

REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 17

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Board of Education News

March 2018

The Region 17 Board of Education recently held two informational meetings about the proposed restructuring of schools. The meetings were well attended by residents of both Haddam and Killingworth. If approved, the plan would be implemented in the 2019/20 school year. The Board of Education listened to the thoughts and concerns expressed by community members and addressed many questions during an extensive Q & A session. A sample list of FAQ's pertaining to the District Restructuring plan is provided below. More information about the plan can be found on the Regional School District #17 website, www.rsd17.org. If you missed the information meeting, you may view it on community TV. You can also contact the Board of Education with any input you may have.

The Board of Education will consider and vote on the proposed restructuring plan in March.

Why are we considering reorganizing our school district?

Originally, the Board of Education set out to ensure that the District had ample resources to support its capital assets, and established a committee to complete a Capital Plan for RSD 17. Data and discussions centered around education efficacy, program trends, capacity utilization, enrollment, annual and capital resources to maintain our schools and pay for building and property improvements. Several things became abundantly clear from the research completed by the BOE Strategic Committee including:

- We have an opportunity to restructure our educational programs to *enhance* student experience and learning
- Declining enrollment, both as a trend and projected, meant that limited resources were being stretched over five campuses and could be better utilized to serve students in fewer buildings
- Community values about how we educate our students would be critical to sustain or improve with any changes
- Based on projected trends locally and at the state level, we can make decisions that could be sustainable for a minimum of 10 years

What is RSD 17 Proposed Restructuring?

It is a plan to create two K-3 Primary Schools, one in Killingworth and one in Haddam, and to close one Elementary School in Haddam. It would also create a new Intermediate Program, Grades 4 and 5, to be housed at the current Haddam-Killingworth Middle School, along with a Middle School Program, Grades 6-7-8, also at HKMS, each Program with its own Administrator. The High School would be unchanged.

Why is the Board of Education considering this and what does it aim to achieve?

These are the reasons for the Proposed Restructuring and what it intends to achieve if implemented:

- Restructure our educational programs to *enhance* student experience and learning
 - Introduce a new K-3 Primary School Program and Grades 4-5 Intermediate School Program
- The changes support community values about how we educate our students
 - Class sizes, arts programs, grouping students at like educational levels
- Utilize our limited resources to better serve students
 - Reduce annual expenses associated with having to operate one less building

- Special Education staff resources stretched over fewer locations
- Maximize the use of our Middle School in which we made a significant investment
- The plan is strategically viable for a minimum of 10 years

What is the plan for the “Intermediate Program” and how will it benefit our students?

The Intermediate School, housed at HKMS, will be a new school for students in grade 4 + 5. This school will take advantage of the similar educational and developmental needs of students in these grades. The educational and extra-curricular programs will be designed to be a “just right fit” for grades 4 and 5. The program will have its own core instructional space in the current middle school building while still taking advantage of the specialized and unique classrooms and equipment found in the middle school building. This will provide students in grade 4 with enhanced opportunities that they are ready for while providing students in grade 5 a program that is a more direct fit for their age and needs. Overall the new Intermediate School will be a better educational and developmental fit for the students while opening up new opportunities offered by enhanced facilities and equipment and new programming.

Will this potentially lead to a reduction in personnel?

If we implement the plan, yes, it will ultimately lead to a reduction in personnel, though many of the personnel from the closed school will be moved to another school based on the number of students. While we have a rough estimate of the personnel reductions, but until the programs in the RSD 17 Proposed Restructuring are fully developed, it is only estimate. Our most recent estimate in reduced annual expenditures is \$1,000,000.

Will class sizes change?

Historical BOE guidelines pertaining to class size will not change as a result of the restructuring. The restructuring may provide an opportunity to create more “evenness” in class size across the grades now that the students will be housed in one school. For example, if Burr Kindergarten (K) classes were at 13 children and HES at 18, there may be an opportunity to make the K classes all 15 at the one school. 18, 13 and 15 children in a K class are all within the guidelines that the Board has been using, however, being in one school allows for resources to be used more efficiently and consistently across the classes when put in one building.

How will the district go about designing the educational programs and the logistics that impact student experience be implemented?

We have been outlining all the important issues related to the design of the educational programming of the Intermediate School and the logistics that impact student experience. If the BOE decides to move forward with the Proposed Restructuring, the RSD 17 Administrators will engage staff and teachers in designing the Intermediate program. Largely, the fourth grade curriculum will be lifted out of the primary program and placed into the intermediate program, and then we will add and customize additional programming to take advantage of the applied science resources located in the middle school. In addition, minor changes to the 5th grade model will be considered.

In addition to educational aspects, the District will engage parents, staff and teachers through a planned outline and timeline to consider and implement the various options for transitioning students and teachers. These issues include school transportation and start times, drop off procedures, lunch and snack times, and other logistical issues. At some point, we will provide school tours of the middle school so that parents and students can see what the new school and set up will feel like.

We believe if we can work together teachers, staff and community we can create an amazing program and student experience.