

OPTION No. 4. GRADE BAND RECONFIGURATION
4.3 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS REASSIGNED TO MIDDLE SCHOOLS, MIDDLE SCHOOLS REASSIGNED TO HIGH SCHOOLS

Description: The program will reduce the school inventory by reassigning all elementary school students to the middle schools and all middle school students to the high schools.

Purpose: To improve the efficiency of operations by significantly reducing the total number of facilities.

Planning Assumptions:

- While the State Rated Capacity figures for the middle and high schools indicate that capacity is available to allow this approach to work if additional capacity is constructed in the south, the architectural plans for all receiving schools and their schedules will need to be examined carefully to determine if the reassignments are possible. Some spaces may need to be repurposed or re-designed. Particular attention needs to be given to core facilities like the cafeteria.
- Consideration should be given to whether these changes will apply to schools in both the north and the south.
- Renovations will be needed at both the middle schools and the high schools to accommodate the different entering age groups.
- Special consideration should be given to the Swan Meadow School.
- Separation of age groups in the new middle school/high schools will be a key area of concern.
- Redistricting will be required for most elementary school students; redistricting will not be required for the middle school students (who already attend schools near the two high schools).
- Since closure of a community school is likely to be viewed negatively by the affected community, it is essential to inform the public on the educational benefits that will result from the program.

Planning Goals Addressed:

- *Address the largest number of the most critical facility deficiencies*
The closure of all or most of the elementary schools will eliminate a considerable backlog of facility deficiencies.
- *Improve the learning environment for the largest number of students*
With appropriate planning and targeted renovation and addition projects, the program will relieve over-crowding in the elementary schools that have the largest student enrollments.
- *Correct inequities in the quality of facilities*
Unless renovations are carried out at the receiving schools, it is not clear if the changes will reduce inequities in the quality of facilities.
- *Improve the efficiency of operations*
The concentration of all bus routes and maintenance effort on two sets of co-located or nearby schools will improve efficiency of operations.

Planning Objectives Addressed:

- *Educational excellence:* Reduced overcrowding in certain schools will improve the learning environment.
- *Equity:* All elementary and middle school students will be equally affected.
- *Community:* The changes will remove the elementary schools as community centers.
- *Safety and Security:* Although the renovations required by this program will be secure in themselves, they will have marginal effect on overall building security.

Benefits:

- Closure of elementary schools will have a significant positive impact on the operating budget for facilities (which may, however, be offset by transportation costs and inefficiencies and by debt service on capital projects).
- Larger school populations may benefit from enhanced academic offerings and services.
- Makes better use of the available capacity in the middle school and high school facilities.

Detriments:

- Renovations and additions to accommodate the arriving students are likely to be costly.
- Will result in large elementary school populations.
- Ride times for many students will be very long.
- There are likely to be strong community objections to removing community schools.
- The closure of community schools may undermine one of the factors that attracts some households to Garrett County.

Implementation:

- Engage the principals of both the leaving and the receiving schools to fully discuss the educational, schedule, and internal circulation concerns, as well as the special needs of students.
- Define the scope of renovations needed:
 - Develop the designs either in-house or through engaged architectural/engineering services.
 - Implement during the summer months to prepare for the fall semester.
- Seek State and local funding approval, as appropriate:
 - State: FY 20__
 - County:
 - Planning and design: FY 20__
 - Construction: FY 20__
 - Other: grants, donations, etc.
- Develop project designs:
 - Detailed architectural/engineering design
 - Detailed cost projection and schedule for design and construction
 - Project delivery method.
 - Special considerations (safety, special needs students, timing of grant funds, etc.)
- Suggested timeframe (initial round of projects):
 - Design: FY 20__
 - Construction: FY 20__

Budgetary Implications:

- Estimated cost of improvements: \$ _____
- Estimated cost of equipment: \$ _____
- Estimated cost of training: \$ _____
- Misc. other: \$ _____
- **Total** \$ _____