

Westside Community Schools
Facilities Task Force Committee Meeting
August 5, 2014 ~ 4:00-6:00 p.m.

Dr. Blane McCann, Superintendent, welcomed members of the task force and thanked them for their commitment to the important work ahead. There will be a tremendous amount of information to review and consider between now and the group's last scheduled meeting on November 24, 2014. We will strive to honor everyone's time at these meetings by starting on time and ending on time.

Dr. McCann introduced John Taylor and Rob Zimmerman from Project Advocates. Project Advocates is a construction and design management firm. Mr. Taylor expressed appreciation for being asked to be a part of the District's facility assessment work. Project Advocates will help format all of the information from the task force meetings and help guide the facility assessment process. Dr. McCann clarified that the role of the task force will be input for decisions.

The key factor that the task force will need to address first is the recommendation on the middle school grade configuration. Committee chairs will be coordinating school visits, both at our own middle school and at middle schools outside the district.

By September, the task force should identify the design features that we would like to see in our middle school building(s). Additionally, a recommendation should be made on whether we remodel or build new. At the conclusion of the task force service in November, recommendations will be made to Administration and the Board, with a document created in December / January that the district can use 5, 10, 15, 20 years down the road.

Dr. McCann provided a sample of questions for consideration for the voter poll / survey and asked the group to discuss in their subcommittees.

Dr. Mark Weichel, Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, led the follow-up discussion and suggestions from the subcommittee conversations.

- Our current middle school is currently over capacity. Would you support a second middle school? Would you support a 7-8 or 6-8 building?
- Consider providing choices for the bond amount that a voter might support.
- Important to provide some point of reference for a bond dollar amount, or you end up with "sticker shock".
- What does this bond mean financially to the owner of \$100,00 home; a \$250,00 home...?

- Suggestion that there is a more comprehensive “introduction / education” piece to precede asking the poll questions... strong schools = strong property values.
- What would your priorities be?

Dr. Weichel provided some history on district enrollment and the middle school grade configuration (powerpoint). He shared a report from Hanover Research on the educational impact and advantages / disadvantages of 6-8 buildings and 7-8 buildings. Ultimately, it is more about what is happening in a building (academically, engaged students and staff) as opposed to the age of the students. No matter what year the grade division happens (either at 6th or 7th grade), there is typically a “dip” in the transition year. Other considerations:

- More opportunities in middle school
- Middle school offers the “large group” experience (in preparation for high school)
- Students / families typically feel more “vested” in a building when they are there for three years instead of just two, which is a benefit to the culture of the building
- Moving 6th grade to middle school provides more space in elementary buildings for PK-5
- Because there is such a huge curve from 6th grade to 8th grade (maturation, physically, socially & emotionally), it is important to have a division of grade levels inside the building

One of the biggest decisions to be made is a recommendation for 6-8 or 7-8. Some of the decision criteria for consideration of 6-8 vs. 7-8:

- Access to resources / athletic & academic
- Ability to know the students, personally
- Can go deeper into content / engagement
- Cost: will need to obtain general guidelines of cost for maintaining another middle school building (operational, staffing)
- Overcrowding, ratio of students to adults
- What do students think...? What do teachers think...?
- Academic achievement
- Decision on what to do with the Career Center

Next Facilities Task Force Meeting:

Thursday, August 28, 2014
4:00 – 6:00 p.m. ~ ABC Building