



Pitman School District

Advisory Committee:
Reconfiguration

Final Recommendation

Purpose:

Our task was to facilitate and organize purposeful and productive meetings of various stakeholders in Pitman in order to ultimately recommend a school configuration that supports student success and fiscal realities, while supporting the district's Strategic Plan, mission, and vision.

Mission Statement:

To outline a proposed course of action for the Pitman School District that focuses on balancing student achievement with fiscal realities.



Formation:

The Pitman Schools Advisory Committee (PSAC) was convened at the behest of Superintendent, Dr. McAleer. Dr. McAleer communicated the committee's formation via a variety of platforms, including social media, local online community based news organization, and Pitman School District email to inform the public. Interested individuals were invited to send Dr. McAleer a written request to volunteer for the PSAC. Committee members were selected by co-chairs, Karolyn Mason and April Miller from the pool of interested residents to cultivate diverse aggregation of stakeholders within the community. The PSAC consisted of:

- Parents of students enrolled in each of our five school buildings
- Teachers and other school staff from all five schools from a variety of roles
- Two building-level administrators
- Board of Education members
- Representation from Pitman Borough government
- Pitman Education Foundation member
- Individuals with areas of expertise in duties assigned to the committee
- Athletic Coaching staff
- Parents of children not yet of school aged children
- Longtime residents with no children currently in the district



Committee Members:

Karolyn Mason, Co-chair

April Miller, Co-Chair

Laurie Boyle, Research Lead

Shanna Hoffman, Communications Lead

Mike Lentz, Facilities Lead

Gail Todd, Finance Lead

Tim Campbell

Steve Carey

Melissa Farrell

Russ Johnson

Ryan Keepers

Mary Beth Koniecki

Allison Massimini

Shea Murray

Matt Newcomb

Mark Piong

Jackie Schanz

Christopher Simons

Cindy Thompson

Jacki Tiger-Williams

Sherri Tulini

Rita Williams

Committee biographies and contact information are attached in Appendix A.



Committee Structure:

The PSAC met on February 4, 2019 to review the organizational structure for the committee and the general committee goal of evaluating each of the five configuration models to make a recommendation for the Superintendent's consideration. The PSAC members were divided into four subcommittees that both suited their individual areas of expertise and their requested interest. A research, finance, facilities, and communications committee were established and task lists for each individual committee were given. A communication committee member was assigned to each of the other three committees, to serve as a general liaison to the PSAC as a whole, and for the subcommittee of assignment.

The PSAC had meetings on February 4, March 4, April 8, June 11, and July 30. Board of Education members Mary Beth Koniecki and Bonnie Savage attended various sub committee meetings, as well as general committee meetings, and were able to observe and report back to the other members of the Board of Education regarding the committees progress. District leadership, including Dr. McAleer, Mrs. Brazelton, and Mrs. Moody also regularly attended general committee meetings and subcommittee meetings at their request. June 11, the research and facilities committees shared with the whole PSAC their final report summary and on July 30, the finance committee shared their final report in preparation for a committee vote.



Group Organizational Chart

Karolyn Mason (co-chair)



Finance Lead

Facilities Lead

Gail Todd

Mike Lentz

April Miller (co-chair)



Communication

Research

Shanna Hoffman

Laurie Boyle

Each lead had a team of four or five committee members on their sub-committee.



Research Committee:

The research committee was lead by Laurie Boyle, and included communication liaison Jackie Schanz, members Melissa Farrell, Ryan Keepers, Shea Murray, Matt Newcomb, and Cindy Thompson. The committee met on February 19, March 19, April 29, and June 3. The research committee analyzed the five potential configuration models:

- Status Quo
- Redistricting
- An Early Childhood Center for grades preschool-1st and two neighborhood schools for grades 2nd-5th
- A 4th/5th grade building, and two neighborhood schools for grades preschool-3rd.
- Grade Level Schools

Using academic research, each potential configuration model was researched through the lens of academic achievement, transitions, special education, safety, parental involvement and logistical concerns. After researching and reporting back their findings for each configuration model, the subcommittee worked to create a rubric that used their findings to evaluate the five configurations models as simply and fairly as possible. The committee used the five core values identified in the Pitman School District's 2017-2022 Strategic Plan as a basis for their evaluation rubric. The general committee findings and rubric were presented by Laurie Boyle at the June 11 meeting. *Attached via Appendix B is the research committee's final report.*



Finance Committee:

The finance committee was lead by Gail Todd, and included communications liaison Jackie Tiger-Williams, members Mark Pilog, Christopher Simons, and Rita Williams. The finance committee met on April 8, April 24, May 7, May 13, and July 1. The finance committee met with Dr. McAleer, Mrs. Brazelton, Mrs. Moody, and Ms. Ruberton. They evaluated district enrollment, budgets, demographic reports, the Strategic Plan, estimated state aid reductions through 2025, and interviewed with the Child Study Team for an overview of special education programming. The finance committee created a detailed analysis of what the potential reductions with each configuration model would yield both financially and for class sizes, moving current cohorts through each model. A spreadsheet was created by Mark Pilog to create an equitable comparison tool for each model. They also identified other potential cost savings, alternative revenue sources, and a longer term financial goal. The final report was prepared by Jacki Tiger-Williams and made available via a google drive for the PSAC prior to the July 30 meeting and shared at the July 30 meeting. *Attached via Appendix C is the finance committee's final report.*



Facilities Committee:

The facilities committee was lead by Mike Lentz, and included the communications liaison, Shanna Hoffman, The facilities committee conducted tours of our three elementary schools to assess current usage and potential configuration model concerns. They also conducted off site visits to both Mantua's Sewell School and Deptford Township's Early Childhood Center to gather additional data. Logistical and safety concerns, particularly as it pertains to drop off and pick up produced in our uniquely walking district were evaluated, at length and included on site observation. Facilities also met with Pitman Police Department and School Resource Officer Corporal Chris Leach. Each building's infrastructure, such as in the number of classroom restrooms, suitable playground equipment, and entrances and exits were evaluated. The final subcommittee summary was prepared by Mike Lentz and presented to the PSAC on June 11. *Attached via Appendix D is the facilities committee's final report.*



Final Committee Recommendation:

Upon review of each subcommittees' final reports and individual members voting record (see Appendix E), co-chairs Karolyn Mason and April Miller are making the final recommendation for Dr. McAleer's consideration that the Pitman School District transition the elementary school configuration for the 2020-2021 to include an Early Childhood Center for grades pre-kindergarten through first grade at the Memorial Elementary School site and two neighborhood schools for grades second through fifth at the Kindle Elementary School and W.C.K. Walls Elementary School.



Early Childhood Center Strengths

- This model will yield an additional savings of \$120,000
 - In addition to the financial savings of \$450,000 for the 2019-2020 school year from the elementary schools
- The potential to expand our preschool and tuition paying student population
 - Both the research committee and finance committee found an increased opportunity to bring additional students into our preschool program. An Early Childhood Center, with before-care and after-care that catered to students in preschool-first grade is highly desired.



Pitman School: Alternative Grade Configuration Options

Early Childhood (PreK - 1 Memorial); 2-5 Walls and Kindle

School Year 2019/2020							School Year 2020/2021						Total 2 Year Savings	
School	Memorial		Kindle		Walls		Memorial		Kindle		Walls		2019-2020: \$450,000	\$570,000.00
Available Classrooms	15		12		16		15		12		16		2020-2021: \$120,000	
Grade	Students	Sections	Students	Sections	Students	Sections	Students	Sections	Students	Sections	Students	Sections	2019-2020:	Dollars
Pre-K 3/4	18	2			21	2	39	4					-6 Sections in 2019-2020;	Total Savings over 2 Years
Kindergarten	35	2	30	2	26	2	91	5						
1st	35	2	30	2	26	2	91	5					-2 Sections in 2020-2021	
2nd	22	1	18	1	34	2								
3rd	30	1	31	2	40	2					37	2	37	
4th	21	1	25	1	31	1					50	2	51	2
5th	29	1	28	1	43	2					38	2	39	2
Total Students/Sections	190	10	162	9	221	13					221	14	170	8
												Related Arts FTE Reduction	-1.5	-\$90,000
												Total Savings	-9.5	-\$570,000

2019-2020 Savings based on a reduction of 6 FTE and a reduction of 1.5 Related Arts FTE

2020-2021 Savings based on reconfiguration model and a reduction of 2 total sections yielding the elimination of 2 FTE

Entry level = \$47,000 salary + taxes = \$50,000.00 adjust FTE + Benefits \$20,000.00?

Enrollment Assumptions:	
Pre-k 3/4 and K same as current school year 18/19 as of 1/31/2019	
1st - 5th same as K - 4 in current school year 18/19 as of 1/31/2019	
Assume Section reduction for 2nd & 4th grade in school year 19/20 base on numbers	
Salary Assumptions:	
Teacher	\$60,000 Salary + Benefits
Related Arts Reduction:	Taken from prior work

Enrollment Assumptions:	
Pre-k 3/4, K and 1st same as current school year 18/19 as of 1/31/2019	
2nd - 5th reflects K - 3 in current school year 18/19 as of 1/31/2019	
Potential Additional Savings Opportunities	
see committee report	

Early Childhood Center Strengths

- Maximum benefit of balancing small class sizes for our youngest grades
 - An identified District core value in our Strategic Plan of small class sizes and to encourage a culture of engagement
 - Research subcommittee findings showed value in small class sizes:
 - **STAR...study, students and teachers were randomly assigned to a small class, with an average of 15 students, or a regular class, with an average of 22 students. This large reduction in class (7 students, or 32%) was found to increase student achievement by an amount equivalent to about three additional months of schooling four years later.**
- Increased opportunity to provide early interventions to all students and potential to lessen interventions needed in older grades



Early Childhood Center Strengths

- A single elementary school transition for students
 - Research Committee findings
 - **Students do not appear to “get used to” transitioning over time.** Previous experience with making transitions does not moderate the achievement loss of the new transition. (Alspaugh, 1998 p. 21-3).
 - **The schools with two transitions had higher dropout rates than the schools with only one transition.**(Alspaugh, 1998, p. 23-25)
- Early childhood is a common age range for narrow grade span configurations



Early Childhood Center Strengths

- Compromise of logistical concerns for families with multiple school aged children
 - Families may have multiple **young** children in two locations (one with status quo and three with GLS)
 - Natural grade level delineation in activities from an Early Childhood Center to the neighborhood school activities, HSA's/fundraisers, evening events, clubs, and other enrichment programming should minimize logistical concerns for families
- Ideal population for parental transportation for a walking district
 - Children will be attending a Early Childhood Center from the entire district. However, preschool-first grade students are unlikely to be independently travelling to school.



Early Childhood Center Strengths

- Memorial School is one level, has appropriate number of in-class restrooms, and has a structural layout for an orchestrated arrival and dismissal procedure due to the surrounding infrastructure.
 - 15 ground floor classrooms at Memorial
 - Has 8 classrooms with an in-class bathroom
 - Memorial has approximately 56 off street parking spaces (compared to six at Kindle and eighteen at Walls) and the best layout for a designated area for a “wave” arrival and dismissal procedure, utilized in other area Early Childhood Centers



2nd-5th Grade Neighborhood Schools Strengths

- Retention of community valued neighborhood schools
 - Identified as a strength of the District in our Strategic Plan of neighborhood schools and small walking district
 - Retention of wide grade level spans to encourage peer relationships across four grade levels
 - Research committee findings:
 - **School attachment predicts a significant degree of change in student achievement.** (Carolan, 2012).
 - **As grade span configurations increase, so does achievement.** The more grade levels that a school services, the better the student performs. The more transitions, the worse the student performs. (Wren, 2004).
 - Research committee showed a high priority for student safety. The consensus included the sentiment that vulnerable students would be best served by the continuity of four years in the same environment.



2nd-5th Grade Neighborhood Schools Strengths

- Elimination of single sections of grades at any one elementary school
 - Single sections **do not allow for departmentalization** within the upper grades
 - Single sections create unique challenges for students and staff (i.e. disciplinary)
 - Single sections create larger class sizes
 - Reduction of single sections will create a grade level partner at all sites
 - All three elementary schools face a single section in some grades in the 19-20 school year
 - Kindle Elementary School: 2nd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade
 - Memorial Elementary School: 2nd grade, 3rd grade, 4th grade, 5th grade
 - Walls Elementary School: 4th grade



2nd-5th Grade Neighborhood Schools Strengths

- Minimal duplication of services with the reduction of one site serving these grades
 - A reduction of one testing site, as all testing grades will now be at two locations (NJSLA)
 - Grade level specific training will be contained within either one or two sites (vs. current three)
 - Ability to share technological resources in a more efficient manner
 - Special education
 - OT/PT/Speech
 - Self-Contained/Resource Rooms
 - Co-Teaching options



Potential Concerns

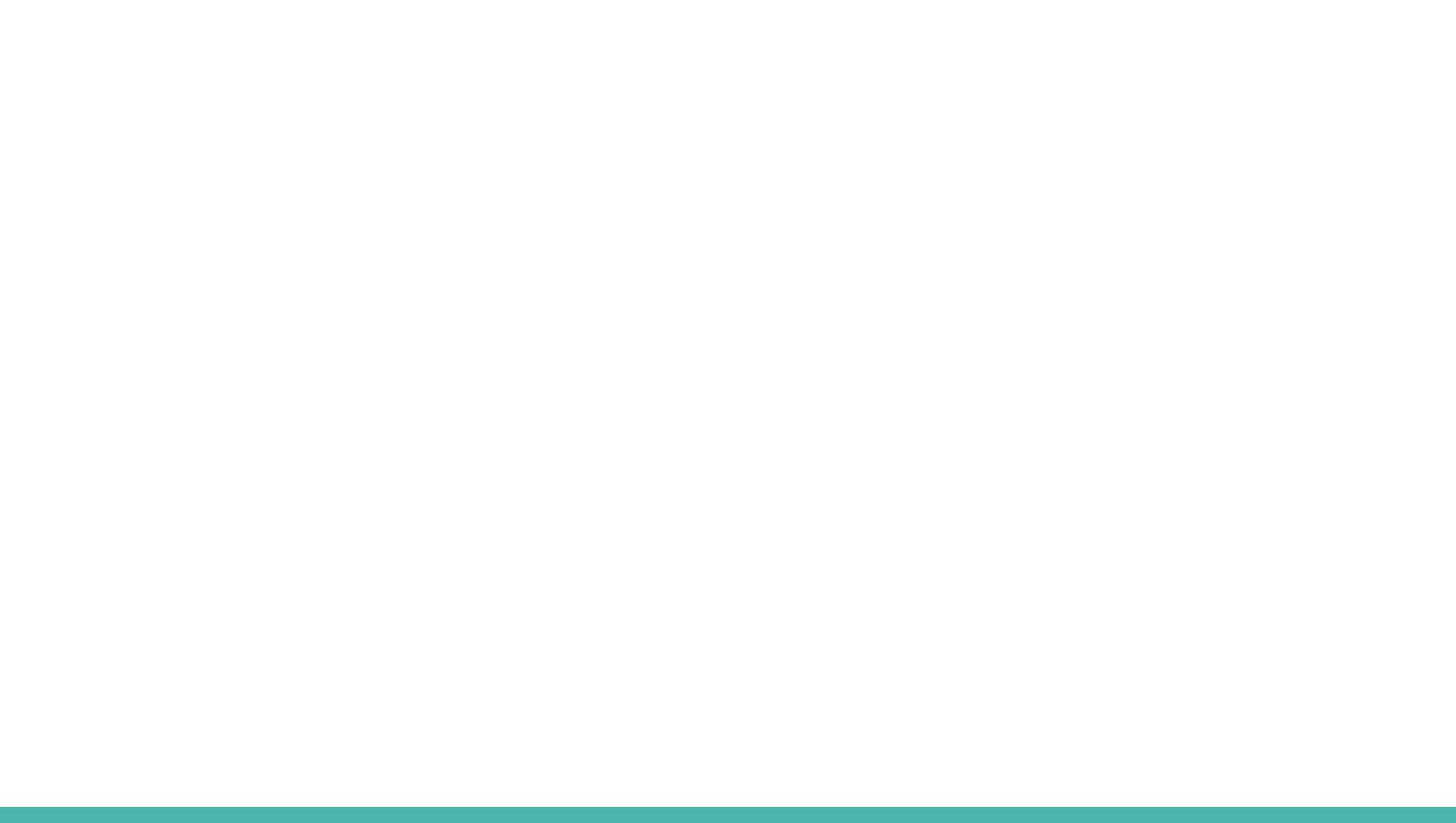
- Clear and concise plan for arrival and dismissal procedures that utilizes multiple entrances for children whom are all in car seats should be established at Memorial Elementary School
- Playground equipment at Memorial Elementary school is not currently capable of handling the entire districts' preschool-1st grade in a way that allows for meaningful use at recess, particularly with the increased recess requirements. Careful planning will mitigate this concern
- Parental overlap with activities, conferences, HSA's, after-care time frames, and other logistical concerns that will be magnified by having multiple **young** children in the same family at two sites. This may necessitate staggered arrival and dismissal times.



Potential Concerns

- A 4-5 Grade Level building yielded one additional, one-time cost savings of an additional FTE teaching position. The remainder of the cost benefit analysis of this model did not outperform the Early Childhood Center/two 2nd-5th neighborhood schools
- A transition team may best assist the District with potential challenges and concerns as well as to help to seek solutions for this hybrid model





Thank you!

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Patrick McAleer for his continued stewardship of the district. Dr. McAleer prioritized the community's feedback and allowed the Pitman School Advisory Committee to perform an independent cost benefit analysis of five potential configuration models for our elementary schools. The time provided was extremely valuable and the members of the PSAC thank Dr. McAleer for the opportunity to partner with the school district to help solve the challenges the district is currently facing.

We would like to thank Dr. McAleer, Board of Education members Mary Beth Koniacki and Bonnie Savage, Curriculum Director Rebecca Moody, Business Administrator Kelly Brazelton, Pitman Police Department School Resource Officer and Interim Child Study Team Director Joan Ruberton for their assistance and support of the committees fact finding process.

We would like to thank the dedicated volunteer committee members for their tremendous work for the PSAC.

