

What will the schedule look like?

The school day will be very similar to the current schedule of BMS. The shift will be from 8 periods of 42 minutes, 30 minute lunch, and 12 minute homeroom, next year will have 9 equal length periods of 41 minutes (including a 41-minute lunch), and a 9-minute homeroom. The proposed passing time next year is 3 minutes, but this is still under review by the administrative team before being finalized. We know that students getting to class on time this year has been a concern for some, and we want to avoid that stress on our students.

What will the start and end time be for middle school? Will classes be scheduled as they are this year?

Start and end times will remain the same. The schedule will mirror the format of this year with the minor shifts to make lunch a longer period. (Note: Having lunch a longer period allows us to use our classrooms 9 times a day.)

Will it be as challenging for students to get to class next year?

No, it should be much improved in that as much as possible, each team is scheduled in classrooms that are located near each other. This will greatly lessen the number of students traveling from one end of the building to the other during passing time and reduce hallway traffic. (Note: Proposed room assignments by team are included on attached schedule.)

Will the two schools be merged in terms of students in classes?

Yes, both CMS and BMS students will be included as one large cohort for scheduling purposes, but the administrators will take time to make sure that every student has some students they know on each team.

What will the class size typically be?

At the middle school level, we aim for classes of 25 students for both core and encore. There may be some smaller and a few larger depending on specifics of how students select math, world language, and music options.

How will the combination of CMS and BMS affect class sizes?

If students remained at CMS, the class sizes would have been the same as at the combined schools, adjusted to the target of 25 this year. BMS has always trended toward classes of 25. The merger of the schools will not impact class size next year.

How will the integration of students look like on teams, with teachers, for lockers, lunch waves, etc.

Teams will be balanced as much as possible, but BMS is much larger than CMS so there will be more BMS students on each team. Lockers, computers, and other resources will be shared equally. Lockers will be assigned near students' homerooms as much as possible. With the downsizing of six teachers at the middle school level for decreased enrollment, there will be some shifts in teacher assignments. The goal will be to ensure that every student feels welcomed and nurtured by his/her team of teachers - no matter what school they attended when the schools were separate.

Will the pod structure stay in place to ensure that students continue to feel that they are part of a smaller group within BMS?

The pod classrooms will be provided to grade 6 and 7 students mostly. Grade 8 students will not have a pod, but travel more in the school. The intent was to provide more of a smaller community with the pod facility to the younger students.

Can pods be formed based on school zoning lines?

No, all students will be scheduled as one school. If we tried to separate the students there would be greater fluctuations in class size and lack of efficiency with teachers and facilities. The middle school joint administration has advocated for the "one" school concept to promote a positive culture in the school by all identifying with one school for the year.

Will there be scheduled "introduction/ice breaker" events at the beginning of the school year for children to get to know one another?

Absolutely, there will be a series of activities for both students and parents to become comfortable with the school.

How will P.E. classes be managed? Is there enough space in the gym to have all P.E. classes in the gym?

With the 9-period schedule and having the students scheduled as a cohort for each grade, all P.E. classes can be scheduled appropriately.

Are there supports in place to help students who might need some additional academic assistance?

Yes, there is a cadre of professionals who provide intervention for students who need additional assistance.

How will guidance counselors provide services?

Every effort will be made to maintain the same counselor with the same students, especially where there is a strong relationship that already exists.

Will other support staff be added?

Yes, beyond the current BMS and CMS support staff, the proposed budget for next year includes another school psychologist and an additional support personnel (e.g. counselor, social worker, etc.) The administrative team is reviewing all resources to ascertain the exact role of this second person.

What about administrators? Will there be administrators from both schools?

There will be six building administrators to support our students, representing both schools.

Are we losing a lot of staff due to 6-8 model? The rumor is the district is cutting 18 staff members due to 6-8 model.

We are mainly downsizing our staff due to enrollment decreases. The 6-8 model has less significant impact on staffing. The 6-8 model has a reduction of a library media specialist, some custodial and secretarial support, and reduction of a health aid.

Will we lose administrator talent?

No, while there will be one less middle school administrator position, we have an open administrator position in our District and will be working with our union to create a way to maintain all administrators.

Will you maintain the headcount of nurses?

Yes we will.

What can/will be done to help teachers manage without their own classrooms?

With more time to plan, and modular classrooms to support space needs, we have time and additional space to accommodate. We also will be creating some internal spaces in the school for teacher work and phone calls.

Will special consideration be given to the integration of BMS and CMS 7th grade girls? How will you ensure their social and emotional well-being during this tenuous time of development?

The school will have all of the current counselors and school psychologists, as well as two new staff members next year. The support team will plan thoughtfully for these needs and be on hand during the year.

How will the school help prevent students from getting lost in the crowd? How can the school foster nurturing relationships with teachers in small group environments? How can the school prevent anonymity and the anxiety and other social emotional outcomes this can cause?

The small teaming structure is an intimate community within a larger school setting. Every student will be known by his/her team teachers as a foundational support. Our entire team of professionals will be working on ensuring each child feels safe and secure in this environment.

If the plan is to reopen CMS in September 2020, would it make sense to keep CMS and BMS contingents separate for grade level events such as play, field trips, grade level breakfasts, and graduation to retain a sense of individual school community and thus make the transition back to CMS easier?

The plan for next year is to have all students participate in the same activities, but knowing that we may need to expand offerings in some areas. We are only allowed to have one Science Olympiad team per school, so we will be researching additional science opportunities.

How can you create a cohesive community environment? How can you ensure that teachers, parents, and students do not treat CMS students as visitors or second class citizens?

The idea that the school is scheduled as one school will go a long way to erode those lines of division. These are all Westport students and have equal rights to this facility - our administrative team continues to work on this during the current year and feels that having students scheduled as one cohort per grade will create a more cohesive environment.

How will space be allocated for SPED?

Dr. Tina Mannarino, Assistant Supt. for Pupil Personnel Services, is working with the school SPED specialists to ensure that proper space is planned for next year.

What are they going to do about the noise level in the building and crowding going from classroom to classroom?

Having additional students and staff in the facility does result in more noise during passing times and in open common areas before and after school. Reducing the volume of more people talking will be a challenge, but our goal will also be to identify some quiet areas for students and staff in the building who might enjoy some time away from the crowds, as appropriate. With the time to better schedule teams into rooms located near each other, this should help reduce some hallway traffic.

Will there be adequate and appropriately placed and sized lockers for all students?

We will install 150 more lockers beyond the 300 which were installed this year. The additional 450 lockers are not as large as the original lockers in the school. Lockers will be assigned by team, so both CMS and BMS will share in the old and new locker assignments.

What classes will be in the portables?

All core classes will be housed inside the main building. Some encore classes and other school functions will be in the portables.

What is the back up plan if the portables are not obtained on time?

We would be able to use the open pod areas as classrooms until the portables were installed. We do not expect there to be a delay.

Will there be extra security measures taken given the amount of students all in one location?

Typically, BMS operates with one security personnel. This year we have two, and next year we have requested an additional security person to make a total of three. These individuals will monitor the interior and exterior of the school, especially near the portables. Additionally, security cameras are being installed in the school for another layer of safety.

Can you monitor the bathrooms for vaping and other risky behavior?

Our school administrators work with our staff to monitor the bathrooms.

How will safety concerns in the parking lot be solved?

We will need to limit parking for SHS students next year and reserve more parking for parents.

In a school with 1,300 students, how will the district ensure that each student's needs are assessed? I was under the impression that the State of Connecticut is increasingly moving toward a model of personalized learning, but I wonder how can this be achieved in an environment with so many students in one facility?

It is our goal as a professional team dedicated to your children's welfare to do everything possible to support a great, productive year next year. We are all cognizant that the pressures on the facility are real, but we are committed to work with each student and to make sure that every student has a supportive, positive experience. It is important that parents keep lines of communication open with the school and let us know if they have any concerns.

Will middle school teachers still have morning office hours?

Yes.

Will the educational curriculum be the same as in previous years or will the children forgo certain experiences/ classes etc due to this town wide merge?

The curriculum will be the same.

I know that we typically pay a lot of attention to the incoming 6th graders, as this is the most vulnerable group. But I hope that measures are being taken to pay attention to the 7th graders, who will be experiencing what has traditionally been a very challenging year socially, and to the 8th graders, who will be experiencing a challenging year academically, as they start to feel the pressure of Staples weighing upon them. Also keep in mind that grades for 8th grade Math and Foreign Language will appear on college transcripts, so even though 8th graders may appear to be the most resilient/least vulnerable, they are not.

Yes, all important points - every student matters. We will keep our eyes on the progress of every student.

Will we be able to retain the vast level of clubs and offerings that BMS and CMS has offered pre-merger?

Yes.

How many lunch waves will there be and will all kids eat at reasonable times?

Please see attached schedule for lunch waves and times. Like many schools, students who eat early or later in the day are afforded opportunities to snack during the day. Currently the model had most lunch waves with one grade, but we are still trying to adjust a lunch wave that would have two grades.

How will the food/line wait times be resolved in the lunchroom?

We will continue to work with Chartwells, but with longer lunch periods of 41 minutes there should be plenty of time for all to purchase and eat lunch.

Will Workshop have a classroom and be moved out from under the stairs?

Yes.

Will there be a change in the bus schedule? Will all schools still be able to start at their current start time?

With all middle school students at one school, there will be new bus routes created for the entire school which should be more efficient than this year with the two sets of routes. All middle school students will ride the same buses together.

How will BMS handle incoming and outgoing traffic? What accommodations will be made so that the school can hold all those students and the parents can drop kids early at school for extra help without terrible traffic jams? For morning drop off, can exiting traffic be sent through Wakeman (just like in the afternoon)?

We will have a traffic plan in place - still a work in progress. We greatly encourage our students to ride the buses whenever possible.

What is the timetable for the Board of Ed to devise the plan and detail for next year?

Please see Dr. Anthony Buono's attached memo with timelines.

What happens when we find out that CMS can't get back online by 2020?

The District would have the fall-back position of remaining as one middle school for another year.

If CMS renovation will be done mid year are you prepared to move the students back or will you wait for the start of the next school year?

It would depend on the timing of the work. It would be possible to move back mid-year, but we would need to weigh the advantages of the move to the disruption of the shift mid-year.