

GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Greenwich, Connecticut

Date of Meeting October 24, 2013

Title of Item: Further Discussion and Possible Action on
Facility Utilization and Racial Balance

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION OR PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION ITEMS

Action required

Informational only

Submitted By Ms. Leslie Moriarty

Position Board Chair

I will be present at Board Meeting to explain if called upon

Yes

No

Synopsis of Proposal:

Racial Balance Update: On October 10, 2013, the Board of Education (BOE) received a letter from the Commissioner of the State Department of Education responding to the letter sent by BOE Chair Leslie Moriarty on the Unique Schools status of New Lebanon

(continued on next page)

Recommended Action (if appropriate)

Motion that the Board agrees it is in the best interest of the Greenwich Public Schools to try to reach a mutually acceptable resolution with the State Board of Education regarding racial balance. Such resolution, which might include submission of a plan to address Greenwich's racial imbalance while still maintaining our Unique Schools status, should be accomplished as soon as possible.

Synopsis of Proposal (continued):

and Hamilton Avenue Schools. (Both letters are attached and available on the Greenwich Public Schools website.) Members of the Board have reviewed the letter and the Board has met with counsel regarding the legal aspects of the Unique Schools status issue. The Board has identified the following options to respond to the State.

- 1) Assert Unique School status and do not supply a racial balance plan
Would expect the State Department of Education will respond with administrative and/or court action
- 2) Maintain Unique School status, but supply a racial balance plan
Preserves Greenwich's rights for future options, but acknowledges State's position and tries to work within the system by developing a mutually acceptable resolution
- 3) Supply a racial balance plan without asserting Unique School status
Develop plan to work towards meeting State guidelines

The Board has already made some decisions regarding actions to address facility utilization and, if it were necessary, could be applicable to a racial balance plan. The Board has voted on the following:

- Authorized the feasibility study for the New Lebanon School facility to identify the facility needs to deliver an appropriate educational environment and address the enrollment projections for this magnet school.
- Authorized the development of a plan to strengthen the programming at New Lebanon, Hamilton Avenue and Julian Curtiss Schools for the purpose of increasing achievement for all students.
- Authorized the evaluation of potential magnet themes for Hamilton Avenue School for the purpose of increasing achievement for all students.
- Authorized Western Middle School as an intradistrict partial magnet school offering the International Baccalaureate program.
- Determined that redistricting will not be used to address racial balance or facility utilization

Additionally, the Board has discussed alternate ways to increase choice within the District to address shifting capacity issues. The ideas have included (a) providing more transportation within our magnet system; (b) adding one or two additional magnet schools; (c) adding one additional school of choice (no magnet theme); (d) providing choice to any under-utilized school. The Board has not taken any action on any of

these ideas and thus will need to continue to consider how or if they may be part of future actions or plans.

Going forward, it is proposed that the Board work with the State Department of Education to identify a mutually acceptable resolution to address racial balance concerns. It should be noted that this resolution should also address the District's overcrowding issues. The resolution should be accomplished as soon as possible so the District can have time to properly implement any solutions.

Facility Utilization Update: At the last meeting, the Board took action on several strategies to address the District's facility utilization issues (see page 2). The Board discussed but did not take action on adding an additional school of choice at North Street School. The Board asked the Superintendent to provide more information on how that concept could be structured. That document is attached for the Board's review and discussion.

Based on the need to determine a strategy to address racial balance, it is suggested that the Board not take action on the proposal to add another school of choice at this meeting. There is the potential that the Board and the Administration may need to coordinate any additional strategies to address facility utilization and racial balance.



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



October 8, 2013

Leslie Moriarty, Board Chair
Greenwich Board of Education
Havemeyer Building
290 Greenwich Avenue
Greenwich, CT 06830

Dear Ms. Moriarty:

I am writing in response to your inquiry surrounding the application of the "unique school" status to New Lebanon and Hamilton Avenue Schools in Greenwich, which are partial intradistrict magnet schools. The regulations define "unique school" as including an interdistrict or intradistrict magnet school. The rationale behind allowing for the exclusion of unique schools is that these schools do not have control over the racial composition of their student populations and would not be able to provide a remedy for racial imbalance.

The statutes do not specifically define the term "intradistrict magnet school." The concept of an intradistrict magnet is that the school offers a specialized program that is designed to draw students from all areas of the district. When conducting the annual racial imbalance report, certain schools are automatically excluded from the list as being "unique schools." Such schools do not appear on the State Department of Education's racial imbalance report. These unique schools include the charter schools, the technical high schools, alternative schools, special education facilities, interdistrict magnet schools, and intradistrict magnets that allow for full voluntary enrollment (such as the magnet schools existing in the Hartford and New Haven School districts). Therefore, in order to be automatically excluded from the racial imbalance requirements for the "intradistrict" category of "unique schools," such school must provide for full voluntary enrollment, meaning that the school must draw its students from a district-wide applicant pool rather than drawing students from the school's defined attendance zone. It is my understanding that the vast majority of the students attending both Hamilton Avenue and New Lebanon Schools are assigned based upon their residency in the attendance zone for each school.

While the regulations also allow for the Commissioner to designate a school as a "unique school," your schools have not been so designated by previous Commissioners. If you were to request such designation going forward, I would expect your schools to meet a high standard with respect to voluntary enrollment and to be part of a coherent and compelling district plan before, in consultation with the State Board of Education, making such a designation.

Leslie Moriarty
October 8, 2013
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Thank you for your continued commitment to this process and your pursuit of excellent educational opportunities for all of Greenwich's students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stefan Pryor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Stefan Pryor
Commissioner of Education

SP:la

cc: Dr. William McKersie, Superintendent of Schools
Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer
Mark Linabury, Bureau of Choice Programs
Laura Anastasio, Division of Legal and Governmental Affairs



Board of Education

Havemeyer Building * 290 Greenwich Avenue * Greenwich, Connecticut 06830

Tel. (203) 625-7400 * FAX (203) 618-9379

September 18, 2013

Mr. Stefan Pryor
Commissioner of Education
Connecticut State Department of Education
165 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Dear Commissioner Pryor:

In June 2012, the Greenwich Board of Education and Superintendent were notified that two schools were out of compliance with the State's racial balance statute and that the State Board of Education would like the Greenwich Board of Education to develop a plan, for the State Board's approval, to bring the schools into compliance.

The Greenwich Board of Education has taken this letter seriously and has been investigating our academic achievement, facility utilization and demographic trends and developing alternative plans. We reported to the State Board of Education in July on our findings thus far. The Greenwich Board of Education is continuing to evaluate all of our alternatives to address the State's letter.

One alternative has been identified during our research of the Statute relating to the Unique Schools clause in the Regulations. Unique Schools, as defined in the Regulations, include intradistrict magnet schools. As you know, Greenwich operates four intradistrict magnet schools for the benefit of the entire community. Thus, the Greenwich Board of Education believes these schools, two of which are being cited for racial imbalance, qualify as Unique Schools.

Please confirm Greenwich's assessment that New Lebanon School and Hamilton Avenue School are intradistrict magnet schools and thus qualify as Unique Schools, per the Regulations concerning the Racial Balance statute. If you do not agree with our assessment, please explain your reasoning and the legal basis for your viewpoint.

We would appreciate a prompt response to assist our planning efforts. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Leslie B. Moriarty".

Leslie B. Moriarty
Chairman
Greenwich Board of Education

Details of Possible Plan for Additional School Choice at North Street School to Address Facility Utilization Issues October 24, 2013

Proposal Identified at October 10, 2013 BOE Meeting

The Superintendent was asked by the Board of Education (BOE) to prepare the outline of what a school of choice at North Street School would entail based on the proposal made at the October 10, 2013 meeting. This proposal was made as part of a solution to address the District's facility utilization issues. This document presents the series of issues and proposed alternatives for the Board's use as a discussion document.

The proposal presented at the Board meeting was as follows: (a) make North Street School a school of choice to which any Greenwich student is able to apply to attend, subject to space availability, with priority given to students from overcrowded schools; (b) there would be no special theme implemented at NSS; (c) choice students would go to the middle school assigned to their home address; (d) transportation would be provided from New Lebanon School since that is the most seriously overcrowded school.

North Street School Enrollment Capacity

North Street has the capacity for 500 students, based on 25 standard classrooms plus dedicated space for specials. Enrollment at North Street School is projected to range from 339 to 360 students over the next ten years. Currently, the District operates two preschool classes at North Street. Based on the enrollment projections, there is space available for choice students at North Street. The following table provides the detailed projections.

North Street Enrollment Projections

(Attendance Area Students)

Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	K-5
2014 - 2015	63	63	47	60	66	57	356
2015 - 2016	58	62	60	45	58	63	346
2016 - 2017	69	57	59	56	43	55	339
2017 - 2018	66	68	54	56	54	41	339
2018 - 2019	65	65	68	49	55	50	352
2019 - 2020	64	65	61	61	49	52	352
2020 - 2021	65	64	61	58	59	47	354
2021 - 2022	65	64	60	58	56	57	360
2022 - 2023	65	64	61	57	56	54	357
2023 - 2024	67	65	60	57	55	54	358

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Based on these projections, North Street is scheduled for 19 sections in 2014-2015, with three sections in grades K, 1, 3, 4, and 5 and two sections in grade 2. There would be two preschool sections for 2014-2015, thus leaving six available rooms.

These projections result in the following number of sections and average class sizes for the students in the attendance zone:

North Street School Enrollment - Attendance Area Only

Year	Sections							Year	Average Class Size						
	K	1	2	3	4	5	K-5		K	1	2	3	4	5	K-5
2014 - 2015	4	3	3	3	3	3	19	2014 - 2015	15.8	21.0	15.7	20.0	22.0	19.0	18.7
2015 - 2016	3	3	3	2	3	3	17	2015 - 2016	19.3	20.7	20.0	22.5	19.3	21.0	20.4
2016 - 2017	4	3	3	3	2	3	18	2016 - 2017	17.3	19.0	19.7	18.7	21.5	18.3	18.8
2017 - 2018	4	4	3	3	3	2	19	2017 - 2018	16.5	17.0	18.0	18.7	18.0	20.5	17.8
2018 - 2019	4	4	3	3	3	2	19	2018 - 2019	16.3	16.3	22.7	16.3	18.3	25.0	18.5
2019 - 2020	4	4	3	3	2	2	18	2019 - 2020	16.0	16.3	20.3	20.3	24.5	26.0	19.6
2020 - 2021	4	4	3	3	3	2	19	2020 - 2021	16.3	16.0	20.3	19.3	19.7	23.5	18.6
2021 - 2022	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2021 - 2022	16.3	16.0	20.0	19.3	18.7	19.0	18.0
2022 - 2023	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2022 - 2023	16.3	16.0	20.3	19.0	18.7	18.0	17.9
2023 - 2024	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2023 - 2024	16.8	16.3	20.0	19.0	18.3	18.0	17.9

North Street School Enrollment with a Choice Plan

The administration recommends that a school choice program at North Street be modest in number of students and sections. Target enrollment would be 400 K-5 students plus preschool students. This would indicate choice seats availability of up to about 50 students be enrolled per year, with a suggested cap of 9 students per grade (which equates to 3 or fewer choice students per classroom). It would be expected that in the initial year, there would be more interest by choice students in the lower grades; however there is room to accommodate students at all grades.

This would entail increasing the number of K-5 sections from 19 to 20. There would be room to increase the number of preschool sections if desired. To understand the impact on class sizes, the following charts show the projected number of sections and class sizes with choice students assuming the maximum of 9 students per grade were enrolled. As can be seen in the following chart, class sizes would be comparable to District averages and have less variation from grade to grade than other neighborhood schools:

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North Street School Enrollment with Choice Students (with maximum number of 9 choice students per grade)

Year	Sections							Year	Average Class Size						
	K	1	2	3	4	5	K-5		K	1	2	3	4	5	K-5
2014 - 2015	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2014 - 2015	18.0	18.0	18.7	23.0	25.0	22.0	20.5
2015 - 2016	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2015 - 2016	16.8	17.8	23.0	18.0	22.3	24.0	20.0
2016 - 2017	4	4	3	3	2	3	19	2016 - 2017	19.5	16.5	22.7	21.7	26.0	21.3	20.7
2017 - 2018	4	4	3	3	3	2	19	2017 - 2018	18.8	19.3	21.0	21.7	21.0	25.0	20.7
2018 - 2019	4	4	4	3	3	3	21	2018 - 2019	18.5	18.5	19.3	19.3	21.3	19.7	19.3
2019 - 2020	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2019 - 2020	18.3	18.5	23.3	23.3	19.3	20.3	20.3
2020 - 2021	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2020 - 2021	18.5	18.3	23.3	22.3	22.7	18.7	20.4
2021 - 2022	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2021 - 2022	18.5	18.3	23.0	22.3	21.7	22.0	20.7
2022 - 2023	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2022 - 2023	18.5	18.3	23.3	22.0	21.7	21.0	20.6
2023 - 2024	4	4	3	3	3	3	20	2023 - 2024	19.0	18.5	23.0	22.0	21.3	21.0	20.6

This model is based on the assumption that the existing North Street enrollment patterns will continue; that is, the number of student cohorts annually decreases from Kindergarten to fifth grade. However, there is ample room under the class size guidelines in the upper grades to absorb a higher cohort survival rate for neighborhood students and still accommodate choice students.

The increase in number of sections at North Street School may or may not be offset by a reduction in other buildings, depending on how many and from which schools the choice students move. The impact on the cost for specials staffing would also depend on the changes in number of sections. NSS specials staff would be able to accommodate the additional sections with, at most, an additional .2 FTE, with a possibility that no additional specials staff will be needed based on the needs of other schools .

Magnet Theme

The proposal recommended that there would be no specialized theme at a new choice school given the large number of changes and initiatives at the elementary school level, which require significant staff attention. However, if the inclusion of a theme would increase the success of the choice program, then the Board might consider the investigation of a complementary program impacting achievement for all the students in the school.

Middle School

The market research confirmed that the choice of middle school has been a factor in the decision to be a magnet student. For the four existing magnet schools, the current policy

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at North Street School to Address Facility Utilization Issues
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allows magnet students to choose to either go the middle school in the attendance zone for their magnet school or return to the middle school assigned to their home address. In order not to have an unanticipated change in the middle school enrollment projections, it is suggested that the choice students attending North Street School be required to attend the middle school assigned to their home address. If the Board wants all the choice/magnet students to have the same rules, then the Board can consider changing that rule for the other four magnet school students; though the Administration would recommend grandfathering current families under the existing rule.

School Choice Process and Transportation

Transportation is an additional consideration for the proposal to make North Street School a school of choice. The market research identified transportation as a factor in choosing to become a magnet student. During the focus group and the Board public forums, transportation was of particular importance for the New Lebanon and Hamilton Avenue families.

The current transportation policy for magnet students is as follows: Transportation is provided if the student lives within the middle school attendance zone of the magnet elementary school. However, students can buy a bus pass if there is space availability on an existing bus route. The cost for the bus pass in 2013-2014 is \$220.

Transportation cost is a concern for the District. As such, it is recommended that a different approach be used for North Street School; one that relies on hub transportation and is differentiated to focus on the one school with the most immediate capacity issues. Since overcrowding is most severe at New Lebanon, the Administration recommends the Board provide hub transportation to magnet/choice schools as appropriate. Specifically, the Board should consider adding transportation to North Street, and could consider adding transportation to Julian Curtiss since there is capacity to accept additional magnet students. Transportation is already offered to attend Hamilton Avenue School if normal criteria for a bus is met. A minimum ridership would be suggested to make it a cost effective strategy. The cost for one bus operating on a hub schedule is approximately \$70,000. Further, the District recommends that transportation not be provided from other Central Middle School feeder schools as the current transportation policy would offer.

Lottery Priorities

Applications for students who wish to attend North Street School would be open to all students in the district. If there are more applications than seats (reference the suggested cap on the choice students per grade), the district would have a lottery similar to the magnet lottery currently run for the existing magnet schools. The lottery preferences

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would be designed to address the facility utilization issues and could change annually if necessary.

A proposal for lottery preferences to address the facility utilization issues for the 2014-15 year is as follows:

- New Lebanon students
- Cos Cob students
- Other Greenwich elementary students
- Students who are children of Town of Greenwich or Greenwich Board of Education employees

The District also recommends that the lottery priorities for the four existing magnet schools be reviewed to align with current enrollment issues. The Administration will bring this to the Board in December 2013.

Other Issues

There will be other operational issues that need to be addressed if this proposal moves forward. Several are:

- 1) Currently, the starting times of the new school of choice and the lottery priority schools are different. The District should determine what issues, if any, that may cause parents.
- 2) Most school services and programs follow the student (e.g., special education, ELL). However, there may be some school-sponsored programming or community-sponsored programming that is impacted. The potential solutions to address issues can be evaluated once the choice students have been identified.
- 3) It is recommended that the Board continue to endorse an open process involving staff and parents in decisions that impact programs and services in the schools.

Budget Implications

The financial cost of establishing North Street as a school of choice cannot be fully determined until the students have been identified. However, the largest cost factors would be transportation (described above) and staffing. Staffing costs would include the possible increase of 1 section at North Street if there was no offsetting decrease at another school and possible increase of specials staffing of up to .2 FTE (if the number of sections increases beyond current capacity for the specials staff). The administration will develop cost projections as part of final planning.