December 7, 2006

Board Member:

RE: PROPOSAL FOR SUMMER SCHOOL INITIATIVES FOR 2007

Background

At the November 10, 2005 Board of Education meeting, the six-week summer program entitled Sophomore Academy was approved. The goal of the academy has been to provide instruction to improve skills in reading, writing, and mathematics for students preceding their sophomore year who are projected not to meet state standards in English and mathematics. Attendance of selected students is mandatory, and as a result, the typical summer school fees are waived. Students are selected for the program based upon Explore test results, District assessment results in English and mathematics, and teacher recommendations. In this program, students spend two hours a day refining their reading and writing skills, and two hours a day enhancing their mathematics skills. The majority of students invited are enrolled in E101 English, a general level course, and either M113 or M114 Algebra. At the time of the proposal, we anticipated that approximately 250 students from the district would attend the program.

The mathematics criteria for selection into the Academy is an Explore mathematics score of 15 or less, teacher recommendation, or a D or F grade on the District Assessment. In January 2006, students in M113 Algebra and M114 Algebra took the Explore test to determine the validity of their assignment to the Sophomore Academy. The criterion for the English portion of the Academy is an Explore reading score of 15 or less, or teacher recommendation. All freshmen English students took the Explore test in the winter of 2006. Based upon the combined English and mathematics criteria for the Sophomore Academy, the District had only 90 students who qualified for the program. In retrospect, the smaller than expected number of identified students reflected a flaw in the selection process for the Academy. It has become apparent that in addition to the students already assessed for entry into the program, students in M117 Algebra also should be tested. Ninety-four freshmen had accelerated into the M117 Algebra class due to a teacher recommendation based upon their performance in the 2005 Incoming Freshman Academy. It is likely that many of these students, if tested, would have qualified and benefited from the support provided by the 6-week required Sophomore Academy. In addition, the mathematics department chairs have recommended that a higher Explore score of 16 or less would be a more accurate Sophomore Academy entry. The English teachers are satisfied with the reading criteria used for placement, but they also believe that the mathematics criteria in 2005 eliminated many students from the Sophomore Academy who would have benefited from participation.
Based on the new mathematics entry criteria for the summer of 2007, we believe there will be a minimum of 100 additional students who will be selected to attend the six-week Sophomore Academy. Those students who do not have skill deficiencies in both reading and mathematics will be invited to attend either a three-week sophomore invitational reading or mathematics program. Last summer 199 students were invited to attend the three-week reading program and 33, or 17% of the students, chose to attend. One hundred sixty-one students were invited to attend the three-week mathematics program and 22 or 14% of the students, chose to attend. The approximate 300 students who decided not to take advantage of the invitational reading or mathematics programs would have significantly benefited from attendance at either of the three week programs.

These at-risk students often experience skills degeneration during the summer that diminishes the effectiveness of the prior school year’s programs to accelerate their academic performance. Therefore, the remedy recommended to address the needs of these at-risk students is a required program of specific and single subject summer coursework based on individual student need.

Summer School Proposal—Three-Week Reading and Mathematics Programs

The proposed three-week required summer school programs would be titled Sophomore Academy English and Sophomore Academy Mathematics. The goal of the separate programs would be to improve skill development in either reading or mathematics for students who would not be predicted to meet state standards in the respective disciplines as measured by the Prairie State Achievement Examinations. Students would be selected for the three-week separate academies based upon the criteria listed above. A pre-test and post-test design will be used to evaluate growth in either reading or mathematics. Students will spend four hours a day over a three week period enhancing their skills in their specific area of deficiency. Approximately 200 students would be required to attend one of these programs. The 60 hours of instruction provided in either single subject Academy Program could become the basis for recommending a student for a higher level of junior placement in either English or Mathematics, but at a minimum would solidify academic gains experienced during the preceding school year.

Program Costs

Since attendance in these three-week programs would be required, course and transportation fees would be waived. The expenses for the Sophomore Academy English and the Sophomore Academy Mathematics for the anticipated 200 students are as follows:

- Summer School Salaries for 12 teachers (3 weeks) $29,502
- Transportation by bus $0
  (Cost included in 6-week Academy programs)

**Total:** $29,502
The expenses for the Sophomore Academy six-week required program for the anticipated 200 students are as follows:

- Summer School Salaries for 10 teachers (6 weeks) $48,425
- Transportation by bus $8,000

**Total:** $56,425

The Sophomore Academy Program that was approved by the Board of Education on November 10, 2005 for an estimated 250 students was $85,240 vs. the total cost of the three-week and six-week academy programs which are $85,927.

**Suggested Motion:**

That the Board of Education authorize the Superintendent to establish the Sophomore Academy English and Sophomore Academy Mathematics programs as presented.

Roger W. Thornton
Superintendent