

To: Winchester Finance Committee  
From: Winchester School Committee  
Subject: Clarification on Staff Reductions – FTE Positions vs. People  
Date: March 23, 2004

Last week's Winchester Star article "Confusion Reigns Over School Positions Lost Without Override," indicated a strong need for clarification regarding staff reductions for a failed override. We are writing to provide such clarification. We hope that this information is helpful in understanding the potential impacts of a failed override on the budget, and on our teachers and the positions they fill.

### **FTEs versus Individuals**

The confusion that arose during the March 11<sup>th</sup> Finance Committee meeting was primarily due to confusion over FTEs versus people.

For purposes of preparing and comparing budgets, we count fulltime equivalent positions (FTEs), not people. Counting FTEs offers a uniform and simple metric for costing and comparison, important since we employ a mix of full-time and part-time staff. One full time English teacher equals one FTE, as do two half-time music teachers. These three people fill two FTE positions. Discussing, for example, a large mix of half-, quarter-, and eighth-time coaches, portrays an overly complex picture of staffing levels and budgeted costs; calculating the budget in terms of full-time equivalent athletic staff imparts a clearer picture of both labor magnitude and associated costs.

Finance Committee members asked how many people – not FTEs – would be affected by the failure of the override. While counting FTEs is important in budgeting, identifying the number of people affected is also important. From a financial perspective, the Town must budget for layoff costs; from an employer's and educator's perspective the School Administration must know which teachers would receive pink slips and must plan to redistribute their students.

To keep the discussion understandable, it is important to clearly distinguish the two concepts and to use each appropriately.

### **The Override and Positions**

First, how many positions would be eliminated if the override fails? The simple answer is a reduction of 20.87 FTEs. Regardless of how many individuals might be affected, a failed override represents 20.87 fewer positions than the schools will require to deliver the current program to next year's greater number of enrolled students.

To cover expected enrollment increases in FY05, the Superintendent requested 6.8 additional FTEs to keep class sizes stable. If the override passes, the needed positions would be filled; class sizes and programs would remain stable.

If the override fails, the schools would operate with 20.87 fewer FTEs than needed: 9.27 FTEs eliminated at the elementary schools, 4.6 FTEs at the middle school, and 7.0 FTEs at the high school. Core teachers and non-core programs would be eliminated; students would be shifted – into larger classes and/or study halls. These cuts would be permanent and would be followed by additional staff cuts in FY06 and FY07, the out-years of what would have been a three-year plan, had the override passed.

Details of these cuts were discussed in our March 3rd letters to the Star and the Daily Times Chronicle (see <http://www.winchester.k12.ma.us/SC/documents.html> for this and more detailed information).

### **The Override and Layoffs**

Determining exactly how many people would be laid off is complicated – not because anybody intends to overcomplicate, but because personnel matters are, by nature, complex.

Rules of seniority must be applied in cases where whole programs aren't cut; it might be necessary to lay off three part-time teachers to equal one FTE position; or one full-time person might need to be laid off at the high school and one hired at the elementary school because the high school teacher is not certified to teach elementary students.

So how many people would be laid off if there override fails? Here is the breakdown as we currently understand it (brace yourselves - it's not easy to explain or to follow):

Override or not, class sizes at Lincoln and Muraco will require 2 new elementary teachers to be hired. Unless, that is, the people laid off from the High School are qualified to teach elementary school; or are qualified to teach middle school and the middle school teachers are qualified to teach elementary school. (Not simple, by any means, and probably just the tip of the iceberg). Assuming that these complications don't arise, we'd need two new staff to fill these positions.

Of the 6.8 budgeted new positions, the remaining 4.8 would be reduced, requiring no layoffs. Each new position eliminated, though, would leave students who would need to be accommodated in other classrooms.

Since 3 of the reduced existing positions involve retiring employees for positions that are to be eliminated (2 at the middle school and 1 at the elementary level), these reductions would also require no layoffs. Each position eliminated via

retirement would leave students who would need to be accommodated in other classrooms.

That leaves 13.07 FTE positions to be eliminated by delivering pink slips to as-yet unknown number of teachers. The total number laid off would certainly be more than 13.07, since many of the remaining positions are in areas such as instrumental music, art, and PE, positions that are staffed with part-time employees. The specific number to be laid off depends on the specific programs to be eliminated and on contractual rules for reducing staff. This will not be known with full certainty until the June statutory layoff deadline (Sam Rippin, our Director of Finance, is currently preparing an estimate). And, as with the other reductions, each position eliminated via layoff would leave students who would need to be accommodated in other classrooms.

In summary, elimination of 4.8 new plus 3 retirements plus 13.07 layoffs equals a 20.87 FTE reduction.

Assuming that the School Committee makes no substantive changes to the Administration's recommendation, a failed override would result in the following FTE reductions from the FY05 school budget request and the corresponding impacts on individual teachers:

### **Elementary Schools**

- Core teaching positions eliminated      1.00 FTE reduced      None laid off (due to retirement)
- Kindergarten aide position eliminated      0.72 FTE reduced      1 teacher laid off
- All librarian positions eliminated      4.20 FTEs reduced      5 people laid off  
no layoffs for 0.2 position (not hired)
- All instrumental music teaching positions eliminated      1.80 FTE reduced      Layoffs/reductions affecting 2-4 teachers\*
- All kindergarten art teaching positions eliminated      0.35 FTE reduced      Layoffs/reductions affecting 1-5 teachers\*
- Phys Ed teaching positions eliminated      1.20 FTEs reduced      Layoffs/reductions affecting 2-5 teacher\*

### **Middle School**

- Core teaching positions eliminated      2 .00 FTEs reduced      None laid off (due to retirement)
- Exploratory teaching positions eliminated      2.00 FTEs reduced      Layoffs/reductions affecting 2-5 teacher\*
- Health position not restored      0.60 FTE reduced      No layoffs

**High School**

• Core teaching positions eliminated	7.00 FTEs reduced	Layoffs/reductions affecting 3-15 teacher* No layoffs for 4 new positions (not hired)
<b>Totals</b>	20.87 FTEs reduced	Layoffs/reductions affecting 16-40 people*

\*Estimates are based on individual teachers associated with eliminated programs and/or specific positions.

Were the School Committee to make changes to these proposed reductions (based on, e.g., different educational priorities), these changes would be offset by an equivalent dollar value of FTE reductions; a slightly different set of positions would be reduced, with reductions of different positions and layoffs of a different set of teachers but with similar impacts on the students.

Regardless of the exact distribution of reductions, one thing is clear: a failed override would result in the permanent elimination of these positions, the layoff of the valued professionals that fill them, and reductions to the quality of our students' education, experienced as larger class sizes, fewer exploratory opportunities, and more study halls. Cuts in the second and third years that would have been covered by the three-year override would instead be made to remaining teaching positions, the majority of which are core classroom positions.

We hope this information has helped clarify matters on staffing and layoffs. We'd be happy to answer further questions on this matter.

The Winchester School Committee  
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