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### The report of the task force on student alignment 22 March 2010

Task Force on Student Alignment

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The Report  
of the  
Task Force  
on  
Student Alignment

22 March 2010

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## Task Force on Student Alignment

### Members

Katherine M. Labanaris, Chairman  
Richard Girard, Vice-Chairman  
Jo Ann Heath  
Kathleen Kamveris  
Sister Frances Marion  
Marina Skaperdas  
Christine Telge

### *Task Force on Student Alignment Mission*

*The team shall conduct a non-political and thorough review of how we currently align our students across the school district. How School District lines are drawn. What busing routes are in effect. Recommendations shall include: How to more efficiently align our student population: Where the greatest opportunities to reduce overcrowding are: Whether the facilities are currently used in an optimal manner for the K-5, middle school, and high school model.*

Testimony  
of  
Superintendents  
and  
Planning Department  
Representative

## TASK FORCE ON STUDENT ALIGNMENT

Dr. Charles Littlefield, Superintendent, SAU # 15

January 27, 2010

### K-8 ADVANTAGES

- Transitions are tough for kids
- K-8 minimizes anxiety for kids and families
- Research indicates student achievement is linked to a sense of school community, stability, and true sense of community after 9 years in the same building
- Shared responsibility for learning across all grade levels. Coordinate curriculum both implicit and explicit instruction, differentiation.
- 8<sup>th</sup> graders stayed younger, longer and helped the younger children
- Larger facilities which gave the opportunity for younger students: regulation size gym, tech facilities, art, music, and media center. The ability to concentrate resources is also greater.

## TASK FORCE ON STUDENT ALIGNMENT

Dr. Charles Littlefield, Superintendent, SAU # 15

January 27, 2010

### FORM FOLLOWS FUNCTION

1. Vision/Function
2. How does the form fit into the function?
  - What does the curriculum look like?
  - What do the classrooms look like? WWI vintage schools/racial/economic isolation
3. Facilities Analysis
4. 2011-2012 lead time, starting now
  - Two years to put the program together
  - Curriculum document
  - What will the new teaching and learning look like?
5. Ten years to complete
  - In any organizational change, no one gets hurt.
  - Parental support, key to success
  - Kids first
  - Concept of the “Grammar School”
6. Staggered Openings
  - K-5 Buses
  - 6-8 Buses
  - A safety question, walking today in some places is not safe
  - Bus full-day kindergarten
7. Supervising Principal
  - Two Associate Principals
8. Set high expectations
  - No excuses...higher than predicated performance
9. Kid centered HS principal
  - Less than 1% drop out
10. Discipline down and student achievement up

TASK FORCE ON STUDENT ALIGNMENT

Dr. Charles Littlefield, Superintendent, SAU # 15

January 27, 2010

REDISTRICTING

1. Must get it right the first time
2. It is not herding cattle, it is about intellectual development
3. Kid factors
  - all schools equal
  - balance of free and reduced lunch
  - regular and special ed
  - affluent/middle/poor
4. Small and large group discussion/PTA organizations
5. Effect on kids, facilities, and families



## TASK FORCE ON STUDENT ALIGNMENT

Robert Suprenant, Superintendent SAU # 40

February 10, 2010

- 34 years of middle school experience
- His questions for the task force:
  - Why are you doing this?
  - Is it worth the cost?
  - What are you trying to achieve?
- Environment
  - K-8
  - Size of schools/fewer students mitigates noise level
  - Staffing: this can be the challenge
    - K-8 = general approach to curriculum
    - 6-8 specific expertise, HQT certification

Middle Schools...receive a bum rap/reputation based on traditional curriculum/ behavior of middle school students is loud, travel is packs, pushing and shoving. They challenge one's ability to manage.

Family and Consumer Science/Band/Industrial Arts

Configuration is not so important as: Can we meet the needs of students?

When schools are too small, students become restless with environment

Same teachers K-8

## TASK FORCE ON STUDENT ALIGNMENT

Dr. Thomas J. Brennan, Superintendent, SAU # 37

February 3, 2010

- We have the capacity to make it work...but, no shoehorning
- Enthusiastic about K-8 approach, but implemented middle school concept
- Requires DOE waivers  
    Course Offerings  
    Meets administrative rules or must seek relief
- A logical plan...meeting overall needs
- Address make-up and structure of schools
- Fewer transitions the better
- A consistent approach
- A systemic change as this requires a generation +2 years to observe/evaluate the process as it evolves.
- Must vett everything
- Need facilities audit, demographic audit, redistricting
- For the West Side....1-2 year lead time, (premium location) theory

## TASK FORCE ON STUDENT ALIGNMENT

Pamela Gaucher,  
Planning Department, Deputy Director

February 17, 2010

- Constant population numbers, to slight decrease over the past ten years; Steady at 107K

### Development:

- 198 units on Karatzas Ave.
- Countryside (Northwest corner): 380 units
- Woodland Pond: 72 lots, 50 homes built
- Neighborhoods at Woodland Pond: 487 units approved, 40 units built, additional 60 units to be built

### Impact on schools:

- 1.8 to 2.4 children per single-family home

### Impact fees:

- Fairly low, at two thousand dollars per unit
- Can only be used for capital improvements, not for renovations nor enlarging to increase capacity, not to pay debt service

### Future Projects:

- South Mammoth Road: SOHA
- Edward J. Roy Drive: 80 homes
- Island Pond Road: 12 single-family homes, 15 condominiums

City of Manchester Master Plan is available on the web site: [www.manchesternh.gov](http://www.manchesternh.gov)

# PROS AND CONS

K-8

K-5/6-8

## PROS K-8

- Fewer transitions
- Builds a stronger sense of school community and more active parent participation. This sense of community extends into the high schools as well.
- Younger students may benefit from greater resources, gym, music, art, media center available when K-8 in one school
- Fewer adolescents concentrated in one school, therefore, fewer discipline problems (issues)
- Students would stay younger, longer
- Upper grade students could mentor younger students; take responsibility, and show concern for them; younger ones look up to older students.
- Faculty, parents, and students build a level of trust. Students feel confident enough to speak to or confide in any teacher. Administration and teachers have significant history with students and families.
- Older students are more aware of their behaviors around younger students.
- More curriculum control and continuity.
- Greater opportunity for vertical articulation of curriculum with emphasis on differentiation of instruction.
- Student academic achievement improves.
- Potential transportation cost savings.

## CONS K-8

- Elementary facilities are not built so that form fits function
- The possibility of loss of unified arts programs
- Possibility of loss of availability of algebra for 8<sup>th</sup> graders
- Cost effectiveness: Facilities audit, demographic audit, redistricting, professional development, retrofitting buildings
- Capability of each school to mirror the others. Equal access to: Gym, cafeteria, music, Family and Consumer Science and Industrial Arts classrooms
- Time required to make facility accommodations, retrofit facilities, prepare staff, inform public
- Systemic change in delivery of education services will be the source of much concern among parents, administrators, teachers, and students
- Teachers may need alteration in HQT designation or require waivers

## PROS K-5/6-8

- Different teaching and learning strategies
- Professionals who want to work with and are trained in the area of younger adolescents
- Organizational structure may better prepare students for transition to and expectations in high school
- More elective options and sports programs
- Change in current system may cause disruption
- Middle schools offer a greater cross-section of our community; more diverse population
- Collaboration and team teaching allows for a correlation of goals/discussions of students/behaviors/curriculum
- Administrative staff and guidance are prepared to work with this age group
- Facilities with a library media center, gym, stage for band practice, concerts
- Opportunity to study algebra, science classrooms are available, access to guidance, health and wellness support programs

### CONS K-5/6-8

- Isolation of the middle grades
- Discipline issues/large groups with similar developmental challenges
- Not enough emphasis on academic rigor
- Standardized test results indicate that the middle grades are the weak academic link
- Academic motivation is overshadowed by the challenges of adolescence; physiological changes.
- Another transition for students; may cause anxiety and stress
- 6<sup>th</sup> graders are too young to be with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders



FINDINGS  
AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. K-8 is a viable option, if it meets the needs of each student as well as the mission of the Manchester School District

### *Vision of the Manchester School District*

*Through the involvement of our families, educators and the community, the Manchester School District provides a safe, supportive, respectful and engaging learning environment which has high expectations for student achievement and embraces diversity. As a result, each student is prepared to be a responsible citizen, lifelong learner, and contributing member of society.*

2. Redistricting, particularly in the Mammoth Road and Currier Hill areas, would serve to eliminate overcrowding in the affected elementary schools.

## MINORITY REPORT

3. The current configuration of K-5/6-8 should remain in place. The administration must address the concerns included in this report with particular emphasis on the over-arching problems of student achievement and discipline issues.

### The vote in support of K-8 was as follows:

Christine Telge  
Marina Skaperdas  
Sister Frances Marion  
Kathleen Kamveris  
Richard Girard  
Jo Ann Heath

### The vote in support of K-5/6-8 was as follows:

Katherine Labanaris

## RESOURCES

New England League of Middle Schools Report on Grade Configuration

Leveling the Field  
American School Board Journal, March 2010

Research Brief  
The Principals' Partnership

Available from Superintendent Brennan