

What is the 21st Century Schools Committee?

The 21st Century Schools Committee is a citizens' committee which was formed at the request of the Board of Education to make recommendations to the Board regarding the following tasks:

- a. Review district facility use and demographics.
- b. Explore various learning configurations.
- c. Review attendance boundaries.
- d. Explore additional educational options for district students.

The committee is comprised of a parent representative from each school building in the district; high school student representatives; community members; school administrators; teachers; school union presidents; and other stakeholders.

The 21st Century Schools Committee is composed of five subcommittees – Instruction, Enrollment, Facilities, Finance & Human Resources, and Communications. The subcommittees report their research and recommendations back to the entire 21st Century Schools Committee.

Why do we need to “right size” the school district?

The national recession and the near collapse of the auto industry have brought great economic challenges to the State of Michigan. School revenues are declining as the State continues to cut K-12 funding. The problem is compounded as families move out of state resulting in declining enrollments and under utilization of buildings. Simply put, Wayne-Westland's student population has declined nearly two thousand students in the last 11 years, resulting in buildings that are significantly below capacity.

Does rightsizing mean that some buildings may be closed?

Yes. In order to live within our means, the district cannot afford to keep open buildings which are significantly under utilized.

Have any buildings been identified to be closed?

No. Recommendations for school closures have not yet been made by the 21st Century Schools Committee and no decisions have been made by the Board of Education at this time.

Can't we just pay more taxes to maintain our current programs?

No. By state law, the district cannot ask for additional taxes for operating our schools. Under Proposal A, our district can only ask the community to increase taxes for building improvements (i.e. bonds or sinking funds).

What factors will the 21st Century Schools Committee consider in making their recommendations?

The committee is looking at many factors in order to make recommendations to the Board of Education. The Instruction Team is exploring grade configurations and additional educational programs which can be offered by using different grade configurations. The Facilities Team is reviewing the building structures in terms of age, capacity, parking, utility consumption, materials, and other relevant information. The Enrollment Team is looking at balancing enrollment levels, geographical considerations and optimizing resources. The Finance & Human Resources Team is looking at the fiscal impact of any suggested recommendations.

Has the Instruction Team made any recommendations yet?

Yes. The Instruction Team has recommended that the Facilities Team and the Enrollment Team explore the implementation of a K-4, 5-6, 7-8 and 9-12 grade configuration.

What are the advantages of a 5-6 grade level school?

After visiting several districts in the area that run a 5-6 educational program, the committee felt this configuration offered several advantages:

- The ability to offer programs in instrumental music, foreign language, and gifted/talented to students in these upper elementary grades.
- The opportunity to house 5th & 6th graders in a developmentally appropriate setting. Sixth graders remain in an elementary setting thus their transition to middle school is delayed until they reach 7th grade.
- Upon leaving 4th grade, 5th & 6th graders are introduced to the classmates they will remain with through high school, thus making the transition to middle school and high school much easier.
- Provides more academic collaboration and targeted professional development opportunities for staff.

Do other districts have a 5-6 configuration?

Yes. Other than our current grade configuration (K-5, 6-8, 9-12) the 5-6 configuration is the next most common configuration in the state. The Instruction Team visited Novi Schools, Livonia Schools, Dexter Schools and Saline Schools – all of which successfully use this configuration.

How will class sizes be affected as a result of rightsizing?

Class sizes will be more balanced and more consistent across the district. This will help reduce the number of split classes needed at the elementary level.

Will transportation guidelines change?

No. The district will continue to make bussing available to elementary students (K-4 and 5-6) who live more than a mile from their school. Secondary students (7-8 and 9-12) will continue to be bussed if they live more than 1 ½ miles from their school. Individual students may experience changes in schools and bussing routes depending on the final recommendation of the 21st Century Schools Committee and the action taken by the Board of Education.

Who will make the final decision and when?

The Board of Education is composed of elected representatives of the community. They will study the recommendations of the 21st Century Schools Committee and vote upon any changes to be adopted. In order to implement these changes for the 2010-2011 school year, the decision needs to be made in the early winter months, so that the district can schedule classes, staff buildings, and proceed with transition plans during second semester.

What will happen to buildings that are closed?

The district is exploring all options to utilize closed buildings to meet the needs of the community. Examples of possible uses might be daycare centers, expanded Head Start Programs, programs run by Wayne County RESA, as well as others.

Why is the district looking at changes now? Can't we wait until next year?

Michigan's poor economy has resulted in continued K-12 funding declines, including a reduction of \$165 per pupil for this school year. That equates to approximately \$2.2 million dollars less revenue than last year, including reductions in funding for Adult Education, Vocational Education, and other programs. Coupled with declining enrollment, the district must act now to avoid financial ruin.

Will Schools of Choice options continue?

The district will continue to offer Schools of Choice for residents of the district (intra district) where space is available. During the past few years the district has opened up a few Schools of Choice slots to parents from Wayne County (intra county) in grades K-5 only. These are only filled after parents from our district have applied and been offered available slots during our publicized Schools of Choice time frames. (Note: By law intra county students who are accepted to the school district remain enrolled through graduation.) We will continue to utilize limited intra county Schools of Choice as slots are available.

Will the district continue to contract with a company for before-and-after-school child care?

Yes. The Champions Program has provided before-and-after-school child care for many years in our district. The number of programs they run is dependent upon the number of parents who want to utilize their services. Consolidating buildings will increase the probability of having enough students seeking day care to run a program in each building.

How can I stay current on the progress of the 21st Century Committee?

All minutes from committee and team meetings are posted on the school district website, *wwcsd.net*. Just click on the 21st Century Schools logo on the home page.