

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT #832
STUDY SESSION – BOARD OF EDUCATION
Thursday, January 28, 2010 - 6:00 PM
Mahtomedi District Education Center - Community Room

The Mission of the Mahtomedi School District No. 832, as a multi-community public school system, is to provide individually challenging, lifelong learning experiences for all people, leading to productive and self-fulfilling roles in a global society, accomplished through partnerships with students, families, staff and communities all committed to excellence.

- AGENDA -

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. ROLL CALL OF ATTENDANCE
3. DISCUSSION/INFORMATION ITEMS
 - A. Review/Discuss Overall Plan for Bond Election Including Financial Plan, Board Resolution, and Schedule 2
Presenter: Don Lifo and Todd Rapp
6:00 PM
 - B. Review/Discuss Middle School Curriculum Changes to Fit Six-Period Schedule 7
Presenter: Dr. Mark Larson, Dr. Sharon Zweber, and Dr. David Peterson
7:30 PM
 - C. Hear Proposal for District 916 to Operate Mahtomedi Learning Center 21
Presenter: Denise Sundstrom and Jonas Beugen, District 916
8:15 PM
 - D. Review/Discuss Plan for Open Enrollment 2010-2011
Presenter: Dr. Mark Larson and Denise Sundstrom
8:30 PM
4. CLOSE MEETING
 - A. At Request of Superintendent Pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05, subd. 3(a)
5. OPEN MEETING
6. ADJOURNMENT

CERTIFICATION OF MINUTES RELATING TO SPECIAL ELECTION

Issuer: Independent School District No. 832 (Mahtomedi), Minnesota

Governing Body: School Board

Kind, Date, Time and Place of Meeting: A regular meeting, held on February 4, 2010 at 7:00 p.m., at the Mahtomedi District Education Center.

Members present:

Members absent:

Documents Attached:

Minutes of said meeting (including):

RESOLUTION DETERMINING THE NECESSITY OF ISSUING GENERAL
OBLIGATION BONDS AND CALLING A SPECIAL ELECTION THEREON

I, the undersigned, being the duly qualified and acting recording officer of the public corporation referred to in the title of this certificate, certify that the documents attached hereto, as described above, have been carefully compared with the original records of said corporation in my legal custody, from which they have been transcribed; that said documents are a correct and complete transcript of the minutes of a meeting of the governing body of said corporation, and correct and complete copies of all resolutions and other actions taken and of all documents approved by the governing body at said meeting; and that said meeting was duly held by the governing body at the time and place and was attended throughout by the members indicated above, pursuant to call and notice of such meeting given as required by law.

WITNESS my hand officially as such recording officer this 4th day of February, 2010.

School District Clerk

Member _____ introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption, which motion was seconded by Member _____:

RESOLUTION DETERMINING THE NECESSITY OF ISSUING GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS AND CALLING A SPECIAL ELECTION THEREON

BE IT RESOLVED by the School Board (the Board) of Independent School District No. 832 (Mahtomedi), Minnesota (the School District) as follows:

It is hereby found, determined and declared as follows:

1. The Board has investigated the facts and does hereby find, determine and declare that it is necessary and expedient to issue general obligation bonds of the School District in an aggregate amount not to exceed \$45,000,000, for acquisition and betterment of school facilities, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 475.

2. The projects described in paragraph 1 have been submitted to the Commissioner of Education of the State of Minnesota for Review and Comment. The Board's determination to hold the election to authorize the issuance of the Bonds is contingent upon receiving a favorable Review and Comment. When the Commissioner's favorable Review and Comment is received, the Clerk is authorized and directed to publish the Review and Comment in a legal newspaper of general circulation in the School District not less than 20 nor more than 60 days prior to the special election date, as provided in paragraph 3 of this resolution.

The actions of the administration in consulting with the Minnesota Department of Education, for the Commissioner's Review and Comment and taking such other actions as necessary to comply with the provisions of Minnesota Statutes, Section 123B.71, as amended, are hereby ratified and approved in all respects.

The School District's adopted capital expenditure facilities program is hereby amended to include each program component specified in the School District's Review and Comment application to the Commissioner and those components are incorporated in said program as though fully specified therein. The Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee is authorized and directed to prepare the necessary documentation to reflect these amendments to the program and to set forth the property tax effects of the program for each fiscal year.

3. The question of increasing the general education revenue of the School District shall be submitted to the qualified electors of the School District at a special election, which is hereby called and directed to be held on Tuesday, April 27, 2010, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m.

4. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 205A.11, the School District's combined polling place and the precincts served by the polling place, as established and designated by resolution of the Board, are hereby designated for this special election.

5. The Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to cause written notice of the special election to be: (a) provided to the Washington County Auditor at least 53 days before the date of the special election; (b) provided to the Commissioner of Education at least 49 days prior to the

date of the special election; (c) sent by nonforwardable mail to every affected household in the District with at least one registered voter at least fourteen (14) days before the date of the special election; (d) posted at the administrative offices of the School District, for public inspection, at least 10 days before the date of the special election; and (e) published in the official newspaper of the School District once each week for at least two consecutive weeks, with the last publication being at least one week prior to the date of the election. The Notice of Special Election shall be prepared in substantially the following form:

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL ELECTION
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 832
(MAHTOMEDI), MINNESOTA**

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a special election has been called and will be held in and for Independent School District No. 832 (Mahtomedi), Minnesota, on Tuesday, April 27, 2010 between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. to vote on the following question:

**SCHOOL DISTRICT BALLOT QUESTION
APPROVAL OF SCHOOL BUILDING BONDS**

- YES Shall the School Board of Independent School District No. 832 (Mahtomedi), Minnesota, be authorized to issue general obligation school building bonds in an amount not to exceed \$45,000,000, for acquisition and betterment of school facilities?
- NO

**BY VOTING "YES" ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR
A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.**

The polling place for the special election will be:

<u>Polling Place</u>	<u>Territory Served</u>
District Education Center 1520 Mahtomedi Avenue Mahtomedi, MN 55115	All territory located within Independent School District No. 832

All eligible voters residing in the School District may cast a ballot at their assigned polling place during the polling hours specified above.

A voter must be registered to vote to be eligible to vote in the election. An unregistered individual may register to vote at the polling place on election day.

Dated: February 4, 2010

BY ORDER OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

/s/ _____, Clerk

6. If paper ballots are being used, the Clerk is authorized and directed to secure a goldenrod colored ballot box for the deposit of ballots at the polling place and to acquire and distribute such election materials as may be necessary for the proper conduct of this special election. If an optical scan voting system is being used, the Clerk shall comply with the laws and rules governing the procedures and requirements for optical scan voting systems. The Clerk is authorized and directed to acquire and distribute such election materials and to take such other actions as may be necessary for the proper conduct of this special election and generally to cooperate with election authorities conducting the state primary and any other elections on that date. The Clerk and members of the administration are authorized and directed to take such actions as may be necessary to coordinate this election with other elections, including entering into agreements with appropriate municipal and county officials regarding preparation and distribution of ballots or ballot cards, election administration, and cost sharing.

7. If paper ballots are being used, the Clerk is authorized and directed to cause a goldenrod colored printed ballot for the question to be prepared in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Section 205A.08, Subdivision 4 for use at the special election. If an optical scan voting system is being used, the Clerk shall cause official ballots to be printed according to the format of ballots for optical scan voting systems provided by the laws and rules governing optical scan voting systems. The Clerk is further authorized and directed to cause a sample ballot to be posted in the administrative offices of the School District, for public inspection, at least four (4) days before the date of the special election and to cause a sample ballot to be posted at each polling place on the date of the special election and to cooperate with the proper election officials to cause ballots or ballot cards to be prepared for use at said election. The ballot shall be in substantially the following form, with such changes in form and instructions as may be necessary to accommodate the use of an optical scan voting system:

**SCHOOL DISTRICT QUESTION BALLOT
INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 832
(MAHTOMEDI), MINNESOTA
SPECIAL ELECTION**

April 27, 2010

To vote for a question, put an (X) in the square next to the word “YES” for that question.
To vote against a question, put an (X) in the square next to the word “NO” for that question.

**SCHOOL DISTRICT BALLOT QUESTION
APPROVAL OF SCHOOL BUILDING BONDS**

- Shall the School Board of Independent School District No. 832
- YES (Mahtomedi), Minnesota, be authorized to issue
general obligation school building bonds in an amount not to
 NO exceed \$45,000,000, for acquisition and betterment of school
facilities?

**BY VOTING “YES” ON THIS BALLOT QUESTION, YOU ARE VOTING FOR
A PROPERTY TAX INCREASE.**

(Reverse side of ballot)

OFFICIAL BALLOT

April 27, 2010

Judge

Judge

(The ballot is to be initialed by two judges)

8. If the School District will be contracting to print the ballots for this special election, the Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to prepare instructions to the printer for layout of the ballot. Before a contract in excess of \$1,000 is awarded for printing ballots, the printer shall furnish, in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Section 204D.04, a sufficient bond, letter of credit or certified check acceptable to the Clerk in an amount not less than \$1,000 conditioned on printing the ballots in conformity with the Minnesota election law and the instructions delivered. The Clerk shall set the amount of the bond, letter of credit or certified check in an amount equal to the value of the purchase.

9. The Board shall appoint election judges and alternates in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Section 204B.21. The appointments will be made at least 25 days prior to the special election.

10. The special election shall be held and the returns made and canvassed in the manner prescribed by law, and the Board shall meet by May 4, 2010 (within seven days after the election) for the purpose of canvassing the results thereof.

11. Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 205A.07, Subdivision 3a, the Clerk is hereby instructed to notify the Commissioner of Education in writing of the certified vote totals for the ballot question in a timely manner.

Upon vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof:

and the following voted against the same:

whereupon the resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

Mahtomedi Public Schools

Promoting Excellence in Middle Level Education

David W. Peterson, Ph.D.

Middle Level Consultant

Background

The importance of middle level education in America has never been greater, with increasing evidence that these are pivotal years in a student's educational development, and in their success later in life. Recent studies have shown, for example, that the single best predictor for students being able to enter and succeed in post-secondary education is the level of academic achievement that they attain by the end of their eighth-grade year (American College Testing Service).

The high-stakes environment for middle level education is also reflected in increasing expectations from local, state and national governmental agencies in their attempt to increase the rigor of school programming and the success of students in achieving agreed upon standards. These expectations, coupled with diminished resources in most public schools, create both challenges and opportunities for policy makers, administrators and middle level teachers in their pursuit of providing a quality educational opportunity for middle level students.

Successful middle level schools are those who have a combination of three key characteristics, including a strong focus on **academics**, the development of positive **relationships**, and a strong **commitment** to pursue an agreed upon set of common goals and objectives. Rather than focusing on just one of these characteristics, the strongest middle schools are ones who have figured out how each of these attributes work together to promote learning for middle level students.

Academics

Academic achievement has become the focal point for defining a successful middle school, and the curriculum of the middle school is how the academic program is defined and implemented. The school needs first to agree upon the content of the curriculum before deciding on the strategies for implementing the instructional program.

The word curriculum in Latin means "a path to run in small steps." As educators we negotiate and choose that path, by prescribing the parameters of the subjects that the school will require of students, but ultimately it is the students who determine how they will, or if they can, take steps on the path with each class, each teacher, and each day they come to school (Jacobs, 2010).

The planned curriculum of the middle school, or the path on which we place students, is subject to and created by a number of forces. Studies addressing the middle level curriculum suggest that the primary force for designing the curriculum should be the characteristics of the middle level student (Beane, 1993; Jackson, 2000; George, 1992). In reality, the curriculum of the middle school is shaped by multiple factors, including influences from the local, state and federal levels.

Almost all middle level schools with similar size and demographic characteristics as Mahtomedi Middle School organize their curriculum around three components; the **core or basic curriculum**, the **exploratory curriculum**, and the **elective curriculum** (Peterson, 2001). For many middle level schools the term “exploratory” is used to describe all learning experiences not part of the basic or core curriculum.

While the organizational structure of many middle schools still mirrors the subject-oriented approach of the traditional junior high school, from which the middle school movement evolved, the effective middle school blurs the lines among the subjects by consciously constructing interdisciplinary approaches that mirror real-world problem solving.

Effective middle level teachers are constantly looking for ways to make their subject relevant for students through the implementation of content choices that are rich, natural and rigorous (Jacobs, 2010). Particularly effective is the use of curriculum themes, within which teachers in each subject can make deliberate connections to themes such as Wellness, Conflict Resolution, Independence, Identities, Justice and Caring (George, 1992).

The implementation of any curricular offering is affected by four different parameters (Jacobs, 2010):

- The schedule used, both on a daily, weekly, or longer-term basis
- The way students are grouped as learners
- The manner in which the teachers are organized within their departments, teams and grade levels.
- The use of space both within the physical confines of the school building, and in the use made by the school of virtual learning environments.

Educational leaders must take these four factors into account, both individually and collectively, when planning for changes in the curriculum for students.

Middle School Comparison Study

Data for this report were gathered by studying the instructional programming features of 17 middle schools in the Twin Cities Metro area. Each of these middle schools shares one or more common features with the demographics, middle school programming, past success, and current expectations for achievement with

that of the Mahtomedi School District. Additionally, the instructional programs of each of the 26 middle schools across the nation who were designated as Blue Ribbon Schools by the Department of Education were studied. In each case the school's core curriculum was examined, as well as the exploratory offerings of the school. For many of the middle schools in the Twin Cities Comparison study, onsite visits were conducted, with extensive interviews being conducted with parents, students, teachers and administrators.

Core Curriculum

The core curriculum of middle school is the content and skills that are considered to be basic for all students. This content, a core of common learnings, has increasingly been shaped by federal No Child Left Behind legislation, as well as by state standards. Additionally, the level of student achievement in middle school is strongly correlated with success in high school and college.

In all comparable high achieving schools in this study, the core of common learnings required of students consists of courses in 1) language arts, 2) social studies, 3) mathematics and 4) science. Students in other comparable grades 6-8 middle schools are typically enrolled in these "Big Four" required courses for each of the three years they are in the middle level school.

With the content of mathematics being a sequential endeavor, one skill building upon another, most middle schools build their math curriculum to prepare students for continued study at the high school level. Grouping by ability and achievement is a feature of all Twin Cities Metro area schools as well as in each of the middle schools who were recipients of the 2009 Blue Ribbon Award from the federal Department of Education. Each of these schools has courses with at least two different levels, allowing students to pursue advanced levels of math.

High achieving middle schools use a variety of strategies to promote the acquisition of skills in reading, writing and speaking. All schools in the framework of this study require a full year of study in Language Arts at each grade level in their middle schools. Approximately half of the schools in this study require additional coursework in Reading instruction at the sixth and seventh grade levels.

The subjects of science and social studies, while not receiving the same level of national and state scrutiny as math and language arts, are also viewed as core curriculum by all middle schools in this study. Some middle schools require less than a full year of study in these subjects, most notably at Grade 6 where some of the time for these subjects is used to incorporate other subjects such as Health and the study of World language/cultures. Additionally, the content of the social studies and science curriculum is often used to create interdisciplinary curriculum units of instruction.

Exploratory/Elective Curriculum

Exploration is important for adolescents because it ensures hands-on, participatory, meaningful and engaging experiences. Exploratory courses have survived because they meet the most fundamental of middle level concepts—they are developmentally responsive and academically challenging (Brazee, 2000).

The most common model for implementation of the exploratory curriculum is a “wheel” of required exploratory offerings where students rotate from one subject to the other throughout the school year, often in time frames of quarters (9 weeks), trimesters (12 weeks) or semesters (18 weeks). These courses are scheduled either on a daily basis, or every other day, in either shorter or longer time blocks, depending on the overall schedule adopted by the school.

Music, physical education and art are most commonly found as requirements at the 6th grade level, while FACS and Technology are more likely to be required at grade 7. Typically schools will use these five exploratory course areas, and the teachers who teach them, to implement a limited number of electives at grade 8.

World languages are increasingly being offered or required of middle level students. Only three middle schools in the 17-school Metro Area Comparison study and four schools in the 26-school Blue Ribbon Middle School Study reported having no world language offerings in the grades 6-8 framework. More commonly, schools offer one or more languages at the 8th grade level, and 12 of the 17 schools in the comparison study had offerings of at least a quarter or semester at grade 7. Specific languages taught in the Comparison schools included Spanish, French, German, Latin, and Mandarin Chinese (the fastest growing new world language being offered), with Spanish being the most frequently-taught language.

Additionally, a number of school districts are implementing language immersion study at the elementary level. This feature has presented the challenge to the middle level schools of providing a continuation of some form of advanced language study for incoming immersion students, while at the same time providing introductory experiences for other students.

Required vs. Elective Courses

The debate of whether to require a common core of exploratory experiences for all students or to let students choose from a menu of options has existed since the inception of the middle-level concept. There is no clear-cut advantage for the exclusive use of either approach. By requiring a common set of exploratory experiences the school provides opportunities to open students’ minds to new interest areas that might otherwise never be discovered. For many students middle school may be the last opportunity to explore new subjects and interests (Brazee, 2000).

On the other hand, to allow the exclusive use of student choice in selecting exploratory options has the inherent advantage of increasing student motivation,

by allowing students to choose only those areas that are of inherent interest to them.

Studies of other middle schools show a high degree of consistency in approaching the dilemma of required vs. a student choice approach to designing the middle school curriculum, with the age of the student being the key in allowing student choice. For example, no middle school in the Metro Area Comparison Study, or in the Blue Ribbon Middle School Study group allowed curricular choices for sixth graders, other than within exploratory areas (band, choir or general music; or the choice of a particular world language), with most schools using a similar approach at grade 7. At the eighth-grade level, however, almost all of the comparison schools allowed students to elect certain course offerings.

Elective Course Offerings

The elective courses offered by middle schools almost always consist of specific strands of the required exploratory curriculum that is taught at sixth-and seventh-grade. For example, eighth-graders might be able to select from courses in Family Consumer Science (Foods Lab, Snack Shop, etc.), Art (Ceramics, 3-D Art, etc.), Industrial Tech (Woodworking, Robotics, etc.), Music (band, choir, orchestra, general music, guitar, etc.) and world language (Spanish, French, Chinese, etc.).

Elective course offerings in special interest areas within the core curriculum areas, such as Drama, Forensic Science, Marine Biology, Teen Literature, etc., are found in few middle schools, likely due to the complexities of scheduling these electives with staff who have the proper licensure and the time in their schedules. These specialty elective course offerings are more commonly found at the high school level where the structure of the schedule is more conducive to a wide array of elective course offerings, especially for juniors and seniors.

The data from this study show that schools with more periods in their school day have more elective opportunities. The schools in the study break down roughly into thirds, with approximately one-third having a six period day, another third having a 7-period day, and the remaining third in an 8-period day. All school officials who were interviewed mentioned the dilemmas associated with balancing the need for a broad range of experiences for middle school students, along with the realities of the resources and time to present those options.

The data collected about world language programming in area middle schools showed a high degree of variation. Only three middle schools in the 17-school Metro Area Comparison study and four schools in the 26-school Blue Ribbon Middle School Study report having no world language offerings or requirements at any grade level. More commonly, schools offer one or more languages at the 8th grade level. And 12 of the 17 schools in the comparison study had offerings of at least a quarter or semester at grade 7.

Extra-curricular offerings

Finally, high-achieving middle schools supplement the regular school program with elective extra-curricular activities as a way of enriching and extending the regular curriculum. Almost all middle schools in the Comparison group had opportunities for students to participate in athletic, drama and extra-curricular music groups. School plays in many middle schools are designed around a philosophy of inclusion, allowing as many students as possible to participate. Additionally, schools with strong Gifted/Talented and/or High Potential programs often offer extra curricular events and opportunities for students with high academic skills to gain the benefits of participation and competition.

Balancing the Core and Exploratory Curriculum

In both the Core and the Exploratory Curricular areas, the curriculum should be tailored to the larger world of the actual field of practice, to insure that the curriculum is relevant and interesting for students. Allow students to see, for example, what engineers are building, what forms writers are generating, what artists are saying about their work, and what scientists are studying. (Jacobs, 2010).

Within the Core curriculum, middle schools should require students to study rigorous and relevant topics on a full-year basis for each of the three years of middle school. This core curriculum should provide for teaching and learning activities that are tightly aligned with local, state and national standards.

The effective middle school should provide opportunities for students to see the connectedness among subject areas by providing multiple opportunities for teachers to design and implement interdisciplinary units of instruction. Allow students to fully engage the depth and richness of each subject area by infusing the use of technology whenever possible. Additionally, teachers should be encouraged to incorporate the concept of student choice within each core curricular subject area by allowing students the opportunity to use a variety of instructional materials and assessment methods to demonstrate competence in meeting instructional goals.

<h2>Relationships</h2>

Having a strong curriculum is a necessity for any high quality middle school, but it is only one part of the total picture of an effective middle school. Learning is ultimately about relationships—about making connections among people, places, resources and ideas (NASSP, 2006). The relationships among students, teachers and parents are critical in defining the success of middle schools.

The relationship between teachers and students is particularly important as studies of middle school students show that between the ages of 10-13, students tend to be more concerned about teachers' personal attributes, and their ability to relate to them on a personal level, than about their knowledge of the subject or

their teaching skills. No matter what textbooks, materials, curriculum guides, or other resources are used, at the middle level, the teachers are the curriculum (George, 1992)

Developmentally Appropriate Programming

This developmental need of middle level students to form a positive relationship with their teachers is the key rationale supporting the initial development and the continuing use of advisory programs in middle schools (Jackson and Davis, 2000). Each middle school in the Comparison Study had some form of regular meeting of a group of students with a teacher for purposes of implementing certain features of advisement. Some schools use the advisory period for a quick, daily check in, using 5-10 minutes at the beginning or end of the day to communicate announcements, take attendance and take care of administrative duties.

Other middle schools allocate as much as 25 minutes to a daily Advisory group meeting, and use it to implement a full array of activities, including, in some cases, a series of high interest electives. In either case, the intent of the Advisory program is to put teachers and students together in a less-formal setting, with the intent that positive personal relationships will develop over time between the teacher and this group of students. Some middle schools are using the advisory period as a way of cultivating long-term relationships by having students assigned to the same advisor for the entire three-years of their middle school experience.

The concept of teachers working in teams can also promote positive relationships within a middle school. First, this arrangement promotes cooperation and collaboration among the teaching staff, increasing the likelihood that students will see adults modeling cooperation and respect among adults in the school (Clark, 1994). Also, students benefit from being part of a team by gaining a sense of identity and feeling of belonging that is critical at this point in their lives. This “in-group feeling” is promoted by many middle schools by having team names, logos, or other identifying symbols to promote a feeling of inclusion.

Parental Involvement and Support

Finally, effective middle schools do not overlook opportunities to promote positive relationships with parents. At a time in their lives when they are often attempting to shut their parents out of their lives, middle school students still need the guidance and support of parents. Effective middle schools seek to provide parents with enough information to help them do their difficult job of parenting, while at the same time allowing students the independence necessary to make their own decisions and learn from the results of those choices.

Keeping Relationships Strong

In order to keep relationships at the forefront of middle level programming, the effective middle school should provide for regular contact between a group of students and a staff member who serves in an advisory capacity. There should be

sufficient time on a regular basis for this advisor and the students to forge a positive, personal relationship.

The school program should provide opportunities for staff to engage in regular dialogue to determine the appropriate balance between the formal and informal curriculum for the advisory period. There should also be methods in place to assess the school climate on a regular basis, as a way of measuring the success of the advisory program in creating and maintaining positive relationships within the school.

Commitment

There are many important external forces at play in reforming middle schools, including:

- External accountability mandates. State and national testing standards provide plenty of incentive for middle schools to promote student achievement, especially in math and language arts skills which are part of high-stakes federal mandates for achievement.
- Achievement of students in a global context. This is an area of concern, especially when examining the data showing the differences in achievement between American students and their counterparts in Europe and Asia (NASSP, 2006).
- Local competition for students. Schools throughout the country, and especially in Minnesota where open-enrollment is firmly in place, face competition for students. Many parents have the ability, and the geographic proximity, to choose from several schools, including traditional public, charter/public, private schools and home schooling to meet their children's educational needs.

If we as policy makers and educators respond only to these external forces, however, we will find ourselves merely adopting a defensive position, and reacting to the next threat that comes along. Instead, all members of the middle school community, including teachers, students, administrators, parents and policy makers, need to be guided and inspired by a vision and mission around a commitment to the middle school concept.

By regularly engaging in discussions of the vision and mission of the school district, and in particular of Mahtomedi Middle School, parents, teachers, school leaders and district policy makers can maintain the already strong commitment that exists for middle level education in the district. Engage in discussion of the essential meaning of this statement, and use it as a guiding force in the design and implementation of program changes, both for the 2010-11 school year and beyond.

Conclusion

The Mahtomedi Public Schools have established a tradition of excellence at all levels of schooling. The collective strength of the district as an organization provides a firm foundation for insuring the success of all students through their Pre-K-12 school experience. The role of middle level education in the district is of vital importance in building a bridge between elementary and high school programs, and in preparing students for success in their lives after graduation.

The changes in middle-level programming that are being proposed for the 2010-11 school year represent a realignment of a program that has been very successful in the past. These proposed changes take into account the research from numerous middle level scholars and practitioners, and also reflect the social, economic and political realities at the state and local level. The proposed program revisions have the potential to preserve and protect the positive features of the previous middle school program, and at the same time have the potential to promote new initiatives for teaching and learning that will propel the middle school to new levels of achievement.

The level of success of the new program will depend directly on the ability of middle level staff, students and parents to focus on academic achievement, foster positive relationships, and demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the success of the middle school program

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Ten Great Sites Every Middle Level Educator Should Know.
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<p style="text-align: center;">Appendix A: Recommendations for Improving College and Career Readiness*</p>

1. Focus K-8 standards on the knowledge and skills that are essential for college and career readiness, and make these non-negotiable for all students.
2. Monitor student progress in becoming ready for college and career, and intervene with students who are not on track to becoming ready, beginning in upper elementary school and continuing through middle school.
3. Improve students' academic behavior. Reduce counterproductive student behaviors that lead to putting off academic work.
4. Increase federal and state support for schools to implement intervention programs that help all students become ready for college and career.

*The Forgotten Middle: Ensuring that All Students Are on Target for College and Career Readiness before High School. ACT Inc., Iowa City, IA, 2008.

Appendix B: Principles for Successful Middle Schools*

1. Teach a curriculum grounded in rigorous, public academic standards for what students should know and be able to do, relevant to the concerns of adolescents and based on how students learn best.
2. Use instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve higher standards and become lifelong learners.
3. Staff middle grades schools with teachers who are expert at teaching young adolescents, and engage teachers in ongoing, targeted professional development opportunities.
4. Organize relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community of shared educational purpose.
5. Govern democratically, through direct or representative participation by all school staff members, the adults who know the students best.
6. Provide a safe and healthy school environment as part of improving academic performance and developing caring and ethical citizens.
7. Involve parents and communities in supporting student learning and healthy development

*Jackson, Anthony W. and Davis, Gayle A. Turning Points 2000: Educating Adolescents in the 21st Century, Jackson, A Report of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, National Middle School Association, 2000

Appendix C:

Nine Cornerstone Strategies for Successful Middle Schools*

1. Establish the academically rigorous essential learnings that a student is required to master in order to successfully make the transition to high school and align the curriculum and teaching strategies to realize that goal.
2. Create dynamic teacher teams that are afforded common planning time to help organize and improve the quality and quantity of interactions between teachers and students.
3. Provide structured planning time for teachers to align the curriculum across grades and schools and to map efforts that address the academic, developmental, social and personal needs of students, especially at critical transition periods (e.g. elementary to middle grades, middle grades to high school)
4. Implement a comprehensive advisory or other program that ensures that each student has frequent and meaningful opportunities to meet with an adult to plan and assess the student's academic, personal and social development.
5. Ensure that teachers assess the individual learning needs of students and tailor instructional strategies and multiple assessments accordingly.
6. Entrust teachers with the responsibility of implementing schedules that are flexible enough to accommodate teaching strategies consistent with the ways students learn most effectively and that allow for effective teacher teaming, common planning time, and other lesson planning.
7. Institute structural leadership systems that allow for substantive involvement in decision making by students, teachers, family members, and the community, and that support effective communication among these groups.
8. Align all programs and structures so that all social, economic, and racial/ethnic groups have open and equal access to challenging activities and learning.
9. Align the school-wide comprehensive, ongoing professional development program and the Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) of staff members with the requisite knowledge of content, instructional strategies, and student development factors.

*Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle level Reform,
National Association of Secondary School Principals, Reston, VA, 2006.

An Analysis of Proposed Plans for Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District Assuming Operating Responsibility of Mahtomedi Learning Center (MLC)

BACKGROUND

The Mahtomedi Learning Center (MLC) has a strong record of effectively serving the needs of at-risk high school learners. The program creates a unique personalized environment that allows many students who have previously struggled academically and/or behaviorally to find success in high school and beyond. This program is a significant asset for the Mahtomedi School District and community.

Unfortunately, the small size of the program (approximately 45 students, half of which are Mahtomedi residents) creates challenges that make it less economically efficient to operate than the other schools in the Mahtomedi School District.

Total expenditures for the program in FY09 were \$451,349. This does not include some incidental costs related to transportation and tuition for the Northeast Metro 916 Career and Technical Center. Consequently, the estimated direct cost of operating MLC during FY09 was approximately \$11,300 per student. This is significantly more than the direct cost per student at Mahtomedi High School which was \$7,800. The cost per student at MLC has increased in recent years, in part due to requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), which requires teachers to be “highly qualified” in the subjects they teach. This requirement compels the program to employ additional licensed staff. Another concern is that economics have reduced student access to art, special education, and social work services. Furthermore, a school enrollment this size requires that employees take on a variety of tasks, which has created increasing challenges in working within bargaining group contracts and maintaining the full-time positions necessary to develop the community environment that is so essential to effective alternative education.

Expenses exceeded revenues for 2006-2007 by (\$40,076) and for 2008-09 by (\$77,043). The Mahtomedi Learning Center has not been profitable for the past 2 years and is expected to have a loss for the third straight year of (\$100,000) for 2009-2010. Expenditures increase every year due to staffing, benefits and other fixed costs including lease expense. Revenue has remained flat for the past 3 years due to not being able to generate more attendance at the MLC.

This past summer program director John Sedey announced that he would be retiring at the end of December 2009. At this time the Mahtomedi School District began exploring options for increasing the long-term financial viability of the program and providing an increased level of service for the students attending the program. As part of this process it was determined that Jonas Beugen, principal of the Northeast Metro 916 Area Learning Center, would assume administrative responsibilities for MLC from January 1st, 2010, until June 30th, 2010, on a contract-for-service basis with Northeast Metro 916.

In August 2009 it was also decided that representatives from Mahtomedi School District and Northeast Metro 916 would examine the viability of Northeast Metro 916 assuming fiscal and management responsibility of MLC beginning July 1st, 2010.

FINDINGS

An examination of the fiscal implications of the proposed change revealed the following.

- The economies of scale associated with Northeast Metro 916 operating the program as part of a system that includes two other Area Learning Center sites (located in Columbia Heights & Little Canada) would result in significant reductions in costs associated with operating the program. Examples include cost savings in the areas of administration and special education.
- With Northeast Metro 916 operating the program, there would be opportunities for students to access additional resources in the areas of art instruction, social work, and special education. These opportunities could be offered at no extra cost (except mileage reimbursement) because they would be provided by employees that will assume additional responsibilities at current FTE levels.
- Per Minnesota law, students attending the program would continue to be able to earn a Mahtomedi School District diploma. Additionally, students would have the opportunity to choose to earn a Northeast Metro 916 diploma, which is based upon Minnesota graduation requirements.
- There are several reasons to believe that there are opportunities for the program to grow as a Northeast Metro 916 program, including the partnerships that Northeast Metro 916 has developed with surrounding districts, which will help with efforts to attract additional students.
- The Mahtomedi Learning Center currently has five full-time employees, including three licensed staff members and two paraprofessionals. The three licensed staff members would all have an opportunity to apply to remain in similar positions after the transition as Northeast Metro 916 employees. It has not yet been determined how many paraprofessionals would be included in FY11 staffing, however, it is likely that both of these employees would be able to remain in a paraprofessional role in one of the two school districts.
- Despite the increased efficiencies associated with the proposal, it will be necessary for the program to show moderate growth in student enrollment in order to remain financially viable as a Northeast Metro 916

program. Northeast Metro 916 is willing to pursue this proposal with the understanding that it will be necessary to make expected enrollment targets in order to maintain the program long-term. Northeast Metro 916 cannot operate the program long-term at a loss.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of the Administration of Mahtomedi School District and Northeast Metro 916 that the Mahtomedi Learning Center be operated by Northeast Metro 916 beginning July 1st, 2010.

NEXT STEPS INCLUDE:

1. Identify a timeline of key activities/decisions over the next 30 days and up to June 30, 2010, to ensure an effective transition of responsibilities to District 916.
2. Identify the assurances we will uphold after the transition occurs. For example, these assurances include continuation of the partnership/identity with Mahtomedi School District, Mahtomedi High School, and Community Education. Continue the name of program as Mahtomedi Learning Center.
3. Develop a Question and Answer document that responds to issues raised by staff, students and parents. Inform parents and students of the change immediately after February 4 and schedule a time to meet with parents in mid-February.