

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE RECONFIGURATION OF THE DISTRICT

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My thanks to the many staff members, members of the Board of Education, and members of the Winchester community who have attended many meetings and have voiced both support, direction, and thoughtful criticism as I have moved forward in crafting a reconfiguration plan for the Town of Winchester's schools.

Based upon the discussion that has taken place over the course of the last 5 months, I have compiled a list of frequently asked questions and my responses.

I hope you find the information to be useful.

WHAT IS PLAN B?

Plan B is the Board of Education endorsed idea to redistrict our schools in a way that will strengthen our instructional program and reduce costs.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Plan B calls for:

- **The Family Resource Center, the Pre-Kindergarten classes, and the Kindergarten classes, and the District office will be housed at Batcheller Elementary School.**
- **Grades 1 through 4 will be housed at the Hinsdale Elementary School.**
- **Grades 5 through 8 will be housed at the Pearson Middle School**

HOW DOES THIS PLAN STRENGTHEN INSTRUCTION AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN?

- **It places all classes of each grade in a single building and allows teachers to team teach, and to group students so that the individual needs of students are met.**
- **It eliminates curriculum differences between buildings.**
- **It eliminates the inequity of resources that exist between our two elementary buildings.**
- **It provides a way for all programs that serve children from birth to kindergarten to experience a unified early education program that will help their parents ready the child for school.**
- **It gives classroom teachers the direct services of a reading specialist and a special education teacher to support teaching and learning on each grade level.**
- **It more easily allows for teachers to share their strengths and to discuss and resolve day-to-day barriers to effective teaching.**

WHY IS IT LESS EXPENSIVE?

- Class sizes are more uniform because of larger numbers of students at each grade level, resulting in the need for fewer classroom teachers (a net reduction of 5.5 teachers).
- With all of the same grades in the same building, there is less necessity to stockpile extra supplies and textbooks to address unexpected increases in student numbers as opposed to two buildings.
- With two fully utilized buildings and our third building only partially utilized, we can operate the district with one less administrator, one less secretary, one less custodian, and one less paraprofessional, an estimated savings of \$188,000.

WHAT SERVICES WILL ALL STUDENTS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE?

Students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8 will:

- Still receive Art, Music, and Phys. Ed. instruction from certified teachers.
- All buildings will have hot breakfasts and lunches prepared in their building.
- Each building will have a full time Nurse.
- Each building will have a full time Psychologist.
- Each building will receive services from a Social Worker.
- Each building will have an operational library and computer services as is appropriate.

WHAT WILL THE DAILY SCHEDULE FOR OUR BUILDINGS LOOK LIKE?

We plan to have:

- Seventh and eighth graders continue to ride buses and start school similar to this year's schedule.
- Grades Kindergarten through 6 will be picked up together and dropped off at their schools at three different start times. At the end of the day, the bus routes will be reversed.

AS A PARENT OF A CHILD ENTERING PEARSON MIDDLE SCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME, WILL MY CHILD BE SAFE?

- The staggered starting and ending times at the Middle School should minimize contact between upper and lower grades.
- The fifth and sixth graders will be housed on a separate floor, minimizing contact with seventh and eighth graders.
- Definitely, fifth grade will be substantially self-contained as they currently are. They will continue to be escorted to and from Art, Music, and Phys. Ed. classrooms. Final plans for grade six are being developed.
- The fifth and sixth grade program will be supervised by Mrs. Deborah Alduini in her capacity as a House Principal. Her office is planned to be in the fifth/sixth grade section of the building.
- There are a significant number of middle schools in Connecticut that include grades 5 through 8. At least 3 have received recognition from the State as exemplary programs.
- Grade 5 students will still have recess time.
- There are lavatory facilities for fifth and sixth grade boys and girls on the floor where their classes will be scheduled.

DOES THE RECLAMATION OF CLASSROOM SPACE AT PEARSON MIDDLE SCHOOL HAVE TO BE COMPLETED BEFORE PLAN B CAN GO INTO EFFECT?

- No. A large classroom area on the first floor, known as the Shop Room, and a large classroom area on the third floor, known as the Home Economic area, are under-utilized because of changes in State Education Department requirements.
- At the same time, needs to provide more space for special education, science, and technology have increased.
- The reconstruction will allow for better utilization of space in a way that addresses new instructional requirements.
- The full estimated costs associated with recapturing this space is taken into consideration as a part of Plan B and still allowed us to submit an education department budget below this years budget.

ARE YOU SEEKING STATE REIMBURSEMENT FOR THIS CONSTRUCTION PROJECT?

- **Yes.** Any funds given back to the Town by the State for this project will become a part of the Town's fund balance.
- Since the funds for this reconstruction have been transferred to the Town's Capital Budget and are not part of the School Department Budget, there is no built-in slack for the school district for future years.

WHY NOT WAIT A YEAR TO FURTHER STUDY, REFINE, AND IMPLEMENT ANY RECONFIGURATION?

To stay the way we are with the requirement to submit a zero tax increase budget would have called for reductions in student services and a weaker instructional program for next year and into the future.

DID THE SUPERINTENDENT AND BOARD OF EDUCATION CONSIDER OTHER RECONFIGURATION OPTIONS?

- **Yes.** With the exception of closing a building, they would have been more expensive and/or would have been less effective instructionally.
- During open meeting where the options were discussed there was strong opposition to closing a building.

WHAT HAPPENS IF OUR SCHOOL POPULATION STARTS TO GROW?

There is space within the two buildings that will house the greatest number of students to address student growth. Currently, the student population is projected to continue to decline.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Superintendent at:
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or
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