

BAINBRIDGE ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 303
School Configuration Committee
Meeting Minutes

Date: November 7, 2012
Place: Board Room – Commodore Campus
Time: 5:30 – 7:30 PM

Welcome and Update

Superintendent Faith Chapel welcomed committee members, followed by individual introductions around the table. Ms. Chapel noted the bulk of the session would be discussion around grade configuration, based on the study materials provided at the last meeting. (Committee members were given several articles related to grade level configuration to review at the October 17th meeting. Those articles included: a) K-8 or Not? – *Reconfiguring the Middle Grades* by Paul S. George; b) Grade Configurations for Educating Young Adolescents are Still Crazy After All These Years by Hayes Mizell; c) Study Raises Doubts on K-8: *JHU Research Finds No Academic Benefit Over Middle Schools, Undercuts City’s Push* by Liz Bowie; d) How Effective are K-8 Schools for Young Adolescents? by C. Kenneth McEwin, Thomas S. Dickinson, and Michael G. Jacobson.)

Small Group Discussions

Members were divided into four small discussion groups facilitated by Peter Bang-Knudsen (Group 1), Tamela Van Winkle (Group 2), Mike Florian (Group 3), and Melinda Reynvaan (Group 4). Each small group was asked to talk about the research on grade configuration that included a variety of grade groupings, as well as the district’s current grade level configurations. Using a discussion guide provided to individuals, folks were asked to discuss the pros and cons of each grade configuration scenario. It was noted that most of the examples provided in the study materials were in the K-8 grade levels. Prior to the small group work, Ms. Chapel distributed information about the current grades K-8 educational programs offered in the district. Current district grade configurations include: Grades K-4; Grades 5-6; and Grades 7-8. The small groups were given 45 minutes for discussion.

Large Group Discussion

Following the small group discussions, folks moved back into the large group setting to share discussion results. Mr. Bang-Knudsen shared discussion results from Group 1, stating the “pros” for the K-8 configuration included: minimizing transitions, creating a sense of community; and establishing relationships. In terms of the “cons,” there could be some impact on the ability to teach upper level math and science classes, and the transition to high school could be harder for students having attended one school through their educational career. Mr. Corsetti spoke for Group 2, stating the K-8 configuration could mean fewer electives, which could be a pro or con. This group talked about the experience of a change to K-8 in the Boston schools, and concluded that configuration didn’t matter as much as having the right people in the right positions. Mr. Richard talked about Group 3’s discussion with similar outcomes as the other groups. One additional item was the facility needs for a K-8 configuration such as restrooms and science classrooms. Group 4’s spokesperson, Ms. Reynvaan, noted similar discussion pros and cons as the others, including the goal of “insulating” students in the K-8 configuration. She added there was the potential of a divided faculty with this grade level configuration. Other small group discussion conclusions related to other grade configurations were: K-5/ 6-8: (pros) middle school is the best configuration when possible for social and academic outcomes; provides a better transition to 9th grade; more rigorous/specialized academics; K-5 provides one more year of preparation for middle school. K-5/6-8: (cons) parental involvement drops off; big difference between grade 6 and grade 8 developmentally; can be poorly implemented if there is no teaming/common planning; major facilities impact. K-4/5-8: (pros) Fewer transitions; no change in elementary mode would be necessary. K-4/5-8:

(cons) too big – lose the benefits; too broad an age band developmentally between 5 – 8; awkward transition time. District’s current model: (pros) status quo; “twens” Sakai model addresses current needs; (cons) Special education issues – challenging for transitions; 50% of student are transitioning every year; curriculum is usually K-5, then 6-8. Other ideas: K-6 Elementary & 7-8 Middle School (pros) socially keeping students in elementary/neighborhood school; maintaining staff & family ties; fewer transitions. (cons) band involvement – when would it start; academics – can a K-6 support more academic rigor required for 6th grade; facilities might be a challenge (science classrooms).

Current Educational Program & Facilities

Ms. Chapel explained the two drivers of the committee’s challenge are district demographics and economic impacts. It was noted that due to the recent Supreme Court ruling in the McCleary lawsuit, significant reductions in state allocations for K-12 education are not anticipated. It will also be interesting to see what the upcoming legislative session will bring related to K-12 General Fund allocations. Ms. Chapel also reiterated there is no set plan for the educational programs in the district – it is totally a community decision. Committee will include review of demographic data and district facility information.

Committee members were given grade configuration comparison data for Fall 2012 for demographically similar school districts including Bellevue, Camas, Issaquah, Lake Washington, and Mercer Island. Configuration data was also included from neighboring school districts in Kitsap County including Bremerton, Central Kitsap, North Kitsap, and South Kitsap. Ms. Chapel distributed Lake Washington School District’s FAQ related to their recent school configuration change. Lake Washington moved from a grade K-6 elementary, 7-9 junior high, and 10-12 high school system, to grades K-5 elementary, grades 6-8 middle school, and grades 9 – 12 high school system. Ms. Chapel also noted a conversation with the superintendent of Mercer Island about our district’s grade 5-6 school. Mercer Island is also looking at a variety of grade level configurations and facility needs. The committee reviewed the data from the Kitsap County school districts. It was noted Central Kitsap is currently engaged in a discussion about configuration, and they recently closed 2 elementary schools. Six years ago, North Kitsap moved to a Gr. K-5, Gr. 6-8, and Gr. 9-12 model.

Director of Facilities and Capital Projects Tamela Van Winkle provided an overview of the current district facilities and the programs offered within those buildings. The current configuration of schools in the district includes: three elementary schools – grades K-4; one intermediate school – grades 5-6; one middle school – grades 7-8; one high school – grades 9-12; and an options school – grades K-12. It was noted facility usage varies depending on program needs. Floor plans for each of the schools was included in the presentation. As the group reviewed the schematics for each school, Ms. Van Winkle used the differences between Ordway and the new Wilkes Elementary School as an example of how careful planning can anticipate future needs by including infrastructure for possible expansion. The initial facilities information was provided as a precursor to the larger discussion related to facilities scheduled for the November 28th committee meeting. Committee members were asked to study the information and come to the next meeting with questions and comments.

Next Meetings:

November 28
December 12
January 16 & 30
February 13 & 27
March 13 & 27
April 17
May 8 & 22