Middle School Consolidation Study

November 9, 2017

Tim Smith, Principal

Pawcatuck Middle School

Stonington Public Schools

We Believe in You

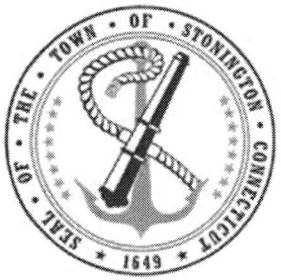
Presentation Overview

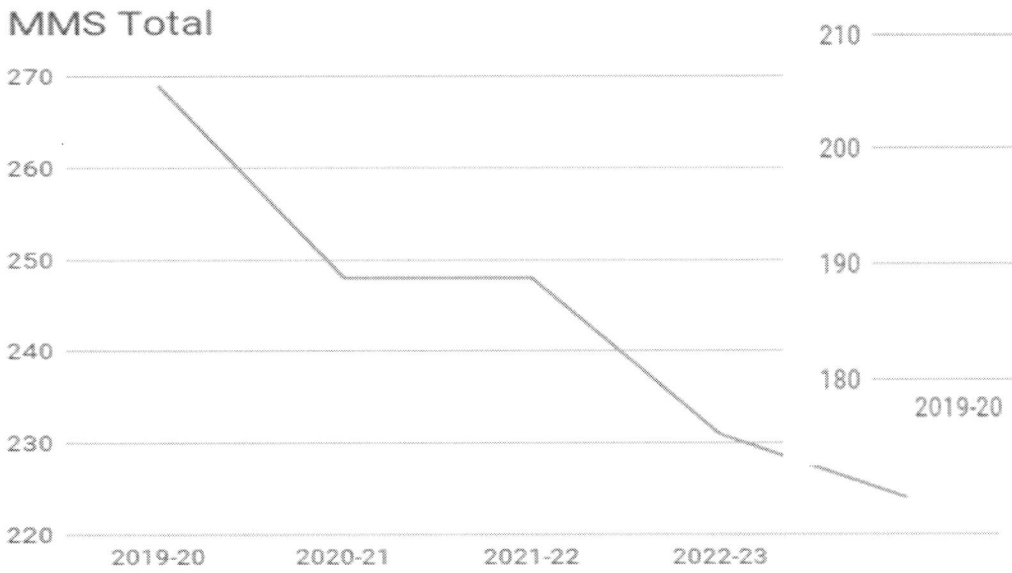
- Maintaining Two Middle Schools: The comfort of what we know
- The Feasibility of Consolidation
- A New Way Forward as a Single Middle School

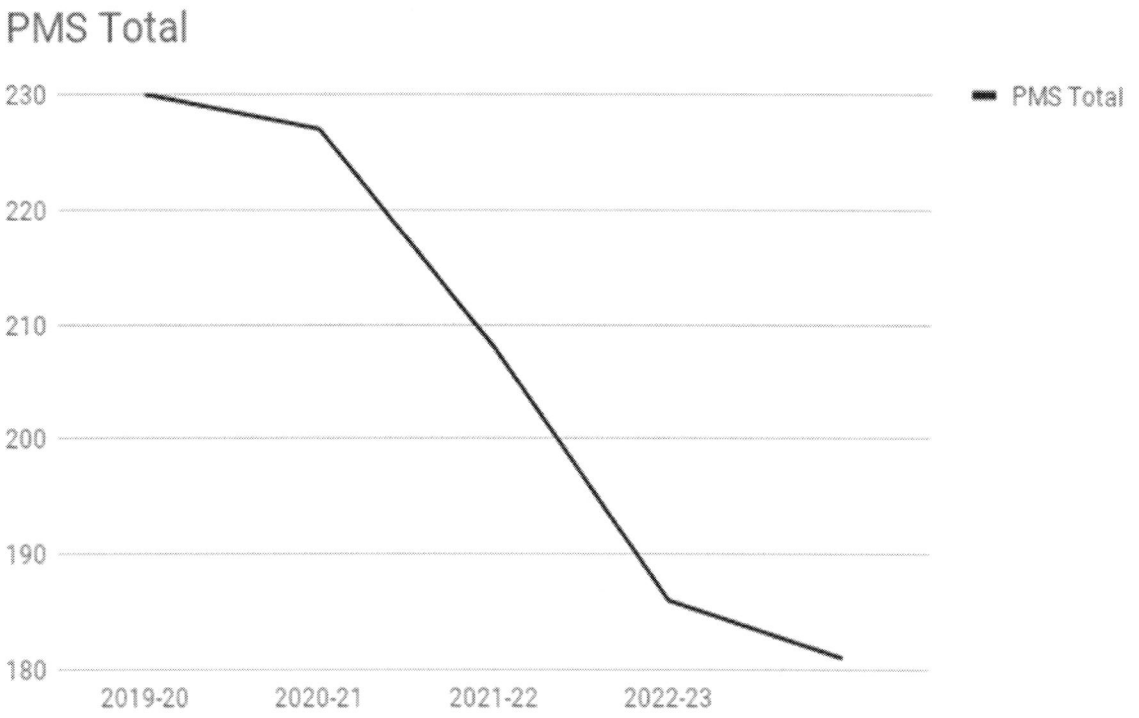
The Comforts of What We Know

Maintaining both Middle Schools

- Declining Enrollment
- Duplicating Programs
- Diminishing Resources
- Devising Parity and Equity







Stonington Public Schools

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The Feasibility of Consolidation

The Status Quo At Scale

- Academics
- Surveys
- Operations
- Sports & Extra-curricular Activities

Academics

- The projected population in grades 6,7 & 8 in 2018-19 will be about 500 Students
- Maintaining current class size of 23 students we need 7 sections per grade level or 21 classrooms
- Mystic's floor plan reviewed to fit classrooms, special services, and the relocation of the SBHC from Pawcatuck
- Classroom needs can be met without sharing rooms. The sharing of classrooms would accommodate any future population increase

Survey Classes

- Maintain the current World Language Program
- Maintaining current survey offerings with some variations in frequency and duration
- Large survey classes like Band, Chorus & PE will need a re-design

Operations

- Current 7-period day schedule (5 academic, 2 survey) will fit
- Average class size of 23.8
- Grade level room assignments and lockers need to be carefully planned for traffic flow
- Parking
- Additional AC units

Lunch Waves

- With 500 students 4 lunch waves are needed to keep lunch to 125 students or less.
- Mixed lunches of two classes across grade 6,7,8 would achieve this.
- Additional throughput for food service
- Carefully planned passing times will also be required
- New cafeteria furniture

Sports and Extra-curricular Activities

- Offer an additional Fall Sport like soccer and/or Field Hockey
- Create a no-cut basketball program with two interscholastic competitive teams and a full range of intramurals
- Clubs and activities currently duplicated in the budget
- Keep most of this funding intact to offer more at one site

A Different Way Forward: Design Thinking

- Successful consolidation depends on creating one new 6,7,8 middle school as a cohesive learning community with a new vision, mission, and operation
- All stakeholders, parents, students, teachers, and the community at large have a role
- Design Thinking is:
  - Human-Centered
  - Collaborative
  - Optimistic
  - Experimental

A New Middle School Framework

- Practices that foster relationships and Community
- Interdisciplinary themed Inquiry-based units of study that develop:
  - Global awareness, Environmental, Civic, Health, and Financial Literacy
  - Creativity and innovation, Critical thinking and Problem solving, Communication and Collaboration
- Schedules with longer more flexible blocks of time to support student centered learning

Student-Centered, Inquiry Model

- A series of essential questions guides curriculum and instruction to ensure programs are both standards-based and relevant to students
- Students will develop the skills necessary to answer questions linked to the core content area concepts
- The goal of the student-centered, inquiry model is to create a learning environment where no student asks, "When am I ever going to need to know this?"

Over-arching Essential Questions

- What is a community? What is the individual's responsibility to the community and what is the community's responsibility to the individual?
- How do I connect to the land and water around me?
- What does it mean to lead?

Common Middle School Experience for all Students

- Offer additional elective courses including access for all to a technology maker space
- Offer 8th grade students experiences in mastery-based Integrated high school courses to improve high school readiness for all students
- Focused use of existing resources to improve extra-curricular offerings to all students
- Academic and community service programming that fully integrates with community resources

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STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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SUPERINTENDENT Van W. Riley, Ph.D. | ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT Mary Anne Butler | DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES Allison Van Etten | DIRECTOR OF FINANCE Gary Shettle

To: Board of Education

From: Dr. Van Riley, Superintendent

Date: November 9, 2017

Subject: **Transportation Issues re: Middle School Consolidation**

There have been several questions concerning the amount of time students in the Pawcatuck area would spend on the buses if the Board decides to consolidate the middle schools. Former First Student manager and current SPS employee Mary Ribeiro completed a detailed study of the five bus routes, adding in all stops and then completing the trip to the Mystic Middle School site. The results are as follows:

	Time on Present Route	Time on Proposed Consolidation Route
Bus #1	25 minutes	41 minutes
Bus #3	23 minutes	40 minutes
Bus #4	18 minutes	35 minutes
Bus #6	20 minutes	33 minutes
Bus #7	18 minutes	30 minutes

There are two factors that could reduce these times. First, these times include stops for 5th grade students. With the move of 5th graders to the elementary schools, there will be some reduction in stop times. Second, these times do not account for any changes due to route efficiencies. Each year, the transportation company looks at ways to shorten route times and this has not been included in these times. It is our estimate that routes will average about 10-12 minutes longer after 5th graders are removed and route efficiencies are included.

I have also been asked if these times exceed our policy concerning route times and if they are similar to times MMS students currently ride the buses. Our policy is to keep all routes under 60 minutes. All routes are well under the 60-minute maximum ride time. In comparison, as far as current MMS student riders, all but one of the current MMS routes are over the 30-minute time frame. The average current MMS route is 36 minutes with half of the routes at 40 minutes or longer.

VR//amd

Middle School Consolidation Questions and Answers

Timeline/Decision

Question	Response
What is the timeline?	The proposed timeline would be to consolidate beginning in September 2018. This is when the 5th grade would move back to the elementary levels with the new construction.
Who will be making the final decision of the consolidation?	The full Board of Education will make the final decision. It is anticipated that the Steering Committee will make the recommendation to the Board for action on January 2018.
Would students need to transition half way through the school year?	No. The recommendation is to implement the consolidation and 5th grade move to the elementary level beginning this fall...2018
Would students finish the 18-19 year at the school they start at in Sept.?	The recommendation is for 5th grade to remain at the elementary level this fall 2018. Current 5-6-7 graders would all join together at the new consolidated middle school. There would be no mid-year moves as that is very disruptive.
Where will 5th grade be next year?	The plan is for 5th graders to move to the elementary level beginning in the fall of 2018. A detailed analysis of DMS and WV/B facilities indicates that the current 4th graders can remain at the elementary level next year as 5th graders.
Could the district look at redistricting to even out the student enrollment?	Redistricting could occur. However, redistricting would only help even out the numbers to around 200 per school in a few years. Consolidation will allow for more programs, less part time teachers, and other benefits.
Could this topic be on the Board of Ed agenda for the next meeting?	This topic is on the November and December agendas. A special presentation by the Steering Committee will be made in November. A video of the Board meeting presentation is available on our website.
Will the proposal be a town vote or is the decision already made?	Neither... There will not be a town vote and the decision has not been made. The Board of Education will consider the recommendation of the Board Steering Committee in December. The Board of Education will make the final decision.
What is the plan for managing the consolidation?	There is a detailed calendar for the consolidation that will be presented to the Board at the November 9 meeting. This calendar/recommendation will be available to the public online (or call Central Office).

November 15, 2017

Middle School Consolidation Questions and Answers

Staffing

Question	Response
Can we have added administrative staff with the consolidation?	Final staffing will depend upon discussions this spring related to program offerings. However, current discussions included keeping two guidance positions.
Will there be the elimination of part time teachers?	Not necessarily. One reason for consolidation is to avoid the necessity of requiring part-time or split assignments. However, there are times when these configurations are beneficial to programs and individual teacher schedules.
Are all of our talented and dedicated teachers from PMS moving over with students?	Teachers and staff members from PMS will move with the students to the new middle school located at the MMS site. Due to declining enrollment, it is projected that there will be a reduction of two regular classroom teaching positions between the schools.
Will teachers be split or part-time?	There may be part-time positions. However, consolidation will help avoid required part-time or split positions.
Will the committee look at the acuity of the health needs of our students when deciding the staffing for the consolidated clinic?	Yes. The Director of Special Services has been developing a recommendation for all mental health staffing needs. Based on her recommendation, we have already kept two guidance personnel and other positions at least for the first year of consolidation.

Middle School Consolidation Questions and Answers

Busing/Transportation

Question	Response
What is the impact on bus transportation?	A detailed analysis of the bus routes indicates that PMS students would have to travel an additional 15 minutes. The estimated maximum bus trip would be 41 minutes for current PMS students, which is actually shorter than the longest ride for current MMS students. Board policy requires trips to be less than 60 minutes.

Middle School Consolidation Questions and Answers

Configuration

Question	Response
Will the school configuration change?	The 5th grade will become part of the elementary program effective fall of 2018. The new middle school(s) will then be grades 6-7-8.
Some students say, "we have to mix with PMS kids"?	There have been several comments from students who would like the idea of joining together at the middle school level instead of waiting for 9th grade.
Can declining enrollment vs. the increase this year in the three current classes be addressed?	There are some ups and downs in the current enrollment years/classes. However, the trend over the next 10 years is for a significant decline. The projection for 6-7-8 in the 5-10 year timeframe is to level off at around 420-440 students.
Does this decline in enrollment also reflect a decline in town population or are the two unrelated?	Declining enrollment is based on our actual enrollment. We use the "move ahead" model. We use the UCONN population report for information only as it shows more of a decrease than our move ahead projections.
I keep reading about the significant hiring effort at EB, and plans for additional housing to be built within the town. Have these projections been part of this decision?	We have not seen a significant increase in student population based on hiring at EB.

Middle School Consolidation Questions and Answers

Extracurricular Activities

Question	Response
Could we add a late bus?	Yes, we are looking to add another day of late buses.
What is the recommendation for extracurricular activities, with more students?	The plan is to keep the current number of stipends/programs. Where duplication exists, the funds will be used for new offerings such as additional sports, clubs, and other activities. In addition, late buses will be available to provide transportation home from extracurricular activities.
Will all students be able to participate?	The recommendation at this time is to add soccer and possibly field hockey to the middle school program. In addition, funds will be available for additional activities and clubs. All students will have opportunities to participate in a variety of extracurricular programs.

Middle School Consolidation Questions and Answers

Programs

Question	Response
Can the library be open to community?	The library, gym, cafeteria, drama, music and other classrooms may become part of a community center. Discussions have already taken place with the COMO and Town Recreation about possible use of the PMS site.
Having more options in band or chorus would that affect the existing band classes and would students be forced to take a type of band class or chorus?	This detail has not been determined. If consolidation is approved, teams of teachers and staff members will discuss program options, schedules, and assignments.
Are class sizes changing or stay the same?	Average class sizes will remain the same as they are this year at approximately 23 students per classroom (average).
What can we do to attract students that have left to go to Magnet schools back into the district?	We are ramping up our own recruiting efforts to counter those of the magnet programs. Many students who go to the magnet programs return as we offer so much more as a comprehensive high school.
Can we create new programs like those that Magnet schools have?	We can create new programs but cannot become a state magnet program. We have attempted to become a magnet but run into issues with state rules and funding.
Can we offer different options for students?	Absolutely....and this will be part of teacher/staff/parent/student discussions this spring.
Will there only be one XC, basketball and unified sport team? Which would mean savings in stipends for coaches?	There may be only one team for certain sports. However, the plan is to add sports, clubs, and other activities so every student will be able to participate.
Could we enhance funding for other after school clubs, which are such a bargain when we consider the cost/benefit analysis?	All costs/stipends for extracurricular programs at both schools will be maintained at the new school. This will provide funds for many additional opportunities for students.
Will the savings from the consolidation be put back into the school budget and additional programming?	The Board of Education will work with the Board of Finance as we do each year on the needs of the schools. There is no plan to put all the savings into the schools. However, there are some identified needs such as parking, new AC, new lunchroom furniture, and other items that will need funding from the savings for at least the first year.
How quickly can leveled math and LA classes be brought to a consolidated middle school?	Specific program configurations, schedules, offerings will be address early this spring with various groups of staff members, teachers, parents and students.

Middle School Consolidation Questions and Answers

PMS/Facility

Question	Response
Would PMS be used as an alternate community building?	The District will keep the PMS facility for use as a the site for a community center, Central Office, and additional instructional programs such as special education regional programs.
Will there be enough room for assemblies and parking with the additional families?	Whole school programs for all families will be difficult as they are now with the numbers. A plan is being developed to add parking at the current MMS site to accommodate larger groups.
Will the building house all people safely according to the fire marshal?	A detailed analysis of building capacity indicates we can comfortably house all students at the MMS site without additional building.
Why not build a new middle school on property by the high school to have a Stonington campus?	This option was recommended by the Superintendent to the Board of Education and to the K-12 Building Committee. The BC had the final authority to make the decision.
How much of a spike in enrollment would there have to be before site is squeezed for capacity?	The current MMS site will accommodate the 490 6-7-8 students with some flexibility in the facility. An additional 80-100 students could be housed without core teachers having to share classrooms. Sharing classrooms would allow for more students. However, enrollment projections for the next 10 years indicate a decline.
Does the school count the number of cars that drop off children vs. ride the bus?	Yes.
How will address traffic flow issue at MMS?	The number of students in the consolidation proposal is similar to the number who attended MMS some years ago. We realize there is a need for additional parking and that need will be addressed.

Middle School Consolidation Questions and Answers

New School/Vision

Question	Response
Will there be a new name, school colors, and mascot?	The consolidation recommendation will include renaming of the new middle school and a process for determining school colors and mascot. Students and staff members will be involved with this process.
How will parents, students, and staff create a new identity?	Students, staff members, and parents will work together this spring to develop new and exciting programs, schedules, and other aspects of the new school commencing immediately after Board action.
How do we build up students with a new image?	Students must be part of the development of school programs. Students should also be involved with the new school name, colors, mascot, extracurricular activities, and other aspects of the school.
How will you hold onto what makes each school special while creating something new?	During the spring months, teachers, staff, students and parents will work together to develop programs and begin the process of joining together.
Would you consider adding some sidewalks too the neighborhood around MMS? This is a good use of the funds from the sale of the central office.	This may be considered by the BOE.
Will we have an appropriate and exciting opening day with all middle school students coming back together to "new middle school" in the fall?	Absolutely...opening day, pre-consolidation events, summer events...whatever we can do to celebrate this new part of the educational community.

January

- Inventory current extra-curricular activities at PMS/MMS
- Examine extra-curricular staffing availability and plan for additional teams, clubs
- Project for staffing needs and efficiencies
- Brainstorm ideas for possible programming innovations
- Assess the related-service implications of the larger school
- Elicit plans for Title 1 funding 2018-2020 funding cycle to support academic needs of students in the new school
- Propose additional early release days for staff work
    - Vision
    - Team building
    - Program planning
    - Scheduling moves/grade/room assignments
- Solicit assignment preferences from middle school staff
- Begin planning early release day professional learning for new middle school staff
- Core secondary team attends Edu Con 2018 to learn practices in student-centered learning
- Establish Principal's Advisory-students from both schools
- Determine to maintain current programming to the extent possible or improve with innovative programming and practices with staff input (January 22)
- Plan for use of PMS site
- Identify facility needs for MMS (parking, air conditioning, cafe furniture
- Combine PTO
- Start times for middle and elementary schools

February

- Staff team building, foundational vision work, student-centered learning expectations
- Family Engagement Event for parents/families from both schools
- Launch campaign to select new school logo, mascot, colors
- Survey students and teachers re: exploratory and club interests

March

- Staff team building, continuation of vision work, student-centered learning expectations, assessment of curriculum needs (March 9 and 21)
- Write curriculum for new exploratories or modify existing ones
- Draft Tier 2 and 3 supports for Integrated Interdisciplinary Grade 8 (high school courses)
- Design summer school programs/camps-Title 1 funded
- Plan PLC work around building the new learning community for both teachers and students
- Identify and contract with moving company

April

- Assess PMS library-remain intact, staffing, hours or supplement new school's circulation materials
- Announce new logo, mascot, colors
- Finalize plans for fall sports (hire coaches, design/purchase fall sports uniforms)
- Determine location of summer school and program design
- Assess special education needs and create a plan for services prior to annual review PPTs

May

- Finalize all staff assignments
- Finalize room assignments
- Identify MMS classroom furniture/supply needs
- Determine materials and resources from PMS that need to be moved, discarded, remain
- Items for transfer marked with room assignment
- Family forum to share changes the consolidation will bring-Q and A session
- Re-allocate bid supply line items to align with new building and new teaching assignments

June

- Teachers finish packing their rooms (MMS and PMS)
- Prioritize the cleaning of the second floor to prepare for the arrival of PMS materials
- Prepare the gym and aux-gym as staging areas for materials and furniture for the new room assignments
- Physical move commences moving into the second floor while summer cleaning is completed on floor one
- PMS Celebration for families, students, and staff

July

- Final hiring if needed
- Curriculum writing for new exploratory courses
- Order new materials/resources for new programming
- Prepare for summer school

August

- Professional development for new staff-solidify common practices and expectations for students and staff
- Physical move continues

Academic Year 2018-2019

Students and teachers will collaborate to set the "Social Contract" for the new school.

- (PMS has "PAWS" and MMS has its "Three Be's") We need to create a new vision to guide expected behaviors that fits the new environment, and that works into the new
- Identity (Logo, colors, etc.)