



Learning Today. Leading Tomorrow.

Single Issue Meeting: Why the Eighth Grade is the Most Important Class in the District

Wednesday, December 5, 2018

7:00 p.m.

High School Cafeteria

- Purpose: Gain understanding why the 8th grade would be better off in terms of academics and co-curricular activities at our High School
- Understandable amount of angst when moving an entire grade to a new building
 - a. Many schools in our state that house 7th and/or 8th graders in their high schools
 - b. Many districts have age ranges that span 9 years in one building
- 8th grade is key because that is where the district loses most kids to choice schools
- Middle School has done an excellent job (staff, leadership, BOE wise) in improving building and now we need to make sure the HS (the District flagship building) has same opportunities for kids
- Realities:
- District needs to compete
 - 8 of 10 million of loss of state aid is due to lack of enrollment
- Believe 8th graders can begin a **preferred future** in the HS environment
- What do we do with 8th graders when they get to the HS
 - a. 8th graders will be eligible for HS credits; graduation requirement for credits will increase
 - b. Will allow students to get through core classes quickly and will get more chances to involve themselves in post-high school opportunities
 - Concurrent classes with WPU will be offered at the cost of \$100/credit
 - c. Career oriented classes
 - Significant population of businesses in town that students can explore opportunities in
 - Career and technical education opportunities that will be offered
 - Begin process next year (2 year process)
- Upgrade the HS
 - a. Innovation labs duplicated that will be in place by September
 - b. Already have arrangement with SCCC and concurrent courses
 - HS Principal and Superintendent share a vision to eventually have students graduate High School with an Associate's Degree
- What will happen with age difference of kids?
 - a. Give the 8th graders one entire section of the building for their core courses → isolated to a degree
 - b. Give 8th graders a lunch period to themselves

- c. Assign an administrator to the 8th grade to work with 8th grade teachers, students, parents, guidance counselors → “protect” kids and “ease angst”
- Already have kids from MS interacting with HS students
 - a. Band
 - b. STEAM Academy
- Potential opportunities for 8th graders
 - a. Interscholastic sports teams practice
 - b. Expansion of after-school programs
- **Give students chance to blossom in an area that they want**
- If we provide them with areas they explore, sometimes they find things they don't want to do
- Plans for 2018-19 school year
 - a. Begin an Academy program that will allow students to explore specific areas they may be interested in as they grow; start sophomore, junior, senior years
 - Areas considered: Engineering Design, Future Teacher's Pathway, Visual and Performing Arts Pathway, Technology and Biomedical
 - Would cause us to add courses
 - On a fast-track
 - b. Give the 8th grade chance the opportunity to work toward a **preferred future** → allow us to compete and retain
- Teachers have raised scores in Language Arts and Math
 - a. Choice students have among best test scores and having them in-district would raise district scores

Questions

1. **Will 7th grade students participate in a graduation ceremony?**
They will have an advancement ceremony
2. **Will the 8th grade promotion still happen and the 8th grade dance?**
Yes both will still happen. There will be social activities just as there are for HS students.
3. **Will this just shift trend downwards and 7th graders will leave for choice schools?**
Do not know. There may be short term collateral damage. Ask parents to consider the idea of preferred future. Want students to have a chance and the opportunity to take advantage of knowing what they want to do sooner.
4. **What happens to this year's 7th grade?**
Middle School Advancement? Yes
Eighth Grade Trip? Yes
Middle School yearbook with large photos? Yes
Farewell dance and other 8th grade activities? Yes
5. **How can you add several academy classes and 8th grade wing, there is not that much extra room**
Yes there is. HS only is working at 45% of capacity currently.
6. **Where is the money coming from?**
 - a. Some of the State aid we received back (\$611,000 into Capital Reserve) can be used toward innovation lab if that staff believes it is vital and BOE agrees

- b. Have 1.1 million less in State Aid next year but new courses that were talked about do not add a significant expense.

7. Will 8th graders participate in HS sports?

Not allowed in our state. However opens idea of interscholastic sports at the MS level.

9. Current guidance department cannot handle 9-12 graders, how will that be addressed?

Closing of HMX gives us extra school nurse and guidance counselor. Both will be retained and utilized.

10. When will we be addressing reconfiguration of bussing and timing?

Next week. Looking to save money from 3 tier bussing system to 2. More to follow on this.

11. How will you do this without raising taxes?

Not the intent. Able to add to school but still cut taxes. Doing a zero-based budget. Sometimes something that is traditional goes out. If anything were to raise taxes it would be the loss of state aid.

12. How is the addition of trade type classes take away from honors classes for high performing students?

Not looking to be a tech school but want to give kids an exploratory experience. These would be elective courses that are developed and easily implemented.

13. How will this year's incoming freshman class take advantage of WPU classes without the opportunity of starting 8th grade in the HS?

Going to WPU in the near future to work this out. Can take the concurrent classes without having taken "way advanced" classes before.

14. What grade will students be able to start earning credits from WPU?

Safely can say juniors. Will speak to them about sophomores in the near future.

16. Will 8th graders be offered a greater selection of electives?

Will have an answer next week.

17. Has an analysis been done of what the HS is lacking?

HS is lacking students. Larger number of students allows expansion. Lacking electives. Staff is wonderful and looking for opportunity to do more.

18. What type of college classes? Liberal Arts or specific major type classes?

Depends on availability of staff interested in being adjunct professors.

19. Is there talk of moving to a block schedule?

No

20. Have we surveyed families of students leaving?

Offering meetings to parents that will take place right after the holidays.

21. Is there an option to tap into other town's classes and use videos?

Need to speak with association about online courses. Need to respect the contract with the HEA. Rather than using neighboring towns, just use online courses.

22. Can the district work with local businesses for internships and opportunities?

Definitely yes. A must with a CTE program. Not limited to labor jobs.

23. Plans to move 7th grade to the HS?

Do not have those plans. Like to respect as much as possible the current configuration. This is an evolving process.

24. How is the bill for mold remediation being paid?

The bill has been paid. All paid from the Capital Reserve account. The state gave us the cut back to help cover cost of remediation. BOE had foresight to plan for emergency circumstances.

25. Most MS students go through times of feeling insecure and emotionally vulnerable; how will HS handle this?

Spent time at the MS recently. Mirror Nancy Marinaro's program that takes place at the MS in the 8th grade and then in the whole HS. Will take care of their social and emotional needs. A guidance counselor for just 8th grade is another factor.

27. It is my belief that young adolescents are not simply older elementary school students nor younger HS students. Middle schoolers require a unique approach to education. How do you plan to deal with the dramatic changes our 8th graders will be going through?

Taking what we have in 8th grade at the MS and replicating it in the HS. Not looking to give the kids an immediate HS experience. Looking to give them a head start so they can do things in the future that they wouldn't be able to without the head start.

28. Can you break down how many students are in choice and charter schools?

GRADE	CHOICE	TECH	CHARTER
# OF STUDENTS			
12	15	6	
11	11	17	
10	14	17	
9	14	18	
8	2		2
7	2		10
6	2		3
5	2		
4	3		
3	3		
2	2		
1	3		
K	4		

Comments:

None