

1. What is your vision for the Mount Desert Island Regional School System?

Table 1

- Island-wide middle school...
- Lot of redundancy with reporting - forms for each school instead of 1 for system-streamline systems.
- Island-wide special education program - consolidated day treatment education on the island.
- Greater flexibility in the curriculum - focus on kids strengths.
- Linking special programs between schools - i.e. island-wide robotics, not just at Conners-Emerson.
- Better communication within district about programs - concerts, dances, etc.
- ****PRE-K!!** Expectations so much higher for kindergarteners.

Table 2

- Fewer requirements
- Freedom to fail
- Safe place for kids to be educated
- Challenge each student
- Follow an individualized path/meeting students where they are
- Fewer interventions in the social realm
- Balance academics with social/emotional development-sports, music, academics
- Involved parents
- Well-rounded students
- Lots of opportunity, lots of challenge
- Home and school connections

Table 3

- To provide the best educational foundation for life and career choices
- To meet needs of each student. Great self-esteem and enter the world with their talents and challenges (self awareness)
- Our students see and are aware of "others" understanding, communication
- Drama and arts continue. Reasonable and appropriate cost to tax

We would:

- Be prepared to take required "tests"
- Seek, retain the highest qualified teachers and administrators
- Not continue as an AOS
- Consider a charter school
- Offer school choice of any elementary/possibly magnet school

Table 4

- Island-wide middle school
- More vocational education to better prepare kids for post-high school life
- Alternative programs for middle level
- Island Pathways for middle school
- Consolidation of schools
- Consideration of an RSU model

Table 5

- Equal opportunities between schools
- Pre-school at all schools
- Continue to see schools take advantage of available resources in our community (non-profits, park, etc.) for students and educating teachers too
- Consolidated middle school
 - Pros - more opportunities, more flexibility
 - Cons - disconnect from younger kids, minimize social pressures

Table 6

- Positives - diversity and opportunity
- See schools have consolidated elementary and middle schools - enhance classroom size, diversity
- Continue to maintain high standards - MDIHS high ranking
- School system #1 in state for STEM curriculum and outside (are Maine standards the gold standard?)
- By end of high school all kids would be able to figure out what they need to know (college, career readiness)
- School system be a magnet for excellent teachers
- Program moving instead of students moving
- Have students in classes based on ability, not necessarily age if larger classes can't be achieved
- World citizens, lifelong learners
- Keep different areas available for different kids to shine
- Mix kids - multi-age classrooms
- School choice
- Educational consensus on virtual consolidation

Table 7

- Community aspect - each town as community center as the school, smallness of it.
- K-8 schools, not middle schools, standing alone better for kids in middle school, takes pressure off middle school kids. Up-rooting middle school kids to new school with kids = stress. Continuity of experience with people who have known them since kindergarten = support.
- Older kids exposing the younger kids to improper things. Having more classes of same grade have more variety to avoid cliques, better socialization. More opportunity for kids to be separated from social situations with classmates if you have larger classes.
- Optimum class size 10-20. Centralized high school good opportunity to meet kids from other towns and mingle.
- Classes are so small... stuck in dynamic and can't break it due to stereotyping in grade school. High school offers more social freedom.
- Range of sports and friends and clubs in high school = better diversity and more opportunities like tennis, etc.
- 7th grade here, 12 kids since kindergarten, very tight-knit group. But other classes with small classes if they don't get along, it's very challenging.
- High school is a good "restart".
- Greater size of school provides us with more opportunities for extracurricular activities and student opportunities. Our vision is growth and sharing within our schools to benefit students and overall costs.

2. What are the greatest strengths of our school system?

Table 1

- The Arts at Pemetic - band, strings, French as well.
- Teachers very welcoming and inclusive to new families.
- Community partnerships - Park Rangers, Coast Guard, Jackson Lab, College of the Atlantic
- Teachers willing to coordinate with extra-curricular programs
- Technology - working laptops, newer equipment, tech grants
- Smaller schools more responsive to special needs
- Great number of programs at high school
- Lots of hand-on learning
- Dedicated teachers -provides inspiring professional development

Table 2

- Travel opportunities
- Staff
- Bus drivers (and sharing) for those with employee drivers vs. contracted services
- Facilities!
- Strong curriculum
- Supportive community
- Resources in the community
- Trusting community
- *More incredible offerings than comparable schools
- Willingness to provide and be flexible for new worldwide opportunities

Table 3

Strengths

- Special education
- Music, drama
- Collaboration with MDI Bio Lab and Jackson Lab
- Access to vocational/tech
- Reading - foundational skills
- Local identification
- Local town commitment to school and identity
- Pemetic community projects - project-based 7th & 8th grade wind turbines
- Exemplary teachers and staff
- Teachers have vision supported by administrator and board
- Community moral support - community parenting

Table 4

- Magnet for high quality teacher candidates
- Good community connection, i.e. shared library
- Connections between schools, i.e. students
- Shared professional development
- Financial support for education

Table 5

- Small schools are nurturing and responsive

- Unified curriculum - teachers working together
- Arts, technology, specials in the district are wonderful opportunities
- Good sense of community, communication
- Great staff

Table 6

- The arts, drama
- Small, familiar
- Everyone knows each other- *sometimes the opposite happens*
- Non-cliquey, accepting, social atmosphere is very positive - *sometimes the opposite happens*
- Welcoming to new students
- Classroom buddies (older/younger)
- Dedicated teachers (example - extra art) before and after school help

Table 7

- Teachers - willing to do whatever kids need, before school, after school, meetings to make sure your kid is successful. We value them greatly.
- Extracurricular stuff - awesome, art program, after school trips and programming, show choir, string festival and various things in addition to the standard sports. Free period they can choose to go hiking etc... a lot of opportunities and choices.
- Taking advantage of the greater island community and enriching students.
- Bringing in authors, speakers and professionals, Barn Arts, Mary Lyman, etc... lots of effort to bring in off-island resources and on-island resources.
- Key Pal - Swan's Island trip etc... good opportunity to meet other kids in the community.
- Teachers and administrators approachable, not intimidated by anyone they had to reach out to. The culture changed because it was back in the day intimidating. Better communication due to friendlier nature and presentation.
- Came here because the school system was known to be good. Ranking is good. Good vibe here.

3. What are the most significant challenges for our school system?

Table 1

- Teachers working for 1 school instead of the district.
- Attendance and on-time arrivals
- Emphasis seems to be on reading not math.
- Stagnant number of students - fewer children
- Cost of real estate for incoming families
- Rising property taxes
- Local control - keep it local, but tough time filling board seats
- More flexibility within grade levels - multi-age learning needed
- Lack of teacher websites
- Anti-bullying - is there a program in place
- Paper waste - fix printing issues

Table 2

- Differentiation is difficult to implement in the classroom
- Hard to capture needs of the outliers

- Small numbers
- Too many graduation requirements (high school). Feels like a choice between being smart and being artistic
- Standards/rubrics take over - especially when child's course is clear
- Reporting system is unclear/confusing/vague

Table 3

- Gifted & Talented kiddos
- Major drug issues
- Local paranoia
- Livable wages/limited jobs
- Cost of living
- Housing
- Decreasing number of young people
- STEM focus
- Math
- Lack of social studies instruction
- Lack of trades
- Teachers tied to mandates - decreases
- Special education services funding (Feds pay, mandates)
- Declining population
- Poverty

Table 4

- Pull-outs (teachers and students) i.e. common study
- Isolation of schools
- Disruptions during week
- Testing
- Lack of diversity
- Class size
- Creating athletic/co-curricular groups-numbers...

Table 5

- Unevenness in family support for students
- Meeting federal and state mandates in decreasing budget environment
- Special education paperwork
- Transportation
- Poor preparation for work habits - required in high school
- After-school activities coordination
- Recruiting teachers - the inability to share teachers between schools
- Low engagement from community
- No DARE program

Table 6

- Substitute teachers (struggle getting qualified subs). Missed instruction time because of professional development. Are we hiring qualified substitutes?
- Are parents participating effectively? Is there effective communication to parents, even simple things - registration, start of school days
- Commitment to hiring "the best" teachers
- Per pupil cost high / high budgets
- Parental responsibility in regard to their role in their kid's education

- Having to provide services now (social workers, etc.)
- Not having enough kids on each academic level to meet their needs
- Catering to lowest achievers - make sure to focus on all. How to support all students?
- Student absences
- Clearer communication from schools to parents
- Away vs. here - small classes. Can take on their own reality - good or bad.

Table 7

- Class sizes - too small,, lack of students, lack of new families coming in.
- Curriculum, similar expectations when they get to high school and consistent standards from all K-8 so they are even when they go to the high school.
- Meeting standards and preparation for high school.
- Over-arching theme consistency in curriculum across the board K-8 feeding into MDIHS so all kids from each town have the same skill set.

4. How can we build on those strengths and best address those challenges?

Table 1

- Community communication and collaboration - this is a great start
- Family meet-and-greets to get to know other parents
- Private FaceBook pages for parents in each class
- Grade specific nights, i.e. 6th grade game night or homework help, potlucks
- Streamline costs - all schools under one budget - district wide purchasing and reporting
- Affordable housing options
- Committee looking for cost savings - identify waste and eliminate duplication

Table 2

- Continue to encourage/foster school - community relationships
- Educate our parents (in reporting, e.g.)
- Fix technology for coherent reporting errors (simple mis-steps on a teacher's end make for very confusing report)
- Find opportunities to teach parents how to be a partner (grow a parent curriculum for consistent involvement/guidelines)

Table 3

- Co-op with Jackson Lab and MDI Bio Lab - how we use those resources
- Make math applied and project based.
- Multi-age, ability group - group by interest and abilities, not date of expiration - is community school
- Use students as resources

Table 4

- Think creatively regarding alternative uses of extra space
- Sharing of staff

Table 5

- By involving people, like tonight
- Find ways to drive up engagement
- Develop tools to allow schools to advocate for their realities
- Regular column in paper? From perspective of different constituents
- Consolidation of resources and school populations, special education and advanced students
- After-school tutoring centers for kids that can't get help at home

Table 6

- Communications - all teachers doing weekly emails, newsletters - recap of what's happened and what's going to happen.
- Websites need continuous review - ex. How to contact school board should be on every school website.
- Engage student leaders to model appropriate behavioral expectations. Unified expectations and consistency by all teachers for behavior management.
- Can we use resources in the community better?

Table 7

- Need more kids in school
- Inspire people, teachers
- Not enough students to employ full time teachers in all areas - but we like small class sizes. Take certain activities and merge classes. Ex. mix kids from other schools for music or art etc...
- Centralize some things - some teachers a.k.a. AOS teacher hire so they can be assigned to any school. Structure that central office can hire teachers that is paid for by AOS for specialties.
- Collectively get bigger if we need to for music, sports, chess, etc. to join and branch out to other AOS communities and start at that simplified level, build on that connection so that can stem into a benefit to all communities.
- We value community and small class size but need programming solutions.
- School consolidation = connect kids earlier on. Harbor House is a great mixing space with the after school program and through sports teams. Join them at a younger age. Join kids at kids level thinking dynamically and working together so they can fully support in sharing of teachers, staffing and facilities.

Additional thoughts/comments:

Table 1

- Is there a screen time policy for kids while in school?
- Cell phone challenges

Table 2

- Consolidate
- Share best practices between schools

Table 3

Transportation time on buses

Table 4

No additional thoughts/comments

Table 5

- Need math homework regularly just like reading homework
- Need as many after-school academics as sports
- Later start time for high school

Table 6

- Seasonal differences - schools vacant in summer. Use school for enrichment programs.

Table 7

No additional thoughts/comments