

District Elementary Enrollment Committee

Humiston Building, Meredith
Monday, December 13, 2004
5:00 p.m.

Members present: Phil McCormack, John Hansen, Richard Hanson, Peter Miller, Steve Kelley, Kay Marini, Peter Miller, Betsy Paine, and Juli Hird.

Public present: John Martin

Meeting called to order at 5:10 p.m.

Public input: None

Minutes: No changes to previous meeting minutes.

The committee continued its work on discussing the pros and cons of various options. The committee began within *Cluster Number 3, Increase Enrollment / Better Utilization of Resources*.

Bring back 7th and 8th grade to SCS

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
Maximizes building capacity	Decreased social opportunities due to diminished peer numbers
Reduces transportation costs and time on bus	Decreased co-curricular opportunities
Kids stay in own community	Transition to high school
Reduces class size at ILMT	Lack of space unless multi-age
Options for peer mentoring	Program facilities (i.e. science) not available
Bring programs to SCS	No overall cost savings / limited cost efficiencies
Small school environment	Too much change in short time
	Loss of "middle school" identity
	Don't need to add 7 th and 8 th grade to justify keeping SCS open

During the listing of the pros and cons, the question was asked what would students in Sandwich not get in 7th and 8th grade educationally, socially, etc. Access to high school course work would be limited, exploratory courses at ILMT not available, social opportunities are decreased and most students have been together since kindergarten. Sports were discussed and it was thought that Sandwich could field teams in baseball, soccer, basketball, cross-country running and skiing.

There was a comment about the difficulty with space in the building if lower grade enrollments increased. Also, implementation of both multi-age and a good middle level program simultaneously is a lot all at once.

Programmatic needs – are there space needs for other District programs that could be housed at SCS?

PROS	CONS
Possible cost savings from out of district placements	Not that many students placed out of district
	Not least restrictive environment
	Transportation costs
	Lack of identified program needs

It was noted that one of the advantages of keeping SCS open is that should a programmatic need arise, space might be available (i.e. full day kindergarten, Sp. Ed.).

Magnet School – create a program focus that entices people to want to attend your school.

PROS	CONS
Specialized focus	Need to market
Long term ramification	Lack of identified focus – need to develop program
Choice	Choice
Most exciting - opportunity to create visioning school	Politically inexpedient due to lack of cost savings in short run
Could generate extra revenue	Won't save money in short run – cost ineffectiveness

There was discussion from both the direction that the market for a magnet school is limited due to the geographic area to the idea that a magnet school could be a long-term solution to fluctuating enrollment. A “magnet” of science, the arts, or experiential learning (tapping into the many local resources such as the Science Center, Loon Center, Historical Societies, NH Music Festival, etc.) were several of the suggestions posed. There was discussion about Sant Bani School. There was discussion about what to do with students whose parents did not subscribe to the particular focus of the magnet school. It was thought that it was an advantage to the District to offer a choice to parents, but this was also a challenge when it comes to transportation of students outside of Sandwich.

There was discussion about the possible need to maintain SCS the way it is for a year or more, while the magnet is developed and marketed. This might be politically and financially inexpedient.

Cluster #4 – Revenue Offsets

Sandwich Financial Subsidy – the general concept with this notion is that the District assessment formula could be altered to address the perceived inequities in funding among the different schools.

Amend Financial Formula in Agreement

PROS	CONS
Address perceived political inequities	Legal issues
	Potential divisiveness
	Short term solution

There was discussion about the *Formula for Assessing Cost to Individual Towns* and the difficulty of altering the formula. It was noted that under the law, the formula may be amended every five years. The formula was originally set in 1961 and was amended once in 1967. There was an attempt to amend it in 1979 that failed. Discussion included the long-term concern about how the total valuation of the three communities will change, altering the percentages of equalized valuation. There was also discussion about Sandwich residents donating additional money to fund specific programs and/or positions. There was discussion that the committee might want to approach the Board to fund consultation with an attorney to explore the ramifications of this issue further.

Public Input: Mr. Martin commented that much discussion revolved around Meredith's perception that Sandwich isn't pulling its weight in terms of cost of running the school. He noted that Sandwich will pay the Inter-Lakes School District a total of \$2,023,718 this school year. Based on figures generated for use in the work of the District-wide Elementary Enrollment Committee, the cost of operating the Sandwich Central School is approximately \$900,000.00 annually. The cost of tuition at the Middle-High School level is \$10,800.00/school year. There are currently ~72 Sandwich students attending ILHS. The cost for educating these students at the \$10,800 tuition rate is approximately \$777,600. The sum of these is \$1,677,600, which leaves an unaccounted balance of \$346,118. In other words, Sandwich taxpayers paid \$346,000 more than the actual cost of its students.

Mr. Martin also commented about the 7th / 8th grade issue, noting that as it stands now, both ILES/ILMT and Sandwich students enter the unfamiliar world of the high school building at the same time, at the same advantage or disadvantage. He thought it would be difficult for a small group of Sandwich students to integrate into the high school two years later than the students from ILES/ILMT.

Mr. Miller appreciated the data presented by Mr. Martin and asked whether similar data could be created for each town. Dr. McCormack and Mr. Hansen said they would gather that information.

Plus/Delta: Dr. Kelley expressed concern that the financial issues we are now discussing are the issues most out of his area of expertise. Ms. Marini found tonight's meeting to be the most fascinating of all the meetings. Mr. Hanson's discomfort level is rising because he is finding it difficult to see a long term resolution within the current time frame. Dr. McCormack didn't think we could do anything differently, but wished we could have made more progress. Ms. Hird thought the process is absolutely necessary and is worried that we might feel forced to leap to a short-term solution; if this happens, she hopes we can provide a vehicle for a long-term solution as well. Mr. Miller agreed with Ms. Hird and added that we should get some legal counsel to advise on some of the more complicated issues. Mr. Miller wants the committee to have thoroughly looked at all possibilities. Ms. Paine thinks that one of our challenges going forward is to communicate the body of knowledge that we have accumulated over time. Ms. Paine noted that there is an incredibly strong sentiment to keep the school in Sandwich. Mr. Hansen appreciated the time the committee is devoting to examining many different ideas, and thinks that the next meeting will prove to be even more interesting than this one.

Next meeting: Monday, December 20, 2004 from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Sandwich Central School library.

Meeting adjourned 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

John Hansen