

Re-Organization of Broad Rock Middle School

Community Conversation

Information Gathered from Community Forums, Media, Emails,
Telephone Calls, School Committee Meetings and Grade 5 Teachers

Positive Elements.....Concerns.....and Questions

Revised March 9, 2010

Positives

- Grade 6 moved to middle school 10 years ago; although there was worry and concern prior to the move, teachers, students and families think it was a positive move.
- There was a Grade 5/6 school in SK approximately 15 years ago (Hazard School), and it was a positive experience (however Grade 6 was self-contained – no teams).
- It would be good for Grade 6 students and their parents to be in BRMS for more than one year.
- If the move happens, we will be fine and will adjust.
- It would be good for all grade 5 teachers to have the opportunity to plan commonly and it would be good for grade 6 teachers to be able to meet with sending/receiving teachers in the same building.

- Kids are resilient...perhaps more resilient than parents. I think the kids will be fine and I do not understand the anxiety.
- The main argument here seems to be improving space for students (K-5)...which is a good thing.
- BRMS is a nice, efficient building and should be used at full capacity.
- My child moved when South Road closed and is doing fine.
- With the community garden here, it would be nice to that more than 1 grade present to utilize it.

- Mentoring and interaction activities between the grades 5 & 6 would be nice to have.
- We need more vertical integration.
- This (move) is important to do because we have enrollment decline and budget concerns...we need to consolidate enrollment and programs where we can.

Concerns

- The timeline seems rushed.
- Keep kids younger longer.
- A teacher expressed not being interested in teaching in a MS and not interested in having students attend a MS.
 - Superintendent & NEASK will make every effort to ensure that every teacher is teaching where he/she will be happiest and most comfortable.
- Concern about 9 & 10 year-olds in a MS building. It is taking away from their K-5 family. They currently have the opportunity for buddy classrooms, safety patrol, other 5th grade privileges, and opportunity to be role models.

- Concerned about bullying and drugs in the middle school.
 - 5th graders would be in a school with 6th graders (students only months to 1 year older).
 - Per Principal Sullivan, “we have zero drug issues at BRMS.”
- Educationally, Grade 5 teachers have opportunity to see students for 6 years and can speak to former teachers if they have questions about a student.
 - In RTI, as of 2009/10, this information should be made available K-12 on an assessment page to be shared among all teachers teaching a particular student.
- Perceived environment (elementary vs. middle school) – there may be pressure for teachers to “team” (if they do not already).
 - Currently some grade 5 teachers “team” for 1 or more subjects (and some do not). Just as it exists now, that choice would be determined by the teachers and their principal.

- My children attend a school (community) that knows and understands them---I am not in favor of a big game of “musical schools.”
- I like the continuity of community schools.
- In an elementary school, 5th graders are self-confident and learn to be leaders.
- NK uses the “sister school model” and are now looking to return to community schools.
- It feels as if we are being reactive (every year we seem to be doing something different).
- My major concern is transportation. No decision should be made without a firm proposal from the bus company (including school start times and # of tiers).
- Kids are resilient but it should not be a goal to see how resilient they are.

- I worry about the transition timeline.
 - If the move does happen, we have lots of work ahead of us, so making a decision sooner (rather than later) will afford educators and parents enough time for a very well-planned transition.
- I read some research that shows moving 5th graders to a middle school to be negative. Studies indicate that students at that age go through many changes and suggests that we not pile on more.
- Concern that there would be no more “fun” activities and assemblies (5th graders do not think activities in elementary school are babyish).
 - o Grade 5 activities and assemblies are currently at the discretion of principal, teacher and parents (and that would continue).

Questions

- What would be the effect on Reading Teachers, itinerants, and Special Educators?
 - Services would follow students.
- Would students be grouped by home elementary school or be mixed?
 - Students would be “mixed” as is currently done in 6th grade. Elementary teachers and parents would have a great deal of input into grouping and scheduling decisions as they do currently. This method has proved to be positive as students have a greater ability to meet new friends while also keeping old friends.

- Why did we not move the 5th grade up last year?
 - Although it was certainly discussed publicly during the last budget cycle, because the 6/7/8 re-configuration was budget-based and this would be a budget neutral move, it was not pursued at that time.
- Will there be recess?
 - We would recommend that if the grade 5 students move to Broad Rock that there be no “traditional recess” but should the 5th grade teachers feel that students would benefit from snack time and/or some fresh air and free-play, they are certainly able to create a recess time utilizing the fields, track, tennis courts and perhaps some indoor gymnasium space.
 - If the school committee wanted to add a “traditional recess” the cost would be approximately \$10,000 (and a loss of 25 minutes a day of instructional time).

- How will the eventual decision be presented to students?
 - Parents would tell students, and if parents needed support from the staff (teacher, principal and/or school mental health team, support would be provided).
- What would happen to furniture and supplies/materials?
 - o As occurred with the middle school reorganization, principals and teachers would determine which items would move and which would remain.
- We have high performing elementary schools, how are the middle school scores?
 - Our elementary schools are high performing.
 - Our middle schools are high performing as well.

- Do we have options for transportation?
 - Option 1 Same as current (2 tier system). Elementary run and MS/HS run resulting in no cost & no change in school times, MS/HS students still ride on same bus with transfer at HS.
 - Recommended---Option 2 (2 tier system) Elementary run and MS/HS run, but with Middle School only buses and HS only buses resulting in 63K cost for 1 bus, eliminates transfer with the following start times:
 - Elementary (same), MS 7:45am, HS 7:20am
 - Option 3 (3 tier system) Elementary only run, MS only run, HS only run resulting in 63K cost for 1 bus, eliminates transfer with the following start times:
 - Elementary 8:55am, MS 7:55am, HS 7:15am
 - Current 2009-2010 Times:
 - Elementary 8:40am-3:08pm
 - MS 7:43am-1:55pm
 - HS 7:37am-2:09pm

- How are middle schools organized nationally?
 - o 5-8 is a national model.
 - o In Rhode Island, the 6-8 was created mostly due to space concerns not necessarily for educational reasons.
- How many middle schools in the state have Grade 5 in middle school?
 - o Information was not available at meeting – reference INFOWORKS:
 - 6-8 : Barrington, Burrillville, Central Falls, Coventry, **Cumberland**, East Providence, Johnston, Lincoln, Newport, **North Kingstown**, North Providence, North Smithfield, Providence, Scituate, Smithfield, West Warwick, Woonsocket, Bristol/Warren, Ponagansett.
 - 7-8: Cranston (just changed for budgetary reasons from 6-8), East Greenwich, Pawtucket, Warwick, Exeter/West Greenwich.
 - 5-8: Jamestown, Middletown, Narragansett, **Portsmouth**, Tiverton, CHARIHO, Westerly.
 - K-8: Little Compton.

- What would be the transition model for special education? Would the service delivery model need to be altered because of a middle school schedule?
 - o Per the PPS Director, students in special education would transition in the same way they are transitioning now....there are options for staggered admission and site visits if needed to help in that transition.
 - o Superintendent confirmed with the PPS office that the delivery model should be similar.
- What would the transition look like for all students?
 - Grade 4 & Grade 5 students would be involved in “moving up” ceremonies, visits and activities.
 - Grade 4 & 5, Grade 5 & 6 teachers would (along with parent input) attend placement and scheduling meetings.
 - Grade 4 students would tour BR much in the same way grade 5 students do currently.

- Why the move? Is it just to fill a school?
 - Budget neutral, the major considerations would be to:
 - Utilize a half-empty school that is 21st century built.
 - Allow for a 2-year (rather than 1-year) transition for BRMS culture.
 - Free up the much needed space in the 4 elementary schools.
- Is this an un-necessary disruption with no upside?
 - Opportunities available at Broad Rock
 - Guidance Counselor to enhance the home/school communication, as a resource to parents, students and teachers, provides anti-bullying workshops, provides mediation services, works with homework club, individual student schedules, balance and time management.
 - Student Assistance Counselor (shared with CCMS) who makes connections with students and families, talks with them about prevention behaviors (more than just drugs and alcohol), deals with behavioral issues (relationships) and provides another important someone for students to talk to.
 - In the elementary schools, band, chorus and orchestra are offered once weekly. At BRMS, these opportunities are offered twice weekly and offer additional opportunities before and after school.

- Student council has some governance role in establishing PBIS assemblies, fundraising, programs and activities.
- Access to a late bus so that students can stay after school with teachers, in the library, in the computer lab or in the fitness center, gym or fields.
- Intervention Block time to work on enrichment, remediation and intervention activities.
- Advisory (separate structured time to reflect on self, goals, interests, career path, ILP, etc.).
- Each student at BRMS has an ILP (Individual Learning Plan).
- Intramurals and Clubs---football, basketball, beach ball volleyball, badminton, soccer, power walking, tennis, orchestra, band, yearbook, student council, art club, drama club, SK youth reaching out, world language club, math club (supported by math coaches), green club (environment).
- Certified Health Teacher
- Locker rooms (for changing after PE)
- Science Labs
- Fitness room

- Why does the decision need to be made in March?
 - If the decision is made early... parents, students, teachers and administrators can plan the transition better. This planning will include: transportation changes, school start time adjustments, teacher placement decisions, middle school schedule development, elementary school schedule development, “moving up” ceremony planning, moving of supplies and materials, etc.

- Why would we increase the size of Broad Rock Middle School (isn't there research on small schools that indicates learning will increase in a small school)?
 - Increasing Broad Rock from 311 to 563 still meets the definition of being a “small school” (and is far below maximum occupancy levels for the building).
 - The proposed Broad Rock model would be considered a “school within a school” with regard to schedule and space, etc. (resulting in two configurations of less than 300 students each).
 - Decreasing the enrollment at all 4 elementary schools creates smaller schools at each elementary site (especially at Peace Dale).
 - Currently (Matunuck 328, Peace Dale 515, Wakefield 295 and West Kingston 309).
 - Projected (Matunuck 267, Peace Dale 426, Wakefield 242, West Kingston 259).
 - Therefore we would actually be creating more small schools in SK with this move.

Middle School Sizes in RI

Examples from INFOWORKS

- Districts with middle schools over 1000 students: (CHARIHO-1117, Coventry-1342, Cranston-1124 and Woonsocket-1334).
- Districts with middle schools over 700 (Barrington 835, B/W 806, Lincoln 849, **Portsmouth 719**, Westerly 796, WW 854, Middletown 749).
- Districts with middle schools under 700 (**SK Curtis Corner 566**, Ponaganset 625, Narragansett 514, **NK 573 & 483**, Smithfield 655, **Cumberland 561 & 689**).

- Why aren't we waiting for the final NESDEC report to tell us that this move is needed?
 - The NESDEC Report finalized in February and we are expecting a community review on March 23rd.
 - Preliminary reports indicated an option of transferring the grade 5 students to Broad Rock (for increased educational experiences for grade 5 students, increased culture/community building for grade 6 students and increased space for students in grades K-4 district-wide).
 - We have no indication from NESDEC that the final report will deviate from those initial recommendations.

- Why can't 5th grade teachers in the MS team?
 - We are not recommending teaming for 5th grade teachers due to certification issues. It would mean laying off many current elementary teachers and re-hiring many new MS teachers.
 - We could certainly change to a MS model for grade 5 if that were the desire of the s/c and community. It would still be budget neutral... (now 81 students per 3 teachers is capacity).
- Will this move position the school committee to be able to close Wakefield School?
 - Wakefield School will be no more or less vulnerable to being closed if the 5th graders are moved to Broad Rock.
 - We can re-organize the district to have 3 elementary schools and not move 5th grade to Broad Rock. If that were the case, the elementary schools would be more crowded than they are currently, but it could be done from a facilities perspective.

- If the Wakefield 5th grade teachers transfer to Broad Rock as the result of this move, what will happen to the River Classroom?
 - As was stated in an earlier slide, every effort will be made to ensure that teachers are teaching where they are most comfortable. Certainly the teachers at Wakefield have been instrumental in creating the River Classroom, and if they elect to remain at Wakefield in lieu of transferring to Broad Rock, every effort will be made to accommodate that request.

Are there any empty rooms in MS and Elementary
and which rooms are cramped?

School	Empty Rooms	Cramped Space (as reported by each School Principal)
CCMS	0	Support staff share space
BRMS	½ of the facility	0
Matunuck	0	OT shares space with PE
Peace Dale	0	Reading rooms, OT/PT/APE, Special Needs and FCE
Wakefield	0	2 Resource Teachers and OT share a space (tried having OT on the stage but PE in gym/cafe makes this set up difficult)
WK	0	ESL room & the rooms for 2 of the special education classes