

# GRADE CONFIGURATION

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Recommendations to the Board of Education  
Sept. 14, 2017



# Grade Configuration Steering Committee

- Phase 1
  - May 2015
    - Grades 6-8 is the ideal middle school configuration
    - Third middle school for September 2017
      - Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence
- Phase 2
  - Committee Co-Chairs:
    - Lesley Buff, Principal, New Albany Academy
    - Lisa Angerame, Communications Specialists
    - Tim Fowler, Interim Director Pupil Services
  - Dr. James Butterworth, CASDA, Facilitator
  - Committee Work (snapshot)
    - Enrollment and demographics
    - Facilities and timelines
    - Special populations
    - Research on urban schools
    - Discussion of pros and cons of location options
    - Enrollment projections

# Recommendations for consideration

- The district should operate four middle schools to accommodate increased student enrollment in grades 6-8
- The four middle schools should be housed in existing district buildings (two potential scenarios offered)
- All four middle schools should be enrolled using a formula that evenly spreads higher-, medium- and lower-performing schools across the schools



# Scenario 1

## Recommended as first choice by 76% of committee

- Convert Arbor Hill Elementary School into a 500-student middle school; keep O'Neal Middle School as a 500-student middle school and keep Hackett and Myers as 650-student middle schools
- Projected cost *without* state aid: \$28 million
  - Arbor Hill ES renovation to a middle school
  - Expansion at North Albany Academy
- Pros:
  - Can meet current and projected enrollment
  - Allows all sixth grades to move to middle school
  - Better balance in size will allow equity
  - Voter-approved renovations creating O'Neal Middle School would not be wasted.
- Cons: Proximity between O'Neal and Arbor Hill may pose security challenge if students dismiss at same time
- Estimated timeline: 3-4 year project
- Considerations:
  - Relocation of Arbor Hill ES students (North Albany Academy)
  - Relocation of Albany International Center

# Scenario 2

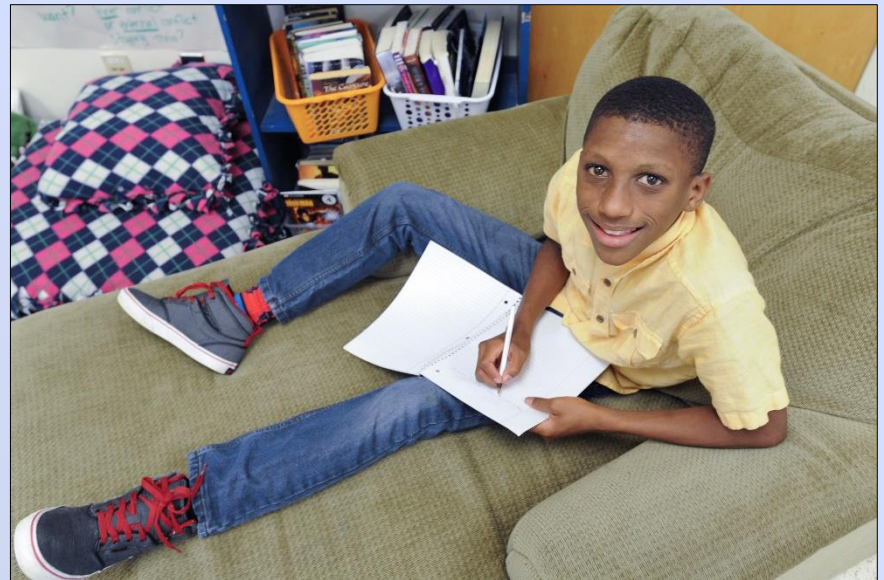
## Second choice among remaining scenarios for 66% of committee

- Convert Arbor Hill Elementary and North Albany Academy to middle schools (650 and 350 respectively); keep Hackett and Myers as 650-student middle schools. Convert O'Neal to elementary school.
- Projected cost *without* state aid: \$36 million (Arbor Hill and NAA renovation only)
- Pros:
  - Can meet current and projected enrollment needs for grades 6-8
  - Distance between Arbor Hill and North Albany Academy may help alleviate neighborhood security concerns at dismissal
  - Arbor Hill has green space
- Cons:
  - Most expensive plan
  - Difficult to achieve equity in practice with significant size differences among the schools
  - There is no space at O'Neal to build a playground for elementary students
  - Wasteful to convert O'Neal to an elementary school after voters just approved plans to convert it to a middle school
- Estimated timeline: 3-4 years
- Considerations:
  - Relocation of Arbor Hill ES students
  - Relocation of North Albany Academy students



# Enrollment methodology

- Committee considered four options:
  - Enrollment pattern based on elementary school performance (**recommendation by almost unanimous consent**)
  - Neighborhood enrollment
  - Lottery
    - Random
    - Designed so that siblings and/or students that live close to a school would be chosen first in the lottery
  - Open enrollment



# Enrollment methodology recommendations

- District administrators should design a middle-school enrollment pattern with a formula that spreads higher-, medium- and lower-performing elementary schools across the four middle schools
- “Feeder” pattern should result in an equitable enrollment structure that is the least disruptive overall
- Pros:
  - Can achieve balance among schools that is more reflective of the district as a whole
  - Model used to successfully enroll Hackett and Myers with relatively balanced student bodies
  - Allows students to retain elementary peer groups while advancing to middle school, increasing student and parent/guardian comfort
- Cons:
  - Families may not be geographically close to their child’s school, creating a disadvantage for some
  - Feeder pattern would need to change if elementary school’s performance changed dramatically

# Summary of recommendations

- The district should operate four middle schools to accommodate increased student enrollment in grades 6-8
- The four middle schools should be housed in existing district buildings as described in Scenario 1
- All four middle schools should be enrolled using a formula that evenly spreads higher-, medium- and lower-performing schools across the schools (“feeder” enrollment patterns)



# Next steps for Board of Education

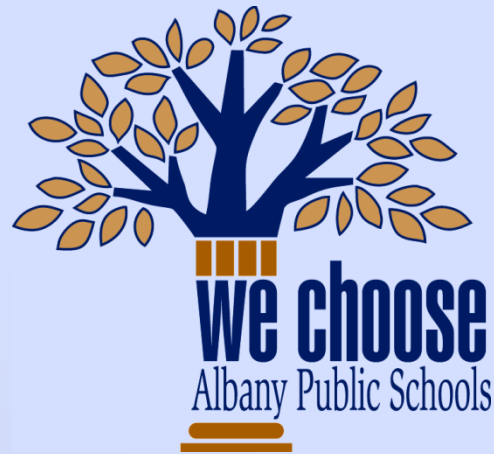
- Review committee recommendations
- Vote on the following:
  - Recommended number of middle schools
  - Location of middle schools
  - Enrollment methodology



# Next steps for staff

- Create a timeline for a referendum vote
- Review and analyze up-to-date enrollment data
- Determine and finalize enrollment based on board-approved enrollment methodology





# Questions