

PRINCIPAL ENGAGEMENT MEETING NOTES SUMMARY

Interviews were conducted with Elementary School Principals (including some APs) throughout October and November. Each Administrator was asked how they felt about the current Consolidation Plan, what the pros and cons were of consolidation, and what they felt was most important to get right as we consider whether or not to consolidate. Below is a summary of the feedback received.

General Sentiment of Consolidation: Supported by all Administrators

- Shared resources offered at a larger school are good for staff and students.
- It was acknowledged that small schools do offer some benefit. The loss of a small school feeling is a factor.
- Pro of consolidation: "This buys into the concept that they are all our children"
- Pros of consolidation include replacement of older buildings. Older schools are not designed for current needs, with too few restrooms and no good space for special education. Site & Facilities are in dire need. Meeting spaces are very much needed. Spaces for therapy, counselors, one-on-ones, etc are not represented in the older schools.
- Consolidation is financially better.
- Consolidation would allow the District to better cluster special education.
- The reality is: we are short staffed. We could better serve students if we consolidate.
- Its cheaper to maintain one school than multiple
- Equity can be an issue at smaller schools: Kids at Hebron have a different experience than Agnes Gray.
- Consolidation would be a good thing. Buildings are falling apart.
- I support consolidation. Rowe is old and should be replaced. This is a win-win.
- Love the small school we have. Services are needed though. If you have a disability, we send you away. This is not inclusive.
- Consolidation will benefit more students throughout the district than other options.

Travel Times are Important:

- Largest concern: Bus/Travel Time. Get this right and it will be good.
- Bussing: 45-50 minute rides now – Travel time will be critical to get right.
- Travel Time: the Biggest factor.

Embrace this as an Opportunity

- This is an opportunity!
- This is an opportunity! It makes sense. We hope this consolidation happens.
- This is a great opportunity.

Community Information:

- We need to get the information out to the community. We need to fight mis-information.
- We need to stress the benefits of consolidation. We need to offset a misconception that kids don't have a community in a larger school. They do; they still have pride and belonging in a school community.
- West Paris is angry but doesn't realize that the resources many kids needed didn't exist at Agnes Gray.
- We still have a strong connection with students in a large school like a small school does. We still get to know kids and families as we have them for multiple years.

Support for Staff:

- Biggest positive of consolidation is having multiple teachers per grade. This allows for better professional development and collaboration at all grade levels.
- Small schools have no real team to work with. No support is difficult for staff.
- Having worked at large and small schools here are some observations:

- o There are more resources to students and staff at larger schools.
 - o Social workers and special needs are fully staffed and more available.
 - o Small schools cant meet some students needs.
 - o Resources offered at a larger school are very valuable to educators.
- Staff support is so much better at a larger school.
- The more resources of a larger school means more collaboration to better support students.

Post MS / Consolidation Considerations:

- We will need to develop an “Ownership” culture at each school to ensure everyone feels like they belong.
- Organize a new large school as 2 communities: Prek-2nd grade and 3rd-5th grade. Make each area age appropriate for their needs
- Common areas should include a large Gymnasium
- Consider 2 smaller cafeterias to keep small school feel.
- Student Performance space for the Elementary level would be ideal.
- This is an opportunity to extend before and after care to more students.
- There is some concern that teh plan calls for splitting some towns across multiple schools – it was recommended that all of West Paris kids stay together and go to Paris.
- It will be important to determine how the remaining schools are organized after consolidation and MS creation.
- Currently small schools lack PT, Life Skills, and Day Treatment
- We need to re-organize existing schools to remain to determine capacity.
- Existing schools still need investment.
- Pick a site with access to natural elements. Keeping it out of town centers would make it more welcoming to residents of other towns.
- Proper design can ensure a small school feel with small learning communities.
- A new school could be more inclusive and avoid the pull out model.
- Focus on Community Building in a new school. Not 1 town, but still 1 community. If kids feel good about being there, it will be successful.
- Need to ask people: “Is it important that your student succeeds? Because if they have the resources they will.”