

SILVER/**PETRUCELLI**+ASSOCIATES

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Meeting Minutes

Project: Regional School District #13 School Facilities Study

Client: Regional School District #13
135A Pickett Lane
Durham, CT 06422

Location: Strong Middle School
191 Main Street
Durham, CT 06422

Date: October 24, 2016 at 7:00pm

Attendees:

Kathryn Veronesi	RSD 13, Superintendent	kveronesi@rsd13.org
Robert Moore	RSD 13, B.O.E. Chair	moore@rsd13.org
Kerrie Flanagan	RSD 13, B.O.E. Treasurer	kflanagan@rsd13.org
Parents	RSD 13	
Michelle Miller	S/P+A, Project Architect	mmiller@silverpetrucelli.com
Jason Ferrisi	S/P+A, Project Manager	jferrisi@silverpetrucelli.com

Parents Focus Group

The goal of this meeting was to meet with parents of the district to discuss programmatic elements and ideas, to develop a better understanding of what is needed / wanted in the district schools. S/P+A provided a brief PowerPoint presentation which contained a few sample layouts and examples of possible furniture options to review with the group to ignite thinking of the possibilities, and current trends in educational setups.

In attendance was about 30 parents. The parents represent the following number of children and their corresponding schools of attendance.

Brewster Elementary School	13 students
Lyman Elementary School	19 students
Strong Middle School	1 student
Memorial Middle School	3 students

The idea was introduced at the beginning of the meeting of the reconfiguration of the district schools into (2) K-5 elementary schools, and (1) 6-8 middle school.

Ideas & Concerns

A major concern among parents is the logistics behind how/when construction will take place. Although the project has yet to address the construction process and timeline, concerns were brought up about occupied construction and the timeframe of the potential projects. The idea of swing space raises concerns as moving kids around a building, or to different schools can be disruptive to the learning process, and can be hard on the children. Also, the school scheduling and busing issues that come with reconfiguration is a concern among parents.

The parents voiced their liking of the Higher Order Thinking (HOT) and Integrated Day (ID) programs, with a few parents stating how they moved to the district specifically for these programs. The current ID program offers the continuation from 5th to 6th grade with the same teacher and group of students. This increases the level of comfort among students, minimizes beginning of the year anxieties and increases learning time by reducing the initial beginning of the year introductory period. Less transitions are better for younger children. The parents expressed their concern of breaking the 5-6 continuation by reconfiguring the schools, and are apprehensive on how the continuum for a 6-8 ID program school would work.

One topic that was mentioned was the idea of an influx of private school students moving to public schools after the construction / reconfiguration; resulting in the new / updated facilities in a public-school system being more attractive and cost effective for parents. Sizing and designing the school based on current enrollment projections which may not account for this possible influx, may leave the school undersized. Given that there is currently a private ID program school in the district, this could also increase the demand for the ID program among public schools.

The following is a list of ideas the parents would like to see integrated into the district schools:

- Maintain smaller class sizes.
- Provide adequately sized classrooms.
- Provide outside space for outdoor teaching and activities like gardening, and poetry reading.
- Indoor gardens spaces and planter areas would provide the ability to teach about nature without having to leave the building.
- Provide private spaces for one-on-one interactions, as well as small group collaboration. Currently small group work is conducted in the hallways which can be disruptive to other classrooms, and not ideal for the students.
- Provide a sink in every classroom to facilitate messier art activities like painting. This allows art to take place throughout the school, not just in the “art room”. Sinks in every classroom also promotes sanitation, through regular hand washing.
- Provide sufficiently sized storage areas for backpacks and coats. Ensure a storage area for each student.
- Provide adaptable and flexible rooms to facilitate dynamic learning.
- Accommodate the growing needs for special education rooms and spaces.
- To promote reading, provide reading nooks to give each student a place to escape to and get lost in a book.
- Provide adequately sized media centers to accommodate the buildings student population. The media center should be arranged to allow more than one group of students to use the space at a time.
- Provide a centrally located office / collaboration space for the specials teachers (art, music, etc.). This would allow them to collaborate easier with each other and other teachers in the building. A common space would be beneficial for all teachers to meet and collaborate.
- Provide computer spaces in the media centers which are secluded, and can be used without disruption if another larger group is using the media center.

- Regarding the reconfiguration of schools, the parents expressed the idea of keeping the younger kids in a separate wing from older kids.
- Utilize flexible furniture, including stand up desks, dynamic seating, and movable furniture on lockable castors.
- Soft porous surfaces may pose a sanitary issue, as cleaning and disinfecting can be a challenge.
- Do away with the existing portables.
- Provide an open inviting foyer that makes parents and visitors feel welcomed. Provide increased security; visitors should be directed into the office to sign in, or be “buzzed in” before they can enter the rest of the building.
- Classrooms located directly adjacent to the main entrance is less than ideal from a security perspective.
- Provide a secluded space for parents and families when visiting to have private conversations.
- Enable assembly spaces, and athletic fields to be used by the community during off hour times. Provide security to shut off classroom areas from public community use areas.
- Provide separate pick-up / drop-offs for parents and buses to increase site safety.
- Parking is limited for each school, and should be expanded.
- While upgrading, and renovating the existing schools, maintain something from the existing schools so that students do not lose touch with what is familiar to them.
- The playground spaces need to be upgraded, and sized to accommodate children of the appropriate size. Provide ample outdoor space giving children room to run around.
- Provide opportunities to move around throughout the day, not just at recess. For example, provide space in classrooms for quick warm-up activities to get out energy before sit-down class time.
- Provide art display walls throughout the building, not just the standard bulletin boards.
- Provide non-intimidating assembly spaces to encourage student public speaking.
- Provide a separate gymnasium and cafeteria space. This would alleviate scheduling issues, and the need to rush students to finish eating, because the room needs to be converted to a gym for the impending class.

Another concern is that these new spaces and ideas that may be provided to the schools may not be utilized as planned. How do we know that the students will adopt these spaces? Is there a way we can test these new ideas, like dynamic seating and breakout spaces, before we invest into these concepts?

Timeline:

Taking the information gather from the parent focus group, the program will be further developed and integrated into the facility feasibility study, before moving on to creating design options.

Any corrections, additions or comments should be made to Silver/Petrucci + Associates within 14 days of the date of this meeting.

Prepared by: Jason Ferrisi, S/P+A

Distribution: Kathryn Veronesi, Michelle Miller, File.