
NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS PROJECT COMMITTEE

APRIL 30, 2008

The Neighborhood Schools Committee held a meeting on Wednesday, April 30th, 2008 in the cafeteria of the Pottstown High School.

Present were committee members: Ed Edwards, Julia Wilson, Dennis Wausnock, and Michele Pargeon. Mr. David Krem represented the administration.

Representing the Federation of Pottstown Teachers, who will be involved with the committee, were the following members: Evelyn Dudonis, Debra Mann, Kelly Wolfel, Heather Kurtz, Colleen Blute, Bob Decker, Beth Yoder, and Kathy Marchek. Connie Belin and Treena Ferguson were not present, however, they would like to volunteer their time knowledge, and expertise to the committee. Of course, we would welcome additional participants from the Federation.

There will not be specific reference as to who said what, but only bullet points of conversations and discussions.

It was confirmed with the teachers present that through May 21st, meeting at the PHS from 4 - 5 pm on Wednesdays is an acceptable time frame for the next 3 meetings.

It was expressed to the committee that the process in which to actually begin work on facilities needs to start with a decision by the board as a whole as to what options the board wishes the committee to actively pursue.

Once the board gets to that point, and we are down to the option the board has voted by majority to pursue, then the feasibility study would need to be done.

Then begins the Plan Con process.

The question was posed to the teachers of whether they would support surveys for entire staff regarding education and facilities in the district to gather input regarding the elementary schools and primary education.

The teachers requested that instead of giving the faculty even more surveys, they would like to bring back questions from the committee to their building faculty meetings for the staff to discuss and offer input on anonymously.

Committee volunteers agreed to disseminate the committee minutes to the staff in their buildings to keep them aware of the committees discussions.

All persons on the committee will receive emails with meeting minutes.

It was agreed upon that guiding questions and lists of facility options and different building scenarios would be composed in an agenda for the teachers to bring back to their buildings. These will hope to focus discussions at faculty meetings that will hopefully generate input from staff, either verbally or in writing,

of their thoughts they would like brought back to the committee by their representative. The agenda will obviously be focusing on information needed by the committee at that time. A list of questions will be emailed to Federation Participants by Friday, May 2, 2008.

We then had discussion regarding the physical state of each of the elementary buildings, the emotional factor associated with those buildings (by faculty and residents). It was agreed that Rupert is in the most dire need of repair, yet would be the most costly project. Lincoln and Franklin were not far behind. Barth is in need of repair, as is Edgewood, yet it is our "newest" school, and the windows do not open.

We also had discussion regarding children who are chronically late for school who also walk to school. Children who are chronically late as walkers would not be as likely to meet a bus on time, and should they miss that bus, that child would probably not go to school. Evidently, this is a problem district wide, with children as young as our kindergartners. A campus facility where many children may need to be bussed could result in constant tardiness or multiple absences. This could dramatically affect the NCLB standards for daily enrollment.

When presented with the possibility of increased grade level collaboration with a centers approach to education, some teachers felt that inservice time currently is used as a time to vent frustrations instead of sharing positive ideas and thoughts. (Mrs. Wilson has requested this question be an agenda item for faculty meetings).

The many benefits of a K-5 school were the buddy system, peer tutoring, opportunities for our special education students to increase their skills by reading to the kindergartners, and the safety, comfort, consistency, and structure available for the children in a K-5 school that a child may not be getting in their home environment. The use of those facilities after hours and on weekends, for use of the open space, is a consideration.

On the other end, a consolidated campus setting would allow for daily teacher and grade level collaboration, the ability for a child to be assigned to a class that best meets their education/emotional/social needs due to a multiple number of classrooms and teachers at that grade level, and balanced (and hopefully lower) class sizes. At least one individual was excited about the possibility of an ELC in the downtown area that would help to stimulate downtown development.

One suggestion was the possible use of the Mrs. Smith's site.

What if the "Gateway To Pottstown" was turned into an ELC?

Another point of view was the convenience to the parents of having all of the elementary aged children in a single location center, as opposed to

3 different grade level centers on 3 different sites. (K-1, 2-3, 4-5).

Another benefit discussed was the opportunity for children to grow up with one another in a centers approach to education so there would be less negative interactions once they reach 6th grade. With our current system, many kids entering 6th grade only know of the other 50 kids from their school.

This could be a cause of increased negative behavior between students once they reach middle school.

There was question as to the amount of academic gain in the 5 different options that have been placed before the board. Those options include:

one consolidated campus with 3 centers k-1, 2-3, 3-4

3 centers, 3 different sites

k, 1, Learning center and 2 grades 2-5 bldgs, separate campus

3 grades K - 5 buildings

5 grades K - 5 buildings

One option asked to be placed on the table for consideration and further review was a 4k, 5k, 1, 2 center with access on same campus to a 3, 4, 5 center to facilitate the buddy system and peer tutoring and mentoring programs.

Realizing a feasibility study would need to include the administrative offices, which are small and barely fitting the needs of staff and administration.

It was offered that any money spent on the administration is just money lost and certainly does not improve education in the district.

It was questioned whether there was an option to take over a school building for the purpose of being used as an administration building.

An option would be to consider Franklin Elementary as a new administration building with classrooms for alternative education, whose students would benefit from the services provided at the annex building, which many of the students have a need for. The alternative education students, as they currently meet in the evening, do not have access to the same services the general student population has access to.

The question was posed as to whether the borough (council) was going to be a factor in the decision making process. "Only in regards to permits," was the answer, and we are already having some difficulty there.

The time frame of the plan-con process and construction start to finish for a single project gives us a time line of 24 - 36 months from start to finish.

During that time frame, children would need to be relocated to another location

St. Pius MAY be available for that purpose, and the administration is currently looking into the option of leasing the building until the market gets better to sell.

However, other schools have looked into the property as a possible acquisition.

A consolidated campus on a different location, most likely Barth as they have the most acreage, would not require the relocation of any students.

A consolidated campus at Barth would require bussing of all but approximately 150 elementary students (which brings us back to the lateness/truency issue).

Currently, by board ruling, our children are bussed if they are more than 1 mile from their school, across route 100 or High street, or for balanced classrooms throughout the district.

WE also discussed the logistics of art, music, gym and library classes with a consolidated campus. Other schools with consolidated campuses such as Avon Grove, have their specials during a block of

time in the middle of the day
which would give teachers common time for collaboration with one another.
It is possible to gather that information from other schools who are able to make the scheduling work
so we do not have to reinvent the wheel.

Some members of the committee expressed an interest in traveling to
Daniel Boone School District during the day to see how they make their consolidated campus work.
The Administration will try to set that up.

Balancing of classrooms and addressing student mobility issues would also be
an asset to a centers approach to education. There are significant benefits for our
special needs children in this scenario, also.

Next meeting ~ Wednesday, May 7th, 2008 from 4 - 5 PHS veranda.

Our meeting adjourned a little late at approximately 5:15 pm.

Michele Pargeon
Neighborhood Schools Committee
Pottstown School Board
5/1/08

**MINUTES FROM THE NSPC MEETING 5/7/08
@ THE POTTSTOWN HIGH SCHOOL**

Present were committee members Dennis Wausnock, Ed Edwards,
Michele Pargeon. From the ADMIN: Jeff Sparagana.
Federation volunteers Heather Kurtz, Connie Belin, Evelyn Dudonis,
Robert Decker, Colleen Blute, Debra Mann were also present.

Minutes from the previous meeting on 4/30/08 were emailed to all
committee participants.

Michele Pargeon drew up a list of questions/talking points for discussions
at the building faculty meetings, and had emailed them to committee
participants on Friday, May 2nd, 2008, after first emailing them to the entire board via the board
secretary, Mrs. Adams.

The Edgewood Elementary School and the Barth Elementary School
were able to have their faculty meetings prior to this meeting,
and the faculty had opportunity to discuss some of the questions
that were emailed to the representatives of the Federation.

Although the list of questions/talking points included the options of what to do regarding the elementary schools and questions regarding grade level collaboration, test scores, AYP, inclusion, and special services (it was a lengthy list) discussions at the two meetings primarily focused on the building options.

Meetings for Lincoln, Franklin, Rupert, Middle School, and High School have yet to be held. Our meeting this day focused on the discussions held at Barth and Edgewood.

There had been a lot of discussion during the two faculty meetings regarding the different options and how each option would affect collaboration with staff, special education needs, AYP, PSSA's, and class sizes.

When asked of the faculty what one option should be taken off the table, the general consensus from the two meetings was that the option of keeping all five schools should be taken off the table.

There was a lot of emotional sentiment regarding the community feel of the school buildings, and fear that, that feeling would be lost in a larger building, or where the 5 grade levels would be broken up.

There were questions regarding how large some of the buildings would be if the district took the centers approach.

It was shared that our largest class this year is the second grade class, consisting of approximately 270 students.

Grade level buildings would most likely need to accommodate between 250-275 students per grade. That would equal approximately 500 students for a grade level center consisting of 2 grades; 750 if the center included 3 grades. It was shared that a K-2 center would allow second graders to mentor Kindergartener's, and that a K-1 center would not be as beneficial as a K-2 center.

Some expressed apprehension regarding a huge, impersonal facility and that considerable effort would have to be made to insure a feeling of a small community.

There were also questions regarding staff who may lose their jobs should the district move to consolidate the schools.

There were assurances that the same number of children would most likely require the same amount of staff.

We are hoping there will be additional thoughts shared with building reps participating in the committee by faculty from the schools, either in person or via email.

There had been considerable discussion regarding the campus idea, whether there be 3 or 2 buildings, and the benefits surrounding those options.

The benefits shared were having grade level partners all in one location and the ability to match a student's educational, emotional, social needs with the teacher who would best be able to address those needs.

There was also input regarding how a centers approach to education would address the transient population.

Many felt that the parents of more than one child would not want to have to go to multiple locations to pick up their children.

One suggestion was to make Lincoln Elementary School a location for a 2-3 and 4-5 center, with an Early Learning Center on the old lumber yard property at the corner of Hanover and East street, as this location is in close proximity to the Lincoln School grounds, and that Lincoln is the geographical center of Pottstown, which would enable many children to walk to school.

It was questioned whether there was enough property on those grounds for this option. Perhaps with some creative planning, it could be done.

It was generally found that what we end up doing should be what we believe is best to meet the needs of the community regarding educating our children, taxpayers on a fixed income, the use of buildings and grounds after hours and on the weekends, open space, etc.

We agreed that meeting the needs of all students educationally should come before building needs.

We also spent some time regarding behavioral issues with our elementary aged children, and that regardless of a child's cognitive ability, if that same child has anti-social behavior, or does not have their emotional needs and feeling of security met, learning can not take place.

It was agreed that special services should be available to all students on a daily basis in every building to address the emotional and behavioral needs of the children. The district currently does not have enough staff to address this issue each facility. Many feel it is a necessity to have at the very least a guidance counselor available to the students in every building. It was shared that anti-social and behavioral issues are a nationwide problem, and a very serious issue here in Pottstown.

There was support for the positive behavior program @ Lincoln, and how it is helping to provide children with incentives for positive behavior.

The district is currently seeking additional funding to provide behavioral support for children currently enrolled with the PEAK program.

Steady progress is being made with each of the participating partners.

It is a goal to eventually put the 4-K program into the hands of the community childcare providers. That move, however, would not be made until each participating provider reached a certain STARS level. It was expressed that the 4-K program currently practiced in the district was a huge success, and that children were coming into the 5-K classrooms from the 4-K rooms academically prepared. We currently service approximately 120 students in the district 4-K program at no cost to the family.

We also had discussion regarding how class size can affect the educational and emotional needs of the students, and how lower class sizes would benefit the staff.

There was also discussion regarding bussing, bussing infractions, children that fail to meet the bus and how much this would be affected if we had to bus more than 50 % of the student population. We also had some suggestions on how to address students from across Rt. 100 and High Street, and who are more than one mile away from a school, who miss the bus.

We liked the idea that a van driver may be able to pick those children up provided the parent calls the district and makes that request.

We also felt that chronic offenders of this service would need to provide some sort of monetary compensation.

Currently, both Edgewood and Barth Elementary schools bus at least 50 % of their students. Lincoln has the fewest amount of students who are bussed.

There was some question as to what would happen to the other school properties should the district consolidate the schools.

Some expressed that the buildings be re-purposed, either for administration, alternative education, PEAK partner buildings, leased, etc instead of selling off the properties.

Should there be a sudden huge influx of children to the district, where would these children be placed if facilities were already at maximum capacity?

Some would like the option of keeping a few of the properties specifically for that purpose. (there was reference to the Jefferson school)

Some conversation was focused on putting some properties back on the tax rolls, and the benefits to taxpayers.

It was shared that the current costs for maintaining the five elementary buildings as they currently stand are at least \$ 500,000.00 /yr.

It was expressed that we do not want to spend upwards of 38 million dollars just to improve the buildings architecturally, and do absolutely nothing to improve the quality of education for the elementary aged students.

The next meeting of the Neighborhood Schools Project Committee will be held from 4 - 5 pm at the Pottstown High School (veranda or cafeteria) on Wednesday, May 14, 2008.

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**MINUTES FROM THE NSPC
MAY 14, 2008
HELD AT PHS ON THE VERANDA
FROM 4 - 5 PM**

PRESENT WERE COMMITTEE MEMBERS DENNIS WAUSNOCK, ED EDWARDS, MICHELE PARGEON. FEDERATION VOLUNTEERS BETH YODER, BOB DECKER, KATHY MARCHEK, HEATHER KURTZ, TREENA FERGUSON, CONNIE BELIN, COLLEEN BLUTE, DEBRA MANN, KELLY WOLFEL, AND EVELYN DUDONIS (thank you for the snacks!!) REPRESENTING THE ADMINISTRATION WAS DAVID KREM.

Lincoln Elementary and Franklin Elementary schools had their faculty meetings for discussions regarding the elementary school options.

Rupert Elementary will have their faculty meeting Friday, May 16th.
High School will have their meeting on Monday, May 19th.
Middle School will have their meeting on Tuesday, May 20th.

It was agreed that many teachers are very emotionally attached to their buildings. As a result, discussions had to be redirected to focus upon educational needs and concerns as opposed to the emotional ties associated with working in that same building for many years.

At the Lincoln and Franklin meetings, when faculty were posed with the question of what options were to be taken off of the table, the consensus from both groups was that the option of a K-1, 2-3, 4-5 buildings in 3 different locations and a K-1 center and two 2-5 grade centers on 3 separate campuses would not be viable options.

Many felt that two grade level buildings on a consolidated campus with an Early Learning Center in a separate location would also not be a suggested option.

When discussions revolved around a consolidated campus, many felt strongly that the 2nd grade class should not be separated from the Kindergarteners and 1st. graders.

Others felt that 2nd graders would benefit more educationally when sharing a building with the 3rd graders, and that they would be better prepared academically to do well on PSSA tests.

Many were concerned with the safety of children walking to school regardless of the location of buildings, especially if they were not walking with an older sibling. When the Jefferson School had closed, not one word about the children who had lost their school and concerns for their safety walking even farther

to a school was expressed. Parents from the downtown area have the same concerns of other parents in the borough about their children living and walking through rough neighborhoods. There was a question about how many children would need to walk through a rough neighborhood to get to school.

A school in the Washington Street corridor would have been the home school of approximately 500 children as a single building, not as a consolidated campus.

There was again discussions regarding children who arrive late to ALL buildings on a regular basis, and how this problem could be addressed. It was questioned whether chronic tardiness should be a contributing factor regarding location of buildings. It was shared that a truancy officer had been employed by the district at one time, however, there is not an officer in this position currently. One such person Federation members mentioned as a possible hire for that position was Stephanie White, as she lives within the borough, and has many ties to children and families in the community.

Many felt she would be an ideal candidate based upon the preceding factor and that she is fearless, fair, and firm enough to get the job done.

Also was the issue at many buildings of parents who come late to pick up their child, and perhaps this could be a topic for future discussions, and the possibility of a need to create a committee to deal with truancy, tardiness, and late pick ups.

At the faculty meetings, some had shared that the children of our community benefit from the K-5 building option, as it creates a sense of security, stability, and emotionally consistency for children that may not have access to that in their home life situations. Teachers shared that these same children would feel overwhelmed in a large campus setting, and would be unable to have the same feelings of security and stability in a centers approach to education.

However, others countered a consolidated campus has far more benefits to these same children, with increased opportunities for cross age tutoring, buddies, having all elementary aged siblings on a single campus, the ability to match a child's educational needs to the best teacher who can address those needs, and the opportunity to have special services available to every student on a regular basis to address individual, emotional, educational, behavioral, and physical needs. IST, Title I and special education professionals believe that the centers approach to education on a consolidated campus would help them to facilitate efficiently the delivery of these services, and would help to meet the requirements of a least restrictive environment for our special needs children, as well as offer many more opportunities for inclusion in regular education classrooms than are currently available in the K-5 buildings.

Many teachers would welcome the ability to have more time for collaboration with their age-level colleagues to discuss the educational needs of their students on a regular basis, however, we did acknowledge that there would be some teachers who would feel that this would be not be a contributing factor towards delivering a quality education to each of their students.

Class sizes were also discussed at great length, and that, regardless of what is done about elementary education in the district, there needs to be a reduction in class sizes. The following ideal numbers were presented at today's meeting:

4-K ~ 15 students

5-K ~ 15 - 18 students

Grade 1 ~ 18 students

Grade 2 ~ 20 students

Grade 3 ~ 20 students

Grade 4 ~ 20 students

Grade 5 ~ 22 students

} these numbers would be inclusive
of special education children
to meet LRE standards
and new regulations

The Administration supports these numbers in regards to class sizes. Unfortunately, the previous administration did not replace teachers as needed, and class sizes have swelled to the numbers we have today due to the lack of staff and room in the buildings for additional classrooms.

There were some concerns that with a centers approach to education on a consolidated campus would mean that teachers may be required to loop their classes (teach for more than 1 year the same students).

The Administration has assured us that teachers would not be required to loop, however, if a teacher felt it was necessary and was willing to practice looping with their classes, every effort would be made to offer faculty that opportunity if it was requested.

Some expressed that other districts had some trouble with looping their classrooms. Others believe that there are also negative aspects to looping, as teachers may become too emotionally involved with "their" students

and appropriate services may not be made available to those student if a teacher may be unable to remain objective or cognizant to their students' needs for additional services.

It was also agreed that many of our teachers are not just educators to their students, but are also filling the role of a parent to their children and very much involved with ministering to their childrens' emotional needs in helping that child to have a feeling of security, safety, and consistency that is lacking in that child's home environment. Should the district move to a centers approach to education on a consolidated campus, every opportunity should be taken to make such a facility feel safe and comfortable for every child by using some of the designs incorporated in the Avon Grove facility to create a family/community feeling that would be far less formidable to a child. Color coded walkways, pods, and grade

level rooms could help to facilitate this feeling.

Some of us still get lost in Edgewood (smile).

Those who had visited the Avon Grove facility expressed that the building was not confusing, and it did not feel large and impersonal.

One additional comment regarding the Avon Grove facility was that the teachers sit down on their first day of school and build their classrooms based on the previous year's data to help best match each student's educationally, physical, and emotional needs with just the right

teacher.

There was also some discussion and concerns that perhaps some of the elementary school teachers may not fully understand or be aware of the problems associated in the 6th grade at the middle school of students coming from 5 different schools. With a consolidated campus, it becomes "their" school, and "their" town and would help to improve the feeling of pride and ownership when all are united together as a group throughout their entire educational experience with far fewer rivalries that are currently associated

with students coming from their individual elementary buildings.

It is a general consensus that some of these peer issues could be eliminated

or greatly decreased when all children are coming from a single school.

Therefore, the committee is eagerly looking forward to the feedback from the Middle School (and High School) faculty meetings, in the hopes that they may help to address some of these issues. I believe we would also like to hear about the successes or difficulties associated with the separation of grade levels.

There was a suggestion regarding moving 6th grade back to the elementary level and 9th grade into the middle school and perhaps building an addition onto the high school for childcare services with the opportunity for the Early Childhood Education students to become interns or assistants.

Some felt that going to a centers approach to education may mean losing good families from the community.

Others expressed concern regarding keeping open space in the borough for children to play when school lets out.

Following the discussion regarding the 2 faculty meetings and the faculty who participated in those building meetings, it was the general consensus from those two meetings that the centers approach to education on a single consolidated campus would be the best option educationally for every child in Pottstown.

The field trip to Daniel Boone will be on Wednesday, May 21, 2008.

Kathy, Treena, and Colleen will meet us there at 6 pm.

Dennis and Michele will meet to carpool at the administration building at 5:30 sharp.

The field trip to Octorora on Wednesday, May 28, 2008

will have Bob, Kathy, and Michele meeting at the administration building at 5:30 pm sharp to carpool.

Committee volunteers from the Federation will forward the field trip information to their building representatives.

On May 22, 2008, Mr. Decker has been invited to address the Board regarding the findings from the faculty meetings and the recommendation of the Federation in regards

to Elementary School options.

Mrs. Yoder will be drafting a statement to be provided by our meeting on the 21st of May.

The next meeting for the NSPC will be on Wednesday, May 21, 2008 on the veranda at Pottstown High School.

**MINUTES FROM THE NSPC
MAY 21, 2008
HELD AT PHS ON THE VERANDA
AND CAFETERIA
FROM 4 - 5 PM**

**PRESENT WERE COMMITTEE MEMBERS JULIA WILSON,
ED EDWARDS, AND MICHELE PARGEON.**

**FEDERATION VOLUNTEERS: BETH YODER, BOB DECKER,
TREENA FERGUSON, DEBRA MANN, COLLEEN BLUTE,
EVELYN DUDONIS, CONNIE BELIN, AND KELLY WOLFEL.
REPRESENTING THE ADMINISTRATION WAS DAVID KREM.**

Faculty meetings for staff discussion regarding the building options occurred at Rupert Elementary School, Middle School, and the High School since the last committee meeting. These minutes reflect those discussions.

The Middle School (MS) teachers love the ability to collaborate with their other team members on a regular basis.

The teachers who taught the 6th grade students in the elementary school buildings during the renovation/construction period of the MS like the benefits of having the children back in the elementary schools, however, it was noted that these 6th graders had never actually left their elementary buildings.

Some teachers felt it would be beneficial to have the 6th graders back in with the elementary students. Others countered with the importance of the 6th graders in the same building with 7th and 8th graders, as it would help them become more responsible. It was also noted that perhaps having all 5th graders coming from the same location, may ease the struggles of having them all grouped together for the first time in the 6th grade.

The High School (HS) sees issues with a lot of the 9th graders not being prepared for block scheduling, and not taking their academics seriously enough to buckle down right at the beginning of the school year.

As a result of this factor, many students are not doing the required work during the 1st semester to get them a passing grade for that course. Ninth graders are also expected to have the same responsibility as upper classmen, and many felt that the level of maturity in ninth graders is just not where it should be in regards to performing well academically at the high school level. Nearly 1/2 of the HS faculty who spoke thought that the 9th graders should be moved into the middle school, and perhaps they can have block scheduling introduced to them there, so that they may have a more successful transition when they enter the HS in the 10th grade.

Currently, the HS is maxed out space wise with 800 students. The middle school is at approximately 750 students. It was noted that the MS was built to hold a maximum of 1000 students.

side note ~ By next Friday, both the MS and HS Administrators will have a detailed list of pros and cons regarding bringing the 6th grade back to the elementary level, and the 9th grade back to the MS level.

Regarding the Rupert Elementary School faculty discussions, these teachers were the most on board with the consolidated campus setting. Due to the deplorable condition of the building that the teachers are required to work in, these teachers expressed they were ready for construction to begin tomorrow, with the immediate demolition of the building to follow. They did not have the same level of emotional attachment to their building that was associated with the Lincoln and Franklin elementary buildings. The Itinerant, Special Ed, IST, and Title 1 teachers expressed strongly the benefits of collaboration. Other teachers would welcome the frequent collaboration with their grade level partners, also. The Rupert teachers also felt that they do not really have a neighborhood school, only a school in a neighborhood, due to the bussing of nearly half of the students due to overflow in other buildings and the transient population.

It was noted that there are many children who live in the community, and who do not move from place to place, that are repeatedly moved from one elementary school to another due to overflow, strictly because that child does not have a sibling at the elementary level. It was strongly stressed that stability is imperative for every student, and with the current configuration, stability is not available to all children. Children would have far more stability in a consolidated campus setting.

The top three representatives from the FPT have prepared a statement to be submitted to the board regarding the synopsis of the notes and discussions that were held at all of the 7 building faculty meetings in relation to the options being considered by the board. This list was handed out to the committee today.

Their list has the educational pros (in black) and cons (in red) for each of the 6 options. Mr. Robert Decker will prepare a powerpoint presentation of what those 6 options are, and he will display them on the projector at the May 22nd, 2008 special meeting of the board, in conjunction with his presentation to the board and the public. It is noted that the top 2 options for consideration are a consolidated campus. The only difference is the grade level configurations, and whether we go to a 2

building or 3 building option of a centers approach to education. The Federation suggests that all other options be taken off the table.

It was also suggested that there may be a lot of dialogue and suggestions being brought to the table, and that the board should be willing to entertain all ideas and thoughts, with the stipulation that those ideas or suggestions are accompanied with a plan to go along with them.

The committee agreed that part of the problem revolving around a consolidated campus in the Washington Street Corridor was, unfortunately, racially motivated, as many parents did not want their children walking down into "that neighborhood.(per statements from parents at public forums)"

There would have been a significant amount of time invested just to acquire the 110 properties selected for demolition, which the Montgomery County Redevelopment Authority would have been responsible for taking care of. That process would have taken years.

Possible locations for a consolidated campus would be Barth, as it is our largest property, however, all but 150 elementary aged students would need to be bussed. Bussing the majority of students would be expensive, however, it could also address a lot of parent concerns in regards to their children walking to school. We also felt that there would be far less concerns with being in close proximity to the Bright Hope complex, than were evident during public forums centered upon the consolidated campus in the Washington Street Corridor, due to the high standards of property upkeep for the residents of the Bright Hope Community.

Another location would be Lincoln, as it is the geographical center of the borough. Edgewood is also a consideration, as it has more acreage than Lincoln, and would still allow a large number of students to walk.

It was also noted that the same amount of children would require the same amount of staff, perhaps even more, with the additional teachers it would require to meet the maximum class sizes suggested by the Federation, and endorsed by the Administration.

It was also noted that a discipline officer be present on the campus to deal with children's behavioral issues and offenses, which would then free up the time of the building administrators to spend more time in the classrooms for observations. However, the need for more than a single administrator in each building would be important due to the number of meetings, conferences, and global responsibilities that our administrators must attend to on a weekly basis. It was strongly felt that there should ALWAYS be an administrator present and available for emergencies, etc.

Regarding renovations, the cost is not always set in stone, as issues could come up that would increase the cost. New construction costs are usually set, with very little fluctuation. Simultaneous construction is also more cost effective,

with a usual time frame of 18 - 24 months from start to finish.
There would also not be any disruption of education with new construction.

There was also some concern as to the Parks and Rec Dept.
and how they are currently using our buildings for after school activities and programs, and how they would be affected.

The last meeting will be our field trip to the Octarora Center on
Wednesday, May 28, 2008. Carpooling from the administration building,
we will be departing at 5:30 pm.

The Neighborhood Schools Project Committee will not meet again until after the board has voted
upon the one option it will pursue in regards to the elementary school facilities. We hope to
reconvene on a monthly basis beginning in September. Committee members will be notified of the
next meeting.

Mrs. Pargeon would like to express her sincere appreciation to the
Federation volunteers for their time and input.

MP

ITEMS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION
REGARDING FACILITIES AND EDUCATION
FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS
PROJECT COMMITTEE

Elementary facility options that the district is currently looking at are:

One consolidated campus with three centers K - 1, 2 - 3 , 4 - 5.

Three centers, three different sites (w/ above grade configuration)

A K - 1 Learning Center and two grades 2 - 5 buildings, separate campuses.

Three K - 5 buildings

Five K - 5 buildings (current)

A 4K, 5K, 1, 2 center with access on same campus to a 3, 4, 5 center. (suggested by teachers)

In your professional opinion, which of the preceding options of elementary school scenarios would be the most beneficial educationally, socially, emotional, and physically for our elementary age children?

Which option would offer the amount of professional collaboration each week that you personally feel you and your students would benefit from academically and professionally?
How much time do you think that should be?

For some grade levels in a school, there may be only one classroom. Three classrooms per grade is about the average.

Regarding Grade Level collaboration throughout the district, do you currently find this time to be beneficial?

Is there enough time incorporated in In-Service days to make a difference in your classroom?

If incorporated into a daily opportunity for teachers to come together and discuss their students, would you find this time to be an asset to your professional development, provided it was a chance for REAL communication of your students' needs and addressing areas of academic concern?

Which option(s) should be taken off the table for consideration?

What is the maximum amount of students you would like to see in your classroom? (Please include grade level with the answers to this question).

Which of the above options would most benefit our special education students and allow for increased opportunities of inclusion in regular education classrooms, yet provide the with required services?

Given the different scenarios, which option would be the most beneficial in increasing PSSA scores and meeting NCLB standards?

Do you feel that either of the options would be detrimental to the district in our ability to meet AYP? If so, why?