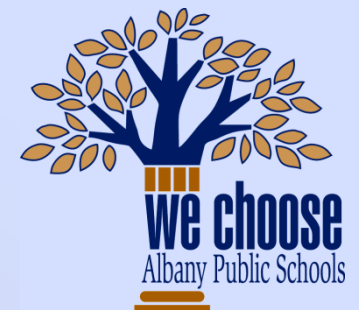


GRADE CONFIGURATION

Sept. 26, 2016



Grade Configuration Steering Committee

- Charged with studying existing elementary and middle-school grade configuration and recommending short- and long-term enrollment and facilities options
- Committee work:
 - Phase I – September 2015-August 2016
 - Phase II – September 2016-June 2017
- Phase I committee charge:
 - Formally recommend a location for a third middle school to begin serving students in September 2017 with an interim short-term enrollment pattern



Why change grade configuration?

- Too many students, not enough space
 - A fall 2015 demographic study commissioned by the school district predicted that by 2025-26 there will be 425 more students in grades 6-8 than there are today (currently approximately 1,984)
- Existing middle schools already are full or almost full
 - Hackett Middle School (6-8): built for 650; current enrollment 611 (could not accommodate current TOAST sixth grade)
 - Myers Middle School (6-8): built for 650; current enrollment 693
 - North Albany Academy (Pre-K-8): built for 450; current enrollment 434
 - West Hill Middle School: a temporary middle school (grades 7-8 this year) located in a former charter school; the district does not own the building and the building does not meet state regulations for classroom size

What the Phase 1 committee studied

- Three subcommittees:
 - Equitable Program Opportunities and Access
 - Facilities
 - Grade Configuration
- Equitable Program Opportunities and Access:
 - Enrollment procedures and attendance zones
 - Enhancing programs in schools with the greatest challenges
 - Making educational experience consistent across the district
 - Minimizing transitions for special education students
- Facilities:
 - Capacity of district schools
 - Non-district buildings that could be potential middle schools
 - District schools that could be potential middle schools
- Grade Configuration – pros and cons of different configurations:
 - A centralized prekindergarten center
 - Schools divided into prekindergarten-grade 2 and grades 3-5
 - Additional prekindergarten-8 schools
 - Single-grade schools for grades 6, 7 and 8
 - A “newcomer” school for newly arrived international students

Phase 1 committee recommendations

- Grades 6-8 is the ideal middle-school configuration.
- The district needs a third middle school for September 2017 to accommodate growing middle-school enrollment.
- 50 North Lark Street, the location of the current Alternative Learning Center, is the most ideal facility to meet the district's short-term middle-school enrollment needs beginning in September 2017.
 - The Board of Education approved this recommendation Sept. 1; the school will have a temporary enrollment pattern beginning with the 2017-18 school year.
- Transparency and ongoing communication with the school community and families throughout the process are priorities.

Data driving Phase 1 conclusions

- Current sixth-grade experience varies depending on the school.
 - About half the students stay in elementary school and half go to middle school.
 - The school day for sixth-graders in elementary school is a half-hour shorter than the school day for sixth-graders in middle school. Over one school year, sixth-graders in elementary school have 13 fewer school days, or more than 2½ weeks less school, than sixth-graders in middle school.
 - Some elementary sixth-graders have the same teacher the entire day. Some switch for math and English. Others do more.
 - Middle-school teachers are certified in specific content areas; elementary school teachers are certified in elementary education.
- Student referral data indicate that students who move up in seventh grade experience more transition issues than students who move up in sixth grade.
- Sixth grades in middle schools may alleviate many (but not all) of the space issues in elementary schools.

Sites the committee considered

- Arbor Hill Elementary School
- North Albany Academy
- West Hill Middle School
- 50 North Lark Street (Alternative Learning Center building)



The choice: 50 North Lark Street

- The building:
 - Capacity: 450-600
 - Former site of New Covenant Charter School, which began as a K-8 school serving roughly 800. The state closed the 7-8 portion of the school and its enrollment decreased to about 600; state closed the entire school permanently in 2010.
 - Current site of the Alternative Learning Center; ALC programs will be relocated for 2017-18
 - A referendum will be held in the coming months on renovations that would provide equitable middle-school facilities at 50 North Lark for 2017-18
- Who will attend 50 North Lark?
 - District staff identified an interim 6-8 enrollment pattern:
 - Arbor Hill Elementary (current fifth- and sixth-graders)
 - North Albany Academy (current fifth-, sixth- and seventh-graders)
 - Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy (current fifth-graders)
 - Sheridan Preparatory Academy (current fifth-graders)
 - West Hill Middle School (current seventh-graders)

Phase 2: Moving forward

- Charge: Develop recommendations about the district's long-term middle-school enrollment structure





Questions