



October 14, 2010

West Families, West Students, and West Staff;

We are writing today to clarify the proposal for high school course offerings in the Madison Metropolitan School District. While discussion and questioning should be part of any change process, the discussion needs to center on factual information.

We have proposed that Advanced Placement offerings be increased in all of our high schools. We have also focused on making an embedded honors option available in 9th and 10th grade English and Social Studies next year and Math and Science the following year at all four high schools. We have also proposed increasing support to students who may not traditionally have participated in an honors or AP course so that rigorous opportunities can become part of every high school student's transcript.

What we have NOT proposed is the elimination of any electives at any of the high schools. Our current high school offerings vary quite widely across the district and we are striving to make good things available across all attendance areas. Nothing in the proposal prohibits a dynamite elective course from being shared and adopted across the city, in fact, some consistency of elective offerings would be welcomed.

The two pathways are groupings of courses. They are NOT a way to group students. Student and family choice is wide open. We are also proposing a set of assessments that will start in middle school to help inform families, students, and teachers about skills that students have that are strong and skills that need to be supported and improved. Those assessments will be given every year and are meant to be used to inform students and families about student progress and growth and to allow students and families to make informed decisions about future courses.

Please understand that students will still have choices. If they chose not to take an Advanced Placement course and wish to take an elective instead, that option remains.

We regret that incomplete information was used to make students and families upset. The proposal had, and still has the word "draft" on it. We look forward to productive conversations with all of you about ways in which we can now move forward.

Sincerely,

Daniel A. Nerad
Superintendent

Pam J. Nash
Assistant Superintendent for
Secondary Schools

Ed Holmes
Principal, West High School