternative program. Instead, H-B Woodlawn provides reports via the Associate Superintendent to the Board on matters such as attendance, home school enrollment patterns and classes with over 30/under 15 student enrollments.

Due to the varied student schedules in operation at H-B Woodlawn, students arrive and depart periodically during the standard school day (9:30 - 4:00). Some reasons for arrival or departure other than at 9:30 or 4:00 are: early morning classes at H-B Woodlawn (8:30 - 9:25); taking Career Center courses; taking classes at the home high school; participating in internships; participation in the Community As School program; lunch; participation in sports at the home high school; and jobs.

Parents are told that students are responsible for managing their own use of time, in and out of school. As part of the philosophy of students making decisions about the use of time, students in grades 8-12 enter and leave the school property ~~without~~^{WITHOUT} specific staff permission. Students in grades 6-7 enter or leave at times other than 9:30 and 4:00 under the direction and supervision of teachers or parents. The lunch practice conforms to this philosophy.

Students have "free blocks" in their schedules, depending on their grade levels and course selections. The philosophy behind this system is that students must learn

responsibility and self-discipline at H-B Woodlawn by being given actual control over their time. The process of making decisions each day allows students the chance to master these personal skills. Students in grades 6 and 7 have very limited free time; students in grades 8-12 have increasing amounts of self-regulated time. The responsibility students must assume for their use of time is complemented by the responsibility students must assume for setting personal academic goals and for participating in school governance.

V. Faculty Practices

The Personnel Office policies apply in the same way at H-B Woodlawn as they do at all other Arlington schools. One Board policy device used at H-B Woodlawn is the following "special needs" requirement included in vacancy announcements for all positions at H-B Woodlawn (T, A, G and M scale): "must accept and work to support the philosophy, curriculum, guidance and administration of the Secondary Alternative Program". By inserting this special need in the announcement, we hope to obtain teachers who will be successful in the special context of H-B Woodlawn.

There are some specific internal rules that govern the teachers at H-B Woodlawn. Each full-time teacher must be a Teacher-Advisor (TA) for a group of about 20 students. This requirement includes the entire range of counseling duties. Each year H-B Woodlawn transfers its guidance allocation into its classroom teacher account to provide additional teacher

staffing to offset the demands of being a TA. This is a practice in effect since 1971, but which is not part of a formal Personnel Office policy. It is a practice long established for H-B Woodlawn.

Since there are eight schedule blocks for teachers who teach students in grades 8-12, the staff voted to require all teachers to teach in six of the eight blocks. Since each department has its transferred guidance allocation, the typical teacher has a TA of 20 students and teaches about 100 students in six instructional blocks (resulting in a class size of 17).

For teachers who volunteer to teach the early morning classes (8:30 - 9:25), they follow a flex schedule that means they may leave before the 4:00 end of school. However, they must be present in the building for the 7.5 hours required under the ASD's.

VI. Home School Relations

Students continue to be members of their home schools. High school students receive a class rank and diploma from their home schools. All students may participate in a number of activities at their home schools: sports; clubs; honor societies; cheerleading; and musical performance groups. The H-B Woodlawn students' test scores are reported as part of their home school populations for SAT and Merit Scholars; they are reported separately for tests administered by Arlington. Following the ASD, H-B Woodlawn students may

take classes at their home schools if the course is not offered at H-B Woodlawn. The limits include the availability of space in the home school course and the difficulties of transportation.

The staff at H-B Woodlawn works with the staff at the other schools to process many issues, such as Governor's School applications and PSAT testing. The principals work together to discuss issues that touch on both schools. Students work cooperatively with sponsors of honor societies, music groups and of the senior class. A bulletin board exists at H-B Woodlawn for each middle and senior high school, on which appropriate notices may be posted.

In general, home school relations have been positive over the past twenty years. When problems have arisen, staff has worked successfully to resolve them.

VII. Administrative Structure

When the Woodlawn Program was approved in May of 1971, the School Board approved the plan for a "T Scale" Head Teacher. The Head Teacher performed the supervisory responsibilities of a principal, under the general supervision of the Associate Superintendent. This system was in place at the Woodlawn Program from 1971 through 1978.

The Hoffman-Boston Program opened in 1972 with a "P Scale" Principal, and continued under that arrangement through 1978.

In the fall of 1978 the combined H-B Woodlawn Program opened with an administrative structure combining the P Scale Principal and the T Scale Head Teacher positions. In the early 1980's a part-time, T Scale Guidance Director's position was added to this structure.

The Principal supervises all administrative and guidance functions at H-B Woodlawn. The Principal meets with the three member team on a regular basis. This Administrative Team divides its duties in a fashion to promote efficient use of the staff, and to provide differentiated supervision for the middle and high school levels.

The Principal supervises all school activities in general. Specifically, the Principal meets with and counsels the Town Meeting and the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). The Principal represents the school in its dealings with the school system at large, and with the public. The principal reviews and approves general policy decisions, and manages the teacher evaluation,

personnel records, financial accounting, master scheduling and other all-school concerns, with the advice of appropriate school constituencies, and with the assistance of the Administrative Team.

The Head Teacher assumes day-to-day responsibility for the management of the Special Education and G/T programs. The Head Teacher also coordinates certain guidance functions related to coordination with the high school students and the home schools. The Head Teacher assumes various responsibilities delegated by the Principal, including participation in the teacher evaluation process (with the final review and signature by the Principal). The Head Teacher is part of the Arlington Schools Administrative Team.

The Guidance Director attends central guidance meetings and supervises the guidance program at the middle school level. The Guidance Director is the day-to-day supervisor of the middle school program, and is titled "Middle School Coordinator" to reflect these duties. As such, the Guidance Director coordinates curriculum, scheduling and student performance for the middle school. The Guidance Director does not participate in the teacher evaluation process, nor is part of the system-wide Administrative Team.