



TO: School Board Members

FROM: Steven M. Constantino, Ed.D.
Superintendent

RE: Middle School/Central Office Options

DATE: March 4, 2014

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with information regarding options for additional middle school space and the subsequent impact on the Central Office/School Board facility.

History/Background

In the fall of 2012, a Middle School Committee was convened to review options for a middle school enrollment in 2017. The committee worked throughout the year and presented its findings to me in May 2013. The final recommendation of the committee, along with their entire report, was shared with the board in June 2013.

In September 2013, a Modernization/New Construction Feasibility Study was presented to the School Board that provided information on the present James Blair and what it would take to create a middle school appropriate for the programmatic and learning needs of students today and well into the future.

In October 2013, the School Board asked for a presentation from County and City Planners regarding Comprehensive Plan inclusion of proffered land for future school construction. From that presentation grew the need to study present enrollment and, to the degree possible, predict future enrollment patterns to determine an optimum location for a new middle school structure.

In November 2013, enrollment projections for the school division were completed and the current population of students mapped into geographic areas. Between December 2013 and February 2014, County and City planners, as well as division staff, worked collaboratively to map current enrollment patterns based on the best information we have today.

Results of Collaborative Mapping Exercises

On Friday, February 28, 2014, the map project culminated in the last of several meetings between County, City and School staff. The results of this project support the original thinking that estimated growth will be in the central portion of the County and that the Blair site is an appropriate location for a new middle school facility.

With the exception of land presently proffered in the Stonehouse development, no other land within the County Primary Service Area (PSA) is presently earmarked for future school construction. It should be noted that if property were to become available at a site in the area within future growth projections, placing a new middle school on that site should be considered as well. At the present time, the only property within the enrollment growth area is the Blair property.

Middle School Enrollment Projections

School division enrollment projections developed by FutureThink projected an increase of 578 middle school students between 2013 and 2023 across the entire Williamsburg-James City County area. Attached to this memorandum is the final map created by the joint planners (City and County).

- The map shows areas of approved development by the City and County Planning Departments. Staff analyzed past development trends for each yellow area for the past 10 years to make an assumption about how many new residential units would be anticipated in each neighborhood in the next 10 years. Most areas were assumed to reach build-out during this time frame.
- Staff used typical per unit student generation rates to determine how many middle school students could be anticipated from each of these developments. This accounted for 282 (or 49%) of the 578 students projected by FutureThink.
- The known developing neighborhoods were geographically grouped. The blue circles on the map show the approximate location of anticipated new middle school students and the size of the circle represents the relative number of students. The projected number of new middle school students represented by each circle is in the adjacent blue box.
- The remaining unallocated 296 students remaining in FutureThink’s projection will come as a result of either by-right development projects that staff is not currently aware of or through changing family composition in existing neighborhoods. It is not possible to know exactly where these 296 students will come from geographically, but in general, County Planning staff expects **about 75% of them (or 222 students) to come from within the red oval on the map.** This assumption is based on what staff knows about development potential and current trends and generally aligns with the County’s Primary Service Area (public utility boundary).
- The red oval also represents the boundary where 65% of the middle school students generated by known developing neighborhoods are anticipated (or 184 students).

Summary Table:

	# of MS students	% of total FutureThink projection*	% of students assigned to known developments**
# Assigned to Known Developments	282	48.7	100.0
Berkeley MS	61	10.5	21.6
Hornsby MS	109	18.8	38.6
Toano MS	112	19.4	39.7

**Out of 578 middle school students*

***Out of 282 middle school students*

Given the information from this study, the Superintendent recommends that the Blair site be returned to use as a middle school.

Future Middle School Program and Learning Needs Considerations

The vast majority of discussion thus far about a new middle school has been focused on building and design. While these topics are completely appropriate, it is important to not forget the need for program design as a driver for building design. Included in the Middle School Committee Report was language about learning needs and design support. From the Middle School Report:

Future Learning Needs and Building Design

The following key concepts were foundational to the committee decision-making process.

- 1. Flexibility in Design:** *The future learning needs of students should inform the decision on how to increase capacity at the middle school level and on the design of future school buildings. Buildings need to be designed with enough flexibility to meet the ever-changing trends in instruction and learning and incorporate 21st Century skills. For example, technology should be incorporated into all learning spaces; learning environments should support active and project-based learning; individualized and student-centered learning should be emphasized; spaces should allow for flexibility in instructional delivery and size of student grouping; and, design, systems and furniture should support the concepts of change and flexibility. Future designs should be flexible enough to support organization by department or grade-level teams, interdisciplinary grouping, smaller learning communities, school-within-a-school concepts or thematic or project-based learning. Flexibility rather than specificity will allow WJCC to meet the future learning needs of students.*
- 2. Sustainability:** *Future-proofing of schools includes incorporating “green” design elements that impact learning such as natural light, air quality and temperature control.*

Program and Learning Needs Considerations

Discussions about the use of a future middle school as a specialty school or school that develops a specific college or career pathway have been ongoing, but limited. The Division Strategic Plan points us toward the notion of personalized learning and flexibility in learning. Personalized learning at the building level promotes the concept of a specialty school or a school that has an academic theme such as a STEM school or International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme.

Ensuring that we have a school that can sustain our programmatic efforts is important. Our future goals of personalized learning at the high school level – including program strands and diploma pathways, industry certifications, global diplomas, dual-enrollment, alternative programs, and on-line and blended learning, just to name a few – will have their start in the program design of middle schools.

As deliberations about the new middle school move forward, it is important that program design and capacity influence the final decision.

Middle School Options

The administration is putting forth two middle school options for discussion and consideration. Attached to this memorandum is a one-page overview of each of those options.

Option A: 925-950 Student Facility at the Blair Site

This option is the preferred option of the Middle School Committee and was presented to the School Board in November 2013. The size of the middle school ensures that middle school student housing is accounted for beyond present enrollment projections through 2024. While it was originally recommended to the School Board that the present building be completely razed and a new building be put in its place, the attached document reminds the board of the cost variance between new versus modernization of the present building.

Option B: 650 Student Facility with Future Expansion Option (Phased-In Approach)

Option B, a phased-in approach, allows a present cost containment of either constructing new or modernizing the present building to fall far below cost estimates of option A and plans for the potential expansion of the building in either 2024 or 2025. This option, in addition to containing costs today, allows for enrollment growth to be tracked and studied closer to the time more capacity is expected to be needed. However, it does have the division looking at expansion approximately 4 years after the opening of a new 650-seat middle school.

This option was discussed and considered by the Middle School Committee, but was not advanced as it was not a long-term solution to student facility and capacity needs within the Division.

Future Capacity by Middle School Option

Option A (925-950 Student Facility) allows for enrollment increases beyond the 10-year period captured in present enrollment projections. Considering the projections as they stand today, in 2024, if this option were taken, capacity would be at approximately 88%.

Option B (650 Student Facility, Phased-In Approach) allows for growth between the opening (approximately 2018) through 2024. It is projected that if this option were chosen, 2024 capacity would be at approximately 97% which would warrant future facility expansion.

Central Office Facility

In January 2013, the County convened a committee to determine the future location of a Central Office with a goal of returning the James Blair site to a middle school. During these meetings, the County directed school division staff to look for either buildings for sale or property for sale that would be suitable for the school division headquarters. In addition to these requests, the County asked the school division to evaluate a piece of property, adjacent to the Courthouse, presently owned by both the City and the County.

The school division did its due diligence to investigate options and provide information. During scheduled Liaison meetings, school division staff discussed options as requested. It was determined that an office building suitable for use by the School Division Central Office staff and the School Board could be constructed on land already owned by the City-County.

In September 2013, alternatives were presented to the School Board based upon non-binding, building only estimates of approximately \$8.5 million. In October 2013, the project was put on hold pending the outcome of the middle school site selection. Given the outcome of the enrollment projections and other data already delivered, the Superintendent recommends that a Central Office/School Board Complex be constructed on the land identified as owned jointly by the City-County.

Time Line

Each of the options listed in the memorandum have a timeline for planning and construction attached.

Conclusion

The options presented in the memorandum are designed to help the School Board in their own deliberations and in future deliberations with governing bodies as to the decisions regarding a Middle School and the Central Office facility. From these discussions, a final recommendation for the proposed Middle School can be included in the final deliberations and Board vote on the FY2015 budget.