

MEMORANDUM FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

To: Board of Education

From: George C. Heitsch, Ed.D.

Date: March 1, 2016

RE: School Closures and Repurposing Recommendations

The purpose of this memo is to provide you my recommendation and rationale for restructuring the preK-12 footprint of Farmington Public Schools. This recommendation is the culmination of the work of the Capital Planning Advisory Committee, the Building and Site Utilization Committee, five community forums, community coffees, PTA/PTSA meetings, two Board of Education workshops and numerous private communications with parents, students, and staff.

I believe, and the enrollment numbers demonstrate, that the continued projected enrollment decline has created excess student capacity in the system.

I believe that our community reasonably expects us to repurpose excess property to be better used in the community and be fiscally responsible with our limited dollars.

I believe, and our data shows, that the dispersion of enrollment across three high schools is becoming a limiting factor in the academic opportunities available to our students.

For these reasons, it is administration's recommendation that we accept the recommendation of the Building and Site Utilization Committee and close Harrison High School. This process should begin with the current eighth grade students selecting enrollment only at Farmington High School or North Farmington High School. Students would continue at Harrison High School for 2016-17 and 2017-18. The current Harrison High School freshman class would be the final graduating class from Harrison High School in June 2019, completing their senior year as a "school within a school," at one of the two high schools.

In addition, the middle schools need to be redefined as well. The movement of fifth graders back to their elementary schools results in excess capacity in the middle level buildings.

Administration recommends that Dunckel Middle School be repurposed for other system needs, specifically a K-8 STEAM Academy, an area that received strong support from the Cobalt survey issued to parents/community members. We recommend that this transition begin in the fall of 2017 allowing the current seventh grade class to complete eighth grade at Dunckel. We propose asking families of current seventh grade students for feedback on staying at Dunckel as a one grade school or transitioning to a 6,7,8 middle school. If a majority indicate to us that they prefer to transition to a middle school, we would implement this change for the fall of 2016.

Finally, administration recommends that the current Highmeadow building be repurposed as an early childhood center, beginning in the fall of 2017.

I believe that it is important for the emotional and financial health of the system to make this decision and begin implementation for next fall.

Overview of Recommendation

High School

- Close Harrison High School beginning with current HHS eighth graders being assigned to attend Farmington High School or North Farmington High School beginning with the 2016-17 school year.
- Current HHS students would continue at HHS for the 2016-2017 and 2017-18 school years.
- The current HHS freshman class would be the final HHS graduating class and would be moved together to complete the senior year at either FHS or NFHS as a school within a school.
- Farmington Central High School will be relocated to the Harrison site. It is anticipated that this will be done in the 2017-18 school year.
- The International Baccalaureate will be moved into FHS with full implementation of this move occurring in the 2018-19 school year.

Middle School

- Dunckel Middle School would close as a middle school and be repurposed into a K-8 STEAM Academy beginning in the fall of 2017.

Elementary School/Early Childhood Programs

- The current site housing Highmeadow Common Campus will close at the end of the 2016-2017 with the program, as a STEAM K-8 Academy, moving to Dunckel.
- The current Highmeadow site would then be repurposed to house the District's early childhood program (combining the current programs currently located at Alameda Early Childhood Center and Farmington Community School.)