
District Planning Update 2-7-19

Westport School District Outreach Message <Connect-ED@westportps.org>
Reply-To: Connect-ED@westportps.org

Thu, Feb 7, 2019 at 2:14 PM



WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Families of Westport Students,

Last evening, the BoF voted to fund \$1M for portables at BMS. This evening the BoE will have its request for funding portables on the RTM agenda. The RTM is the final stop for authorization on any Town funding, and may accept or modify the request sent forth from the BoF.

A few questions have come forth since the meeting last night:

Is it accurate that the BoE and Town have now engaged in efforts to bring CMS back on line as a school?

Yes, while KG&D proposed total replacement of the exterior walls, the Peer Review and CMS Task Force have recommended addressing the walls, but not total replacement. All three sets of experts indicate that beyond the exterior walls, there is a need for a new HVAC ASAP, and the windows and roof are approaching the end of their useful life and need to be replaced in the next few years. The BoE and Town are working in partnership to move this work forward as quickly as possible.

What are the timelines for bringing CMS back on line?

If the work moves ahead on a fast-track basis, it is very reasonable that a significant body of remediation can be accomplished by fall 2020, allowing the use of the school while some further work continues at the school. It is not unusual to have a school open while managing some construction projects appropriately. The costs of work will most likely range from \$20M to \$35M, but that higher amount includes all exterior wall replacement. All of this work has to be designed and cost out for more accurate fiscal projections, but for the scope of work before us, it is reasonable to assume \$20M+.

What is the difference from the approach of fast-track and seeking State reimbursement?

If the Town opts for fast-track, it can move the project forward immediately, but forego the State reimbursement of 20.71%. If it sought this reimbursement on the project, it would take at least another year for the process. Fast-track has a target of fall 2020, and State reimbursement would mean the Town would get \$4M-5M, but we would be out of the school for at least another year. Given the urgency to get back in the school, the BoF expressed much support of fast-track approach last evening, and foregoing State reimbursement.

What are the estimated costs for portables?

The cost must be bid for both the K-6 and 6-8 options. However, using the bids numbers for

portables from last fall, estimates for the K-6 model would be approximately \$2.76M, but reimbursement could bring down costs to \$2.2M to the Town. Costs for BMS portables are estimated at \$917k, with a reimbursement of \$190K for overall cost of \$728k. However, last evening the BoF provided feedback to the BoE to consider fast-tracking the portables as well, if it means that it greatly reduces the risk of getting them installed on time.

What would BMS look like with 6-8 students housed there next year?

- Approximately 1,300 students and 200 staff would be at BMS.
- All core and encore courses would be offered in a 9-period schedule.
- Six portables would be added to help with space.
- All grade 6, 7, and 8 students would be scheduled at individual cohorts - all grade 6 together, etc. It is not possible to schedule BMS and CMS as separate schools with the space constraints or to keep grade 6 students separate from the general school population.

What would K-6 look like with students housed there next year?

- Grade 6 collaborative teams would be located at each elementary school with four core teachers and a designated SPED teacher.
- All core and encore courses would be offered in a schedule similar to current schedule this year.
- 14 portables would be used as follows: CES (3), SES (2), LLS (4), GFS (2), and KHS (3).
- Our grade 5 students are known by the current elementary professionals already and could have a more supportive transition to grade 6.
- All students in the District remain in their current schools next year, except the current grade 8 BMS students that move to the high school.

These are thumbnail sketches of these plans, and I attach two documents that provide further information to our families. Both of these plans are viable, and no matter what the approach, our entire WPS team will implement with fidelity and high quality.

Educationally, I stand behind the K-6 model as the preferred educational model for the entire District, but costs of the 14 modulars require more funding than the other model, and the time frame for getting back into CMS has now been shortened that creates additional scrutiny on those costs. There are many pros and cons of each model, but in weighing what has the greatest benefit for both our grade 6 students and maintaining the high standards of academic integrity for BMS grades 7 and 8, I believe that the K-6 approach achieves this.

We are one District, and we need to have a balanced approach to support the best interests of all students.

If you have feedback you would like to provide to the RTM before they consider this evening, please send their way today at rmmailinglist@westportct.gov.

I realize that these past few months have tested our District and our community in every way. As we are now able to clarify options for the future, our Westport Board of Education and our entire team of WPS professionals look forward to working together with our Town to be an eight-school District again soon.

Sincerely,
Colleen Palmer

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File attachments:

[K-6 Model Progress 2-3-19.pdf](#)

[Presentation_ Proposed Combined Middle School Model.pdf](#)