

November 17, 2014

Garfield Staff and Parents
(reply to email)



Thank you for your thoughtful email regarding staffing at Garfield. After extensive review, the basic facts remain the same. Garfield is overstaffed by 2.0 FTE and is being asked to reduce staff by 0.5 by giving up one full time staff member at the semester.

I will attempt to respond to the questions and concerns in your letter. Ted Howard is welcome to invite district staff to clarify any of the following for the PTA or the BLT.

Staffing: Garfield is staffed as are other high schools based on enrollment numbers for basic education and for career and technical students. Staffing is also based on Average Annual FTE ... recognizing that high schools have more students in the fall and fewer students in the spring. Garfield was projected for 59 teachers – one was added in August – but enrollment actually generates only 58 teachers. Garfield is being asked to reduce by 0.5 FTE (one full time staff at the semester) instead of the 2.0 they are overstaffed.

	May	August	Oct 1
Headcount	1612	1653	1586
Ave Annual FTE	1532	1570	1505
Adj for ELL and SpEd	1464.8	1492.8	1448.6
Formula at 30:1	48.8	49.8	48.3
Prep Time @ 20%	9.8	10.0	9.7
Staffing – Rounded Up	59	60	58

Running Start: High Schools do receive credit for *part-time* running start students. High Schools do not get staffed for, or schedule classes for, students who are *100% off campus*. This evidently was a change one year ago. This was not a change for this year.

Scheduling: Yes, scheduling is a challenge for many reasons. Principals go through an extensive budgeting process based on enrollment estimates in the spring and those numbers are revisited in the summer. The formula for staffing is one teacher for 30 students. Adding or subtracting staff after the school year starts is a challenge. This practice has been my experience in every district where I have worked. Principals do keep an eye on numbers and try to anticipate needs as much as possible.

Wait list: Why was the waiting list for Garfield not moved? Garfield is at or near their recommended capacity of 1593. When we “move the wait list” we must be able to say that we have room for those

students now ... and during the next few years while those students remain in the school. And we have to have room for any newly enrolled students in future years. Wait lists are reviewed at the district level when requested by building principals. Moving one wait list also impacts enrollments at other schools. We did move the wait lists at Rainier Beach, Franklin and Cleveland in an attempt to balance enrollments.

Timing is a problem, especially for secondary schools with complex scheduling requirements. Ideally, we would make staffing changes much earlier in the year / semester. Making the decision late in October is a huge challenge. We need to make staffing decisions much earlier. Recognizing that students need to finish the semester to earn credit, the Garfield staffing reduction is scheduled for the end of the semester.

Parent Funding of staff positions is a district-wide concern from an equity standpoint. That said, parent funding is one option that schools might consider. Other options include using school non-staff funds, making reductions in non-teaching areas or making the reductions as indicated by enrollment.

Can we avoid all staffing cuts? Probably not. We have overestimated DISTRICT enrollment for the past three years. That means that we have hired more teachers than we have revenue for. In addition, some schools are UP in enrollment and expecting more teachers – making the budget issue even harder. One potential solution is to budget enrollment more conservatively (always easier with hindsight) to insure that we do not overstaff. Although it certainly feels better to add teachers than take them away it still requires schedule changes. In addition, it is often difficult to find teachers to hire after the school year starts.

Can we take the costs out of district funds or reserve? Our reserve is 3.25% of the school district's budget, which is below the recommended level for fiscal prudence by OSPI and our credit rating. The "district" portion of the Seattle Public Schools budget does include many of the school staff that other districts report at the school level: custodians, food service workers, nurses, Special Education and English language learner Instructional assistants, substitute teachers, school security staff (middle and high schools), and athletic programs. All these staff are 100% in schools but budgeted and supervised by central staff and therefore included in the district-wide financial data as teaching support and other support activities.

Per Pupil Costs: At the community meeting, parents also asked about the per pupil costs at Garfield. The per pupil basic education costs for Garfield (\$5,095) are in the range for other similar sized schools in the district. Four schools have a lower per pupil BEA cost and four schools are higher. The TOTAL per pupil costs for some other high schools are greater if those schools serve more special education or ELL students (which have higher per pupil costs). (See attachment).

School Impact: The Collective Bargaining Agreement calls for the principal, with the help of the Building Leadership Team (BLT) to identify the area of least impact in which to make the reductions. The principal then asks for staff to see if any of them are willing to volunteer for a transfer. If there are no volunteers within five days, the least senior teacher is asked to transfer. I apologize for identifying the Latin teacher at a recent community meeting. Since that was the area selected by the school as having the least impact on the school and the five days had passed, I assumed that that information was public. Since then I have been told about the lack of available Spanish and/or other languages (Latin). I am not clear on why Latin was selected as the area that would have the least impact on staffing and students.

Equity: Garfield was overstaffed by two teachers. Garfield was asked to reduce staff by one – leaving them overstaffed by one. Roosevelt was overstaffed by one and was allowed to – like Garfield – remain overstaffed by one.

Next Steps: As you know, we have many schools that have been asked to make reductions in staff based on enrollment. I can appreciate the fact that you want those processes to be fair and equitable and we certainly strive to do so. It is now time to work through the processes at the building level to determine where staffing reductions can be made with the least impact at the Semester. Since your average annual FTE is 95% that means that you will have fewer students – and even fewer students per teacher with one reduced position – for the second semester.

Finally, I believe that all of the above is in accord with the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). If there are specific violations of the CBA, please do bring those to the attention of your principal, Ted Howard.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Larry Nyland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Larry" and the last name "Nyland" clearly distinguishable.

Dr. Larry Nyland
Interim Superintendent