

# **Monroe County Community Schools Corporation Secondary Schools Realignment Task Force September 20, 2005**

On behalf of the entire Realignment Committee, the co-facilitators would like to thank the MCCSC School Board for the opportunity to be part of the challenging process of realignment for our middle and high schools. Starting with our first meeting on May 19 last spring, the committee has met six times representing a total "person-hour" investment of roughly 250 hours. In addition, the co-facilitators met six times on their own and communicated extensively via email, committing another 100 hours of work to this effort. The committee could not have been successful without the help of John Carter and Mike Shipman. Their expertise has been invaluable, and their professionalism helped make our meetings smooth and productive. Their computer skills, school knowledge and expertise have been invaluable. The task presented was a large one. However, after a great deal of discussion, debate, research, suggestions and ideas, the group has reached an agreement around the current proposal.

## **PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES**

Dr. Maloy's original charge was to "Look at secondary school realignment options and bring recommendations to the School Board that will keep large groups of children together as they move from elementary to middle school to high school and in that process, see a better balance in high school enrollment". As the process unfolded, it became obvious that there were some changes needed to adjust for elementary realignment changes that carried over to middle and high schools. In addition, there were some issues that needed to be addressed with regard to the flow of students from elementary to middle to high school. As a committee, we attempted to take a forward looking approach to this task; taking into account future housing developments and which school populations would continue to grow. However, we realize that we cannot predict the future. Our primary objective was to relieve immediate over crowding problems, leave some room to grow at most of the schools and leave extra room at schools where we predict more growth will occur. This suggested realignment is designed to benefit the entire corporation. While some individual changes move more students than others they should be looked at as an overall solution to the problems posed.

## **OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Early in our deliberations, the task force agreed to a set of core principles that would guide our decision making. We list alphabetically and briefly explain these principles below.

Consider reasonable split – try to keep large groups of students together as they move from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school.

Current Neighborhood vs. Future Neighborhood

- Consider each section separately: maximum impact-minimum moves
- Optimal number for each school may be different
- Some schools may need low enrollment to allow for growth
- Adjust capacity depending on potential for new building

Data Driven or Facts Driven Process

Parents Voices To Be Heard Along The Way

- Keep people informed
- Create an e-mail link on the MCCSC web site for people to ask questions, share comments, etc. The questions would be brought to the Task Force and responses posted on the site.

Socio-Economic Diversity Within a School May Be Considered A Factor When Appropriate

Task Force Must Consider Neighborhoods That May Not Come Forward To Represent Themselves

- Task Force members concerned for good of all
- Liaison with home school(s)

Transportation: Student Time ... Parent Time ... Financial Impact

- Consider creating routes on roads that have been upgraded (not currently used) in order to shorten bus rides to a school that is geographically closer to students.

Try to Keep Neighborhoods Together

- Whenever possible, keep defined subdivisions together
- Look for natural flow

The committee had to accept that some conflicts in principles would occur. For example, it was not always possible to address acceptable enrollment levels while allowing everyone to attend the school closest to their home. At times, it was also difficult to find the optimum number of students to move without affecting school flow.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

The first task was to review any issues caused by the elementary realignment. After that the committee considered more than seven possible scenarios for realignment. These scenarios included options that split elementary schools and split one, two or all three middle schools. The committee also generated some "givens" with regard to school flow based on geography.

The broad theme of our recommendation is to allow for a flow of large groups of students as they move from elementary to middle school to high school. Since there are three middle schools feeding two high schools, it became clear that at least one middle school would have to split as students flowed to high school. Two middle schools combined flowing together would overcrowd the either of the two high schools. This task was complicated by the fact that two of the three middle school are located in close proximity of each other in the southern part of the school district and lie within close proximity of Bloomington South High School. The specifics of our recommendations are contained on a separate handout.

The tentative plan for moving forward with this process includes the following:

- Incorporating Board feedback
- Two public meetings at different schools to solicit public input (a third public meeting will be held if deemed appropriate by the board)
- Returning to the board with final recommendations.

We anticipate completing the process by the beginning of November.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to help with this most important issue.