



CHEESEMAKER PRIDE

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE

Winter Edition 2019-2020

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER

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MONROE, WI 53566
608-328-7171

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MONROE, WI 53566
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MISSION STATEMENT

*The School District of Monroe
will prepare each student for
the future by developing
academic, life, and
employability skills.*

*To this end, we will foster
partnerships with family and
community to ensure student
success.*

District Seeking a Long-Term Solution to Facilities Issues



Rick Waski
District Administrator

In the Summer of 2017, the Board of Education interviewed eight architectural firms and general contractors to conduct a facilities study to do a needs assessment on our aging school buildings. After interviewing these firms, the Board selected CG Schmidt (general contractor) and Plunkett Raysich Architects to conduct a facilities study to determine immediate, short-term, and long-term needs for our facilities.

Early in 2018, these firms produced a 300+ page study that identified a number of issues in our five schools that should be addressed. The Board had some discussions and decided to form an ad hoc District Facilities Committee made up of community members, administrators, and staff to take an extensive look at how capital improvements could be sequenced in a way that they felt the community might support. This committee began meeting in the spring of 2018 and their initial work was focused on creating a short-term facilities project that could address some of the less significant needs at Parkside Elementary and Monroe Middle School, the two buildings that needed the fewest number of immediate improvements.

The result of their work was the \$3.36 million referendum question that was to be financed over 2 years that provided Parkside Elementary a new HVAC system, ceilings, LED light fixtures, a remodel of the Parkside library, and remodeled restrooms to allow for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The same project also allowed for the same type of remodeling of the restrooms at Monroe Middle School. This referendum question was approved when 70% of the district electorate voted Yes to the question, and this work was completed this summer.

The District Facilities Committee also reported at that time that they would be bringing a larger, long-term plan to the board for consideration and that the plans they were researching could include consolidating the number of elementary schools in the district. As a result, the board authorized the formation of an ad hoc Elementary Consolidation Committee to discuss and research elementary consolidation that could also affect the configuration of other buildings. This committee was formed of 20 community members, administrators, and staff. This committee started their work in the Fall of 2018 and completed their work in the Spring of 2019. The individuals that composed the Elementary Consolidation Committee and the District Facilities Committee appear later in this newsletter.

In May and June of 2019 the two committees, formed to study school facilities and building configurations, made their recommendations to the School District of Monroe Board of Education. The Elementary Consolidation Committee, formed in November of 2018, made a recommendation to the Board that the District consider consolidating from three elementary schools to two. The District Facilities Committee, formed in January of 2018, made a recommendation that included moving from five to four buildings and embarking on an extensive construction project combining new construction and remodeling at the current Monroe High School site.

The plan includes the following changes:

- Parkside and Northside Elementaries would serve as PreK-3 buildings. These buildings can accommodate all district students in these grades without extensive remodeling.

District Seeking... (continued on page 2)

District Seeking... (continued from page 1)

- Convert Monroe Middle School to a grade 4-6 Intermediate School that would serve all students in the district in these grades. There is plenty of space to accommodate these students and speciality areas such as large music rooms, science labs, and increased gym space would now be available to these students. Just as is the case with the elementary schools, there would be minimal need for remodeling at this site.
- Construct a 7-12 building at the Monroe High School site that would serve as two buildings under one roof. The Middle School would be a grade 7-8 building and the High School would be a grade 9-12 building with separate entrances and offices. The building would share many spaces (music, art, physical education, science, career and technical education, commons, library media center) offering modernization at a reduced cost compared to building new areas for each school.
- Close Abraham Lincoln Elementary School. Under this configuration we would not need a third elementary school and Abraham Lincoln would require the most repairs of any of the three elementary schools if it remained open.

A conceptual map for the proposed 7-12 facility can be found on page 3 of this newsletter.

The estimated cost of this plan is \$85-86 million dollars and the district would likely look to finance this program over 20 years, similar to that of the building project in the late 1990s which was recently paid off. In Ron Olson's article in this newsletter found on page 4, he will analyze the tax impact of this proposed project.

The Board of Education is also looking at some other options, several of which offer similar configurations to what is currently in place. These options include, but are not limited to:

- 9-12 High School on a new site while maintaining 5 buildings
- 9-12 High School on a new site, maintaining a 6-8 Middle School at the current site, remodeling Northside to allow for expansion of the site to a PreK-5 facility with increased capacity, operate Parkside as a PreK-5 facility, close Abraham Lincoln
- 9-12 High School on existing site, maintaining a 6-8 Middle School at the current site, remodeling Northside to allow for expansion of the site to a PreK-5 facility with increased capacity, operate Parkside as a PreK-5 facility, close Abraham Lincoln
- 9-12 High School on existing site while maintaining 5 buildings

At the time of publication, the cost of these plans had not been finalized.

We recognize that there will be many questions about these proposed projects, regardless of the direction the Board decides to bring to our community as a referendum question. We decided to dedicate a majority of this newsletter to information about the proposed project recommended by the District Facilities Committee (see earlier description in this article). In this issue, you will see articles from our principals and other administrative personnel describing this proposal in great detail. The district will be hosting community feedback sessions on Wednesday, January 8th and Tuesday, February 11th at 7:00 pm in the Monroe Public Library's Community Room. As we have in the past, we will survey the entire community regarding their thoughts on this project through paper and electronic surveys. This will occur after the winter break. We will also have more feedback sessions later in the spring after the survey results have been totaled.

We understand the magnitude of these projects and their financial impact. At the same time, our newest school was built in the mid-1980s and our schools (particularly the High School and Abraham Lincoln Elementary) need some significant repairs that will be quite costly and would put us in the position to put more money into aged and inefficient buildings many years into the future.

We want to emphasize that we need your feedback because no project can occur without the support of our community. We need to invest in our buildings, but we know that the amount of changes that are proposed will be unsettling to some people. We also know that the financial impact of the project is significant. We ask that you take the time to learn about the plan, in its entirety; and we also ask that you give us feedback we will need as we move forward with our facilities planning.

We are grateful for the support that has been provided to the District in recent years. We feel we have been good stewards of these funds as our District mill rate is at or near the lowest it has been in the last 30 years. At the same time, we ask that you look at the future of our schools with an open mind as we work to find solutions to aging buildings and the need to have our programming and facilities change as the needs of our workforce continue to change.

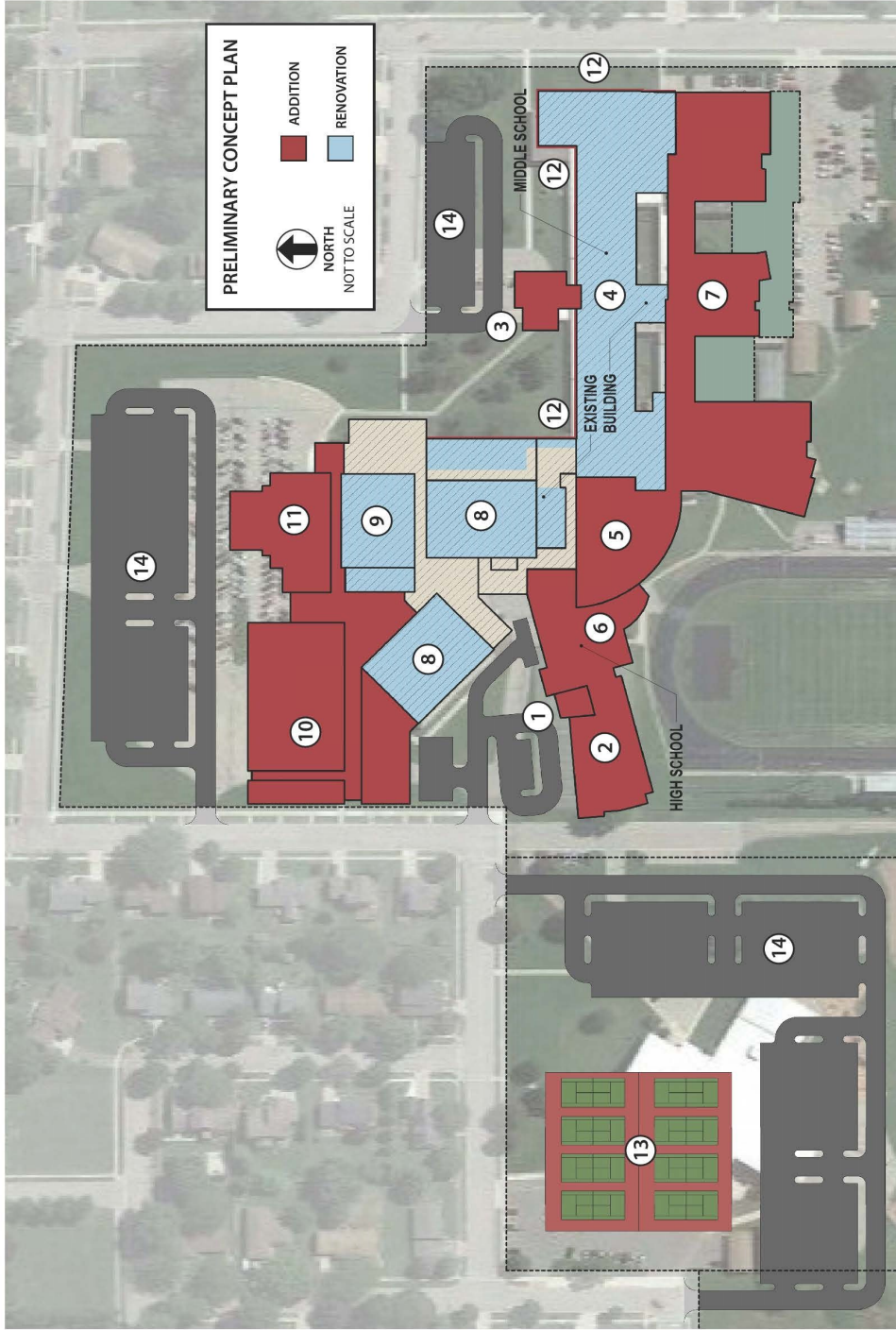
Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter and Go Cheesemakers!!

District Facilities Committee Members

Tim Brown, District
Ann Doyle, Community
John Emmons, Community
Jeriamy Jackson, District
Jason Kundert, Community

Nate Lancaster, Community
Ron Markham, Community
Chris Medenwaldt, District
Joe Monroe, District
Jeff Newcomer, District

Ron Olson, District
Andrea Sweeney, Community
Amy Timmerman, District
Rick Waski, District
Rich Zentner, District



1. New High School main entrance
2. New High School classroom addition
3. New Middle School main entrance
4. Renovate existing classrooms and building
5. New Cafeteria / Commons
6. New Library
7. Specials classroom addition

8. Renovate existing Gymnasiums
9. Renovate existing Performing Arts Center
10. New Gymnasium, Fitness Center, and Wrestling
11. New Music addition
12. Upgrade exterior facade
13. Relocate tennis courts
14. Relocate parking

7-12 Consolidation Potential Tax Impact



Ron Olson
District Business
Administrator

Major school facility projects are not something that come up often. This may be the first time for some taxpayers, parents and/or voters to potentially be considering a referendum question for a project of this scope. There will be many questions and I will try to address some preliminary ones regarding the potential cost or tax impact to taxpayers.

Is now a good time to consider this? As with any major purchase such as a home, home repair, appliances, etc. there is always the weighing of the need and the cost. There will be a number of articles and information over the next year on the needs and reasons this project was recommended. Beyond that we sometimes take on those projects when other factors help make it more cost effective. One of the biggest factors that makes now a good time to look at a significant project is that interest rates are at a historically very low rate. This obviously saves taxpayers money over the life of the bonds that are issued to pay for the project. Another reason is that a significant portion of our existing debt will be expiring. The majority of our long-term debt expired during the 2018-19 school year. The taxpayers approved the renovations to Parkside Elementary in November 2018. The debt for those upgrades kept the levy level and will be paid off in two years in the 2020-21 school year. Having expiring debt will help limit the cost impact of adding new debt for a much larger project. The other significant factor is that our current tax rate (mill rate) is near a historic low. The District's current tax rate of \$9.91 is much lower than it has been for most of the past 40 years and likely for some time before that. Only twice, in 1997-98 and 1998-99, when the tax rates were \$9.88 and \$9.85 has it been lower.

What will the cost impact be to my taxes? Based upon the current proposed project recommended by the two committees advising the Board of Education, the District would be looking at a tax rate impact (increase) of \$2.41 per thousand dollar of valuation. That would be \$361/year on a \$150,000 or approximately \$30/month or \$1/day. These costs will continue to be updated over the next year as the scope of the project and/or variables are updated. The cost of other plans the board may seriously consider will be available at a later date, and will be finalized by the time the community is surveyed on these concepts in January and February of 2020. We have already had larger than expected valuation growth and lower interest rates since we received this estimate which would mean the cost likely will be lower. We mentioned the historically low tax rate the District currently has; with the addition of the cost of this project, our tax rate would still be lower than a number of the past 40 years including as recently as 2010-11.

Does the state help pay for the project's debt service? Our District has lower-than-average valuation per pupil and thus is fairly highly aided. The state currently covers 61% of District shared costs. However, the state pays nearly 76% for first dollars spent and then it gradually reduces with each additional dollar spent. For the cost of the new debt, the estimate is the state would cover nearly 25% of the cost of the debt for the project.

Are there ways to offset or lower the tax impact? Probably the most common way would be to consider putting out bonds with a 30-year pay back rather than a 20-year payback. This often doesn't make financial sense as it adds interest costs, but there are a few situations where it does. One scenario would be if interest rates rise at the time of issuance. You may issue longer-period bonds with the anticipation of calling (paying off) the bonds before they expire by issuing new debt at a lower interest rate and possibly a shorter duration. Another scenario is when interest rates are exceedingly low. It may reach a point where the extra interest costs are actually less than the projected inflationary costs making it a value to taxpayers to pay less over a longer period of time. The third scenario is when a project is of a larger scope and impact than a typical project or borrowing. You would not want to extend debt on a smaller building or project when there was the possibility of needs for a bigger building or project within 30 years. Those projects you would want to keep on a shorter pay-back period. However, when it is a large-scale project (a 7-12 building would contain half our student population) it sometimes makes sense to spread the cost over a greater time period as it is less likely that you will have another major project during that duration.

We will certainly update and provide additional information over time. I hope this gives you some initial information to understand the potential costs associated with the project as currently recommended.

Elementary Consolidation Committee Members

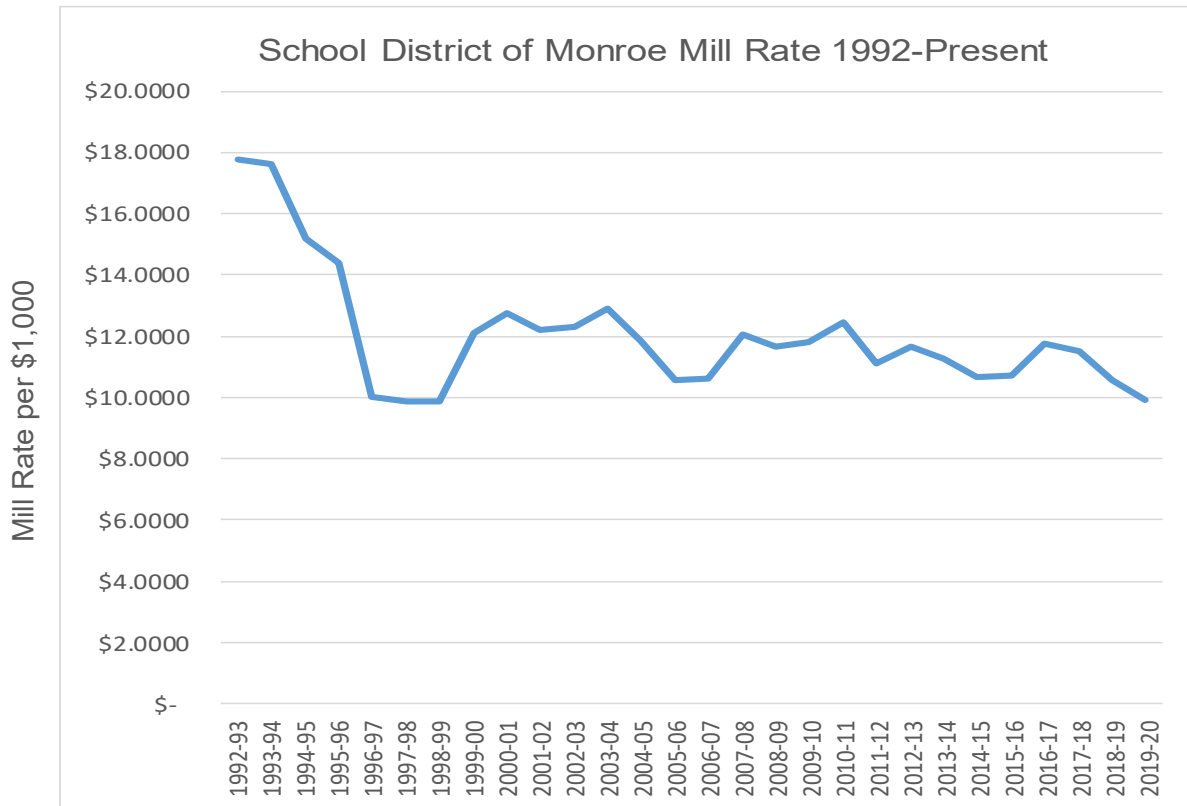
Molly Babler, District
Lisa Beach, Community
Catherine Boughton, Community
Stephanie Fletcher, Community
Alex Justiniano, District
Brittany Klitzke, St. Victor
Samantha Kubly, District

Kate Maliszewski, District
Joe Monroe, District
Terri Montgomery, District
Ron Olson, District
Todd Paradis, District
Joe Peters, St. Victor
Theresa Robertson, Community

Bradley Saugstad, District
Chris Soukop, Community
Kirsten Steinmann, District
Amy Timmerman, District
Jenna Trame, District
Rick Waski, District
Carrie Williams, Community

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE MILL RATE HISTORY

YEAR	MILL RATE/\$1000	% CHANGE
1992-1993	\$17.7708	
1993-1994	\$17.6153	-0.8750%
1994-1995	\$15.2125	-13.6406%
1995-1996	\$14.3788	-5.4803%
1996-1997	\$10.0171	-30.3344%
1997-1998	\$9.8755	-1.4130%
1998-1999	\$9.8535	-0.2231%
1999-2000	\$12.0957	22.7550%
2000-2001	\$12.7800	5.6575%
2001-2002	\$12.2189	-4.3902%
2002-2003	\$12.3316	0.9224%
2003-2004	\$12.9103	4.6928%
2004-2005	\$11.8725	-8.0386%
2005-2006	\$10.5843	-10.8504%
2006-2007	\$10.6152	0.2918%
2007-2008	\$12.0414	13.4354%
2008-2009	\$11.6795	-3.0051%
2009-2010	\$11.8344	1.3262%
2010-2011	\$12.4514	5.2130%
2011-2012	\$11.1254	-10.6494%
2012-2013	\$11.6519	4.7328%
2013-2014	\$11.2418	-3.5197%
2014-2015	\$10.6514	-5.2515%
2015-2016	\$10.6959	0.4176%
2016-2017	\$11.7529	9.8817%
2017-2018	\$11.5179	-1.9990%
2018-2019	\$10.5497	-8.4065%
2019-2020	\$9.9089	-6.0739%



Future Considerations for Pupil Services Programming



Joe Monroe
Director of
Pupil Services

The School District of Monroe has been exploring facility options to address issues related to an aging high school while also considering the needs of our current student population. The idea brought forward by the District Facilities Committee that includes consolidating our students into a four school building configuration (2 elementary schools, an intermediate school, and a 7-12 school) brings some new challenges, but more importantly, offers some exciting opportunities. As a part of this exploration process, I have been asked to consider how moving to a 7-12 school could benefit our students. Below is a brief summary of some of the more significant potential Pupil Services changes:

Pupil Services Staffing: One of the most significant implications of a 7-12 model is that it potentially allows for some consolidation of staffing. The District currently employs 5 school psychologists and 6 school counselors across grades 4K-12. By serving nearly half of all district students in one building there could be consideration of reducing a position to realize a much needed cost savings.

Pupil Services Collaboration: As you might imagine, supporting the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of roughly a thousand adolescents is quite a challenge. In order to effectively meet the various needs of our students it is important to provide opportunities for school counselors and school psychologists to work together to proactively plan supports and problem-solve issues as they arise. Having a team of counselors and psychologists that specialize in adolescent issues working together in one building will allow us to develop supports that were not previously possible.

Guidance Classes: Currently, students at Monroe Middle School and Monroe High School have limited opportunity to access classes that focus on social and emotional learning. By combining the staff it increases our ability to work across various grade levels to provide much needed instruction. These classes would focus on developmentally appropriate topics such as empathy, communication, bullying prevention, emotional management, goal setting, addiction, and healthy habits.

Counseling Groups: The school counselors and school psychologists do an excellent job of working to meet the various needs of students. While individual counseling is often beneficial, there are times when group therapy is more appropriate. This can be a challenge when dealing with low incidence disorders. By consolidating students in grades 7-12 the counselors and staff can develop specialized groups of students across multiple grade levels that would benefit from working together to address a common challenge.

Peer Mentoring and Other Projects: Student mentors are one of the most under-utilized resources in our schools. A plan that would bring students from grades 7-12 together in one school would allow for meaningful peer mentoring and support. In addition, it would allow us to develop special projects as they relate to developing a positive and inclusive school climate and culture.

These are just a few examples of ideas that are being considered as the District evaluates the benefits of moving to a new school configuration. If you have any questions, concerns or feedback, please feel free to contact me via email at josephmonroe@monroe.k12.wi.us or by calling me directly at 608-328-7155.

Thank you for placing your trust in us as we work to provide the support and educational experience your children deserve!

The Process Behind the Proposed Configuration for Elementary Consolidation



Jenna Trame
Principal
Abraham Lincoln
Elementary

A significant number of models and configurations had been researched, studied and discussed by District and building level administrators. Each model and configuration had a number of benefits as well as challenges.

The administrative team felt it was very important to gather insight and feedback from community stakeholders to determine which benefits and challenges were most significant when making decisions and considerations. In the fall of 2018 an Elementary Consolidation Committee was formed to begin having conversations about elementary school consolidation in Monroe.

The Elementary Consolidation Committee included district level administrators, elementary principals, parents and teachers from all elementary buildings, community members, and St. Victor school administration and staff. It was noted that about half of the committee members had attended the School District of Monroe personally and are now parents and/or teachers in the district.

The committee met monthly throughout the 2018-2019 school year. Meetings were held from 4:00-6:00pm. Each meeting included small group and large group discussion around specific factors that would need to be considered for successful elementary consolidation.

The following questions were considered, discussed, and researched during the course of the committee meetings:

- How many building transitions do we want students to experience in their elementary school years (Pre-K to 6th)?
- How will a change in elementary school configuration impact transportation services?
- What services and programs could we provide to 4th and 5th grade students if they were in an intermediate setting as opposed to an elementary school?
- How will it be determined which elementary site students attend?
- How will a change in configuration impact the housing market in the community?

(The Process... continued on page 7)

The Process... (continued from page 6)

In addition to the meeting discussions, committee members read articles on the topic, heard presentations from the District Business Administrator, District Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and held a Q&A session with members of the District Facilities Committee who have visited other districts to observe the considered configurations.

After careful consideration of all information, representatives from the group put together a presentation for the Board of Education. The recommendation was based on the majority vote from the committee.

The Elementary Consolidation Committee recommended the following:

- Consolidating from 3 elementary schools to 2 elementary schools
- Configuring the 2 elementary schools to serve 4K-3rd grade
- Consulting an outside firm to study population and determine boundary lines for each school

1st Grade is on a Mission!



Claire McMannes, Kendra Kalvin,
Melissa Chambers
First Grade Teachers
Parkside Elementary

At the beginning of October, the first graders at Parkside Elementary were quite surprised when their teachers announced that there was a police officer outside, parked with a squad car on the blacktop. They were even more surprised when they heard Officer Quinn had a message for them! After a few breaths to calm the excitement, students listened to a message read aloud on the speaker. The message was a call to action from the 'Super Secret Detective Agency'. The "Agency" needed the first grade class to join the team as word detectives and to work hard to help solve tricky words. Each class received an envelope containing their first word detective mission to be completed in their next reading lesson.

Throughout the next month, each class will complete multiple missions that help the students learn reading strategies and use everything they know to solve words. During the missions students practice strategies such as breaking words into parts, watching out for endings, keeping an eye out for tricky vowels, and more. At one point in the unit, the 'Super Secret Detective Agency' will deliver tools (flashlights, magnifying glasses, and word pointers) for the students to solve tricky words. Upon successfully completing their word detective missions at the end of the unit, classes will earn official word detective badges. Student engagement throughout the unit is amazing, as they really take pride in their job as a word detective and soak up each new reading strategy we learn together.

With the addition of the new "Units of Study: Phonics" this year, we will see this theme of word detectives continue into other parts of the students' day. The Phonics unit that will happen simultaneously is titled "The Mystery of the Silent e", where students will investigate long vowel words and look closely to find patterns that help them read and write words. Later in the unit, there are a few mini-lessons that are designed as a mystery case: "The Case of the Letter Twins" and "The Case of the Words in Disguise". We see students apply these skills in both their reading and writing, calling upon the strategies and tools introduced in the lessons.

Throughout their year in 1st grade, students' reading abilities progress from reading books with one or two lines on a page to reading chapter books. Units like 'Word Detectives' keep students excited and engaged, helping them apply the strategies taught in the lessons and reach their reading goals.



Opportunities Outside of the Classroom Stand Out in a 4th-6th Grade Intermediate School Configuration



Todd Paradis
Principal
Parkside Elementary

During the 2018-2019 school year, the Elementary Consolidation Committee spent time meeting and discussing the possibility of a 4th-6th grade Intermediate School configuration that would be located at our current Monroe Middle School. The group discussed the pros and cons of this type of change and how it would impact students, families, and staff. This proposed change offers some exciting opportunities along with a few challenges.

One major benefit to this change would be how well these grades fit together developmentally. Students at this age are entering early adolescence and are experiencing many changes that can be difficult. By putting these ages together, it would create more options for support with programs, staff resources, and age appropriate student activities. In our current elementary K-5 configuration this cannot always be accomplished with our 4th and 5th grade students. Many times at the elementary level, our activities and programs don't fit the wide range of ages from kindergarten to 5th grade.

Increased access to specialized programs for all 4th and 5th graders would be another major advantage to this configuration. In our current middle school structure, 6th grade students have more options in their encore classes (Chorus, Health, Positive Action, Business/Keyboarding) and can participate in different sports and clubs. The 4th-6th configuration could allow over 300 **more** students opportunities to take part in some of these classes, specialized programs, and clubs. These types of opportunities outside of the regular core classes help engage students in positive experiences with their peers, build a stronger connection to school, and help build skills that support their growth socially and emotionally.

In addition to the extra opportunities for our 4th and 5th grade students, the committee identified other benefits that relate to the structure of the building. The current middle school building is three levels and would fit perfectly with the three grade level configuration. It would allow for each grade to have their own floor and provide plenty of room and flexibility for future growth in class sizes. The building also has two gyms, an auditorium, science labs, and its own fitness center. All of these areas add flexibility for course offerings.

Other benefits from this change would include more leadership opportunities for our 6th grade students and potentially, an easier transition to a proposed 7-12 building because students would have spent three years together. For staff, having all 4th and 5th grade teachers under one roof allows for better collaboration and a more consistent academic program starting in 4th grade.

For challenges, the committee discussed scheduling, recess time, and outdoor space at the middle school. Here are a few questions that were discussed:

Will students follow an elementary schedule or the current 6th grade schedule with 8 periods?

- There will not be an 8 period bell schedule. We anticipate the schedule being similar to our current elementary model where students have a homeroom teacher, but transition between a smaller group of teachers for their different classes.
- We would continue to run 3 lunch periods in this building.

How would this configuration affect recess schedules?

- The 4th and 5th graders would have the same amount of recess as their current schedule allows and 6th grade may see an increase in recess time compared to their current schedule.

There is no playground and less green space at the current middle school site. How does the district plan to address that?

- It is anticipated that some playground equipment would be moved or purchased and the green space across the road from the middle school could be utilized for more playground space.

We are in the beginning phases of our planning, but you can see from the committee's discussions, there are some exciting opportunities with this proposed change. As a principal and a parent of students in this age range, I'm excited for the possibilities and the positive impact an intermediate school could have on our students.

School Closings, Delays, and Early Dismissals

The School District of Monroe's school closing information is posted to the district webpage and district Facebook page minutes after a decision to close, delay, or dismiss early is made. Parents and guardians of current students will also receive an automated phone call from our Skylert messaging system.

The district contacts the following TV and radio stations when these events occur:

RADIO
WBGR FM 93.7 (Monroe)
WEKZ FM 95.5/AM 1260 (Monroe)

TELEVISION
WISC CBS 3 (Madison)
WMTV NBC 15 (Madison)
WKOW ABC 27 (Madison)

WEB Program at Monroe Middle School



Brian Bruggeman, Ashley Thompson,
Claire Tibodeau, and Jake Whitstone
WEB Coordinators
Monroe Middle School

WEB, which stands for “Where Everybody Belongs”, is a middle school orientation and transition program that welcomes 6th graders and develops a sense of community throughout their first year of middle school.

The objectives of the WEB program include:

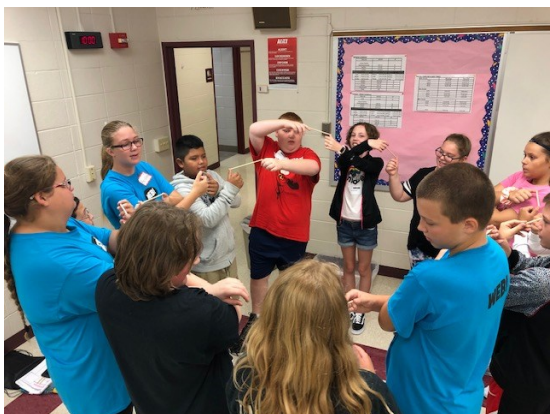
- empowering eighth graders as role models for sixth graders
- increasing academic success through peer support
- developing leadership skills in students on your campus
- allowing successful older students to pass on positive traditions to younger students
- exposing students to a variety of individuals at school in positive situations
- teaching students that by working together they can be successful and enjoy one another
- helping create a supportive and positive atmosphere on your campus



Built on the belief that students can help students succeed, the program trains mentors from the 8th grade class to be WEB Leaders. This training provides our 8th grade leaders with the skills and tools necessary to be effective leaders. WEB provides the structure for 6th graders to receive support and guidance from 8th graders who have been through the challenges that middle school poses and understand that the transition to a larger school can sometimes be overwhelming.



Prior to the start of this school year, our 8th grade WEB leaders attended a two day training with our WEB Coordinators to prepare them for leading the sixth grade class in various activities during our first ever, 6th grade only, first day. This orientation day consisted of a welcome assembly followed by small group activities led by the eighth grade leaders to build a sense of community and knowledge of multiple aspects of middle school. In addition to the orientation day, the student leaders will also be meeting throughout the school year with their groups for both academic and social follow ups.



The 8th Grade WEB Leaders are currently preparing an academic lesson for their 6th graders called, “If you Don’t A-S-K, You Don’t G-E-T”. We want to model to 6th graders how to ask questions and what kinds of questions to ask their teachers, coaches, and parents. Activities will occur throughout the school year both during the school day as well as other events outside of the school day. Pay attention to announcements and e-mails from your WEB Leaders for upcoming dates!

Winter Break
December 23rd, 2019 - January 1st, 2020

Consolidation Would Expand Opportunities for Middle School Students



Brian Boehm
Principal
Monroe Middle School

In July of 2019, the School District of Monroe Facilities Committee, formed by the School District of Monroe Board of Education, made a recommendation to the Board that the District consider building several new additions to the current high school and consolidating from five (5) to four (4) buildings. Here are highlights of the key components of that plan as they affect Monroe Middle School.

Overview

- Remodel part of the existing Monroe High School and build several new additions to the property. This would become a 7-12 building that will serve as a middle school and high school under one roof.
- All students in grades 4-6 would attend an Intermediate School housed at the current Monroe Middle School site. 6th grade is likely to continue to occupy the 3rd floor of the current middle school.

How will the “two schools (7-12) under one roof” be organized?

- 7-8 area for most core classes (ELA (English Language Arts), Math, Social Studies)
- 9-12 area for most core classes (ELA, Math, Social Studies)
- Shared areas for CTE (Career and Technical Education), Science, Fine Arts, PE, LMC, Student Services
- Separate entrances and offices for middle school (MS) and high school (HS)

Will administrators and Students Services personnel be assigned to students in one of the two buildings (7-8, 9-12) or will everybody share students in grades 7-12?

- There will be separate Administrators and Guidance Counselors for the MS and HS
- There is the possibility of a shared School Psychologist

Will there be recess for 7th and 8th graders?

- We will seek to maintain 7th and 8th grade recess but this will depend upon lunch scheduling and space considerations as we are now sharing the lunch room/gyms and exterior spaces with the HS

Will the MS and HS be on a common bell schedule? If so, what will that be?

- MS and HS would be run on a common bell schedule. It is likely that that schedule will be the current trimester schedule used at MHS
- A common schedule would allow sharing of staff across MS and HS
- A common schedule would also afford MS students the opportunity to be accelerated into higher level classes at the HS

How will the shared library (LMC) be utilized in a 7-12 setting?

- It will be located in the commons area of the building and be accessible to all students 7-12

Science and many “encore” classes are being shared in grades 7-12. How will that work and what new opportunities does that offer?

- 7-8 students will have access to HS classes when needed in the core and encore
- Updated labs in the science area will allow for more efficient and effective science instruction
- The intent is that all science teachers will have individual classrooms

We already have Technology Education, Business Education, Art, and Family and Consumer Education classrooms at the existing high school. Why would we rebuild them?

- New construction will allow students to have access to updated, functional and modernized facilities
- New construction will allow new opportunities for students in CTE areas with updated facilities
- New facilities create an opportunity for updated curriculum and opportunities to teach students skills and trades that more closely match what is happening in our community and in the world

Thank you for taking time to read this article. The information above is not meant to answer all questions to be sure. Rather, it is intended to provide a brief overview of this important project as it affects Monroe Middle School. More information will be provided and input sought from stakeholders as we move forward.



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Consolidation Provides Many Advantages for Schools and Students



Terri Montgomery
Director of Curriculum
and Instruction

In November of 2018, an Elementary Consolidation Committee was formed to investigate what consolidation would look like for the School District of Monroe. This committee, composed of teachers and administrators from the Monroe School District and St. Victor School, and parents, met monthly diving into the concept and research on school consolidation. The committee developed many different consolidation configurations and identified the pros and cons of each. After many months of discussion, the committee presented the following consolidation recommendation to the Board of Education:

- Two elementary schools (Northside & Parkside) grades PreK-3
- One intermediate school (Currently MMS) grades 4-6
- One secondary school (Currently MHS) grade 7-12

Currently, we have three elementary schools serving grades PreK-5. In the proposed consolidation plan we would have two elementary schools serving grades PreK-3. This configuration would allow us to provide 4K classes in both elementary buildings. In our current configuration we only have space to accommodate two 4K classes at Abraham Lincoln. Consolidating to two elementary schools would also allow the buildings to look and operate similarly. With consolidation comes the added benefit of ease of collaboration. The 4-6 grade intermediate school would look similar to our current middle school from a collaborative standpoint. At the middle and high school level, combining grades 7-12 into the same building would provide greater collaboration opportunities to ensure vertical alignment of our secondary curriculum; providing a strong foundation of knowledge that builds and prepares students for the next grade level.

From a developmental standpoint 6th grade is more appropriate with grades 4-5. An Intermediate School would allow us to better meet these students needs and provide expanded, age-appropriate enrichment opportunities, especially in encore areas. For example, music programming for grades 4-6 could be expanded in band and vocal music, giving our students extra years of playing an instrument or singing in a chorus. Research shows that students who participate in music tend to have higher academic achievement. At the middle and high school level, a 7-12 facility would provide students who need to be challenged with more opportunities to take high level courses. Currently, students who need acceleration in some courses must be transported to and from the high school, which can lead to scheduling challenges. With a combined 7-12 building, they will be able to just walk down the hall to a math or science class that is needed. Another advantage to our students is that there will be less sharing of staff throughout the District. Some staff currently travel between buildings during the school day. If we can eliminate the need for teachers to travel from building to building it will provide opportunities for increased instructional time.

Consolidation is exciting as it offers opportunities for our students and staff that simply aren't possible in our current configuration.

Elementary Consolidation Pre-Kindergarten Through Third Grade Elementary Schools



Amy Timmerman
Principal
Northside Elementary

The proposal of two, pre-kindergarten through third grade elementary schools offers many opportunities and challenges for our families and student learners.

A great advantage to this alignment is that both Parkside and Northside Elementary Schools would be able to house four-year-old kindergarten (4K) classrooms which allows for a more consistent 4K through third grade experience when compared to our current model. This provides an opportunity to create strong student-family-school relationships in addition to providing consistent early intervention access and supports. The combination of these two factors can prove to be instrumental forces when setting a solid foundation of early learning. Please note that the district views maintaining strong partnerships with our community 4K partners as a priority as we explore future facilities plans.

Changing schools is a valid concern for many of our families, and it is important that the process is fair and equitable when determining school placements. For this reason, an outside consulting firm that specializes in school attendance zone studies would be hired to conduct a thorough analysis of Monroe. This third-party consultant will make recommendations to our Board of Education whom will

(Elementary Consolidation... continued on page 12)

School District of Monroe Proposed Facility Project Community Feedback Sessions



WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8th, 2020
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11th, 2020
at 7pm in the
Monroe Public Library
Community Room

Elementary Consolidation... (continued from page 11)

then make final decisions on school attendance areas. In the realignment process, it is important to the district that the two elementary schools are equitable in all demographic areas in order for both schools to offer similar programmatic offerings. This is a shift in that there are currently different demographics in the three elementary schools resulting in dissimilar programming.

The three elementary schools are currently working diligently to align all curricula practices and having two buildings will make the process easier. Specials/encore classes, such as art, music, physical education, and Spanish, are expected to continue as currently offered. It is also anticipated that there will be one full time school counselor and school psychologist at each of the schools which will allow for a continuation of the supports and services that are in place.

One of the options presented during the Elementary Consolidation Committee meetings was to have an early learning building (4K-1) and primary center (grades 2-3) which would result in at least seven and up to eight sections of each grade level in a building. This large number of teachers per grade level actually proves problematic to collaboration as it would not be possible to have a common planning time due to the specials' schedule. In other words, each grade level would be split into two teacher teams. This factor and the fact that this model would actually include more transitions were considered disadvantages to this type of alignment.

With the reduction of an elementary school and changes in attendance areas, a disadvantage is that there is a likelihood of increased transportation costs. A larger number of students will likely need in-town busing as both of the elementary schools are located on the northern side of Monroe.

As the principal of Northside Elementary, a common question that I have received is in regard to the updates that are going to be necessary at our school in the coming years. There are several areas that will need to be addressed and the plan is for those improvements to be taken from the District's general maintenance budget.

Know that these highlighted benefits and challenges certainly do not include every detail when considering an elementary consolidation, but these are some of the main factors for community members to consider to make an informed decision.

Ukuleles Take Monroe



Savannah Bettin
Music Teacher
Abraham Lincoln
Elementary

Abraham Lincoln Elementary School and Monroe Middle School students will have a unique opportunity to learn a new instrument this year! Students will be learning to play the ukulele. I studied the ukulele several years ago and felt this instrument would be the ideal next step for the students of Monroe. In the first year of implementation 250 students will have the opportunity to learn about and play this instrument.

Sixth graders will have a unit dedicated to the instrument during their 9-week general music course and 5th graders at Abraham Lincoln will start their unit during the spring semester. Seventh and eighth grade piano and guitar students will also have the opportunity to learn the ukulele alongside their regular curriculum.

This project was inspired by the passion and excitement that I observed from students when working with instruments. Instrument units teach coordination, music theory, performance skills, and perseverance. In 4th grade students learn the recorder. In 5th grade students experience drumming and xylophones. In 6th grade the opportunity to play an instrument is tied to band, a class with much more commitment financially than some families are able to make. The 6th grade curriculum focuses on music history, composition, and rhyme scheme, but does not provide authentic music-making opportunities which leads to a very different music class experience than students had in 5th grade.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Excellence in Education Foundation, I was able to purchase 25 ukuleles, workbooks, songbooks, and tuners for student use in the classroom. Students will borrow the instruments from school and will not be required to purchase them. However, the ukulele is a very cost-effective instrument, with an average price of \$60-\$70. If a family decides to make this investment, children are welcome to bring their own ukuleles from home to use during class.

The ukulele is small in size and has a manageable chord structure. The ukulele is perfect to introduce stringed instrument techniques, strumming patterns, and accompanying yourself as a soloist. The ukulele only has 4 strings as opposed to 6 on a guitar, making it easier for small hands to maneuver. The small structure also limits the volume that comes from the instrument which is helpful with a class of students all learning at the same time.

Many school districts across Wisconsin have already implemented ukulele curriculum because of its affordability, wide range of repertoire, and possibilities for ensemble and solo performances.

Students in Monroe have started to explore these benefits through the District Summer School ukulele course, offered this past June. Fourth through eighth graders were able to work independently or in groups as they learned folks songs, multicultural works, and even some pop music through this versatile instrument. Many students even purchased their own ukuleles by the end of the course, or had it on birthday or holiday wish lists! Your child might come home one day asking for a ukulele of their own!

As for the future, the music department is hopeful that eventually each elementary school will have its own set of these instruments so that all 5th graders across the District can use them, but until then the elementary music team will be collaborating to make plans for a rotation system that would allow equal access to the instruments.

The ukulele's manageable size, lovely sound, and ease of use leads to endless, exciting possibilities!



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SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE
DISTRICT CALENDAR
ON OUR WEBSITE
FOR SPORTS AND EVENT
INFORMATION

WWW.MONROESCHOOLS.COM



Consolidation Would Bring Exciting Opportunities for Change at Monroe High School



Chris Medenwaldt
Principal
Monroe High School

The building consolidation plan for the School District of Monroe presents exciting possibilities but also concern about the unknown. Part of the unknown is what will happen at MHS as it possibly merges into a 7-12 building. Administrators in the District have considered many possibilities and this article seeks to answer some of the questions about this particular consolidation. The current plan includes remodeling part of the existing Monroe High School and building several new additions to the property. This would become a 7-12 building that will serve as a middle school and high school under one roof.

The consolidation will possibly include some cost savings due to the reduction of administrative staff, the ability to share staff without transporting between buildings, and possibly using more energy efficient utilities. However, the building will also be larger so it may cost more and the plan includes moving some outdoor facilities here which may increase some costs.

The plan will retain the same number of counselors at Monroe High School, but will consolidate the Student Services for the building into one area. Counselors will be assigned to 9-12 students or 7-8 students. This is also true of library services; there will not be separate facilities, rather they will be consolidated into an easily accessible area for all students.

A common question is about lunch services. It is possible that 9-12 grade students may eat lunch with 7-8 grade students as the current plan incorporates one kitchen and one eating area. As the seating area is not large enough to accommodate the entire lunch population, there may be a need for several lunch shifts. There is also a possibility, if this area is large enough, that the campus would close during lunch.

The configuration of the core area classes will largely remain the same. High school English, math and social studies areas will remain separate from 7th and 8th. However, the current plan would have a 7-12 science wing to consolidate supplies, equipment and allow for ease of sharing staff and providing for student needs. Shared facilities for 7-12 will also occur in the encore areas, particularly Career and Technical Education and Fine Arts. In fact, these areas will likely be heavily remodeled or built new in another part of the building; which will allow us to significantly upgrade these facilities to match real world applications for students.

The plan will include separate office entrances for high school students as well as a student parking area. However, 7-12 students will share a common bell schedule to facilitate the sharing of staff and encourage all students to be able to access the appropriate courses throughout their 6 years in the building.

As with any building plan there is a question about athletic facilities. The current high school configuration is not large enough to add the 7-8 grade classes for physical education or athletic teams. A 3-station gymnasium will be added to allow for physical education and athletic practices. There will also be an enlarged weight room to facilitate training as well as physical education courses.

While consolidation can bring about some worrisome questions, it also allows for dreams and goals to be unleashed. This is an opportunity for the community to provide a facility that will meet their needs for generations and one where students can have a chance for their spark for learning to be fueled for their future.

Second Step Child Protective Unit



Katlyn Trumm
School Counselor
Northside Elementary

At the elementary level, we are using the Second Step program in S.E.L.F. class which stands for Social Emotional Learning Foundation. The Second Step program teaches children important skills for getting along with others and doing well in school. Students across all grade levels learn skills for learning, empathy, emotion management, and problem solving. This program also helps our school to be a safe and supportive place where everyone can learn. To help make our school even more safe and supportive, we were granted money by the Monroe Excellence in Education (EIE) Foundation to purchase the Second Step: Child Protective Unit for all three elementary schools. In this unit, students will learn a variety of skills to help them stay safe from dangerous or abusive situations.

The program begins with educating our students about three ways to stay safe which are to Recognize, Refuse, Report. Students will need to be able to recognize when a situation is unsafe and learn ways to help them decide what to do. They could ask themselves; Is this safe? Does this break a rule? There are additional important Never-Never rules, such as safety with guns, sharp tools, fire, and when riding on wheels or in a car. The first safety rule is to ask a parent or the person in charge first before going somewhere, doing something, or accepting something from someone. It is important for adults in their life to encourage students to always ask an adult first.

When a student encounters an unsafe or dangerous situation, adults may not always be around to stop them. They need to use their assertiveness skills to say words that mean no. Students learn about being assertive in the second step program which means to stand or sit tall, face the person you are speaking to, and use a calm, firm voice. If something happens or someone is being unsafe, students should report it to a grown-up; this could be a parent or guardian, a teacher, a trusted adult, or their school counselor.

As they learn about all the safety rules, students will discuss safe, unsafe, and unwanted touches, and rules about touching private body parts. This may be uncomfortable for students to talk about although it is important for them to know the rules. The school counselors will be addressing private areas as our bathing suit areas and how they are different for boys and girls. With these lessons, they will be learning and practicing ways to say no to unsafe or unwanted touches as well as how to tell an adult if someone breaks rules about touching private body parts.

Your child may be coming home and talking about the Ways to Stay Safe, the Never-Never rules, or Private Body Parts Rule. We encourage families to talk about safety plans in their own home and what to do in case of an emergency. Discuss trusted adults in their lives who they can go to in order to report unsafe situations. This unit is not meant to scare any student but rather prepare them for any situation they may encounter as they grow up. If you have any questions about the program or would like more resources to talk to your child, please feel free to reach out to your child's school counselor.



SCHOOL BOARD ELECTION NOTICE

The School District of Monroe will hold its annual School Board Election on April 7th, 2020.

All incumbents not seeking re-election must file their written notification by 5:00pm on December 27th, 2019.

Four seats will be open for the April 2020 Election. Any Monroe School District resident wishing to run for a seat on the Board of Education must file their candidacy papers by 5:00pm on Tuesday, January 7th, 2020.

Candidacy papers may be picked up and turned in at the District Administrative Center,
925 16th Avenue, Suite 3
(third floor of the Monroe Public Library).

Monroe High School Learning Center Supports Students for Success



Jeriamy Jackson
Associate Principal
Monroe High School

For many years now Monroe High School has been fortunate to have the support and services of the Bauer Learning Center (BLC). The BLC was a program that students applied to when they were experiencing some difficulties in the regular classroom. If they were accepted to the program they were assigned program courses and received daily support from the program teachers. The Pathways program was also housed within the BLC and supported students who were also experiencing some difficulties but to a lesser degree. In the 2019-2020 school year, we have developed a new strategy for supporting these students and to support many more.

This new approach is simply called the "Learning Center" because any of our students could access this area at one time or another to get support. Some students will need this area one time in their high school career and others will need it more, this will be a more fluid way to support students. It is our belief that we are there to build students up, provide them support and get them back into the regular classroom if at all possible.

We believe that we can reach and support more students by making some changes to allow the Learning Center teachers to be more available and flexible for student needs. Students who are in need of support are identified through bi-weekly meetings where we look at student performance, attendance, discipline and at-risk data. From this information we assign levels of support based on the amount of support needed. This includes everything from a student having a "Mentor" that will be able to check in with them a few times a week, to family meetings, home visits and small group classes.

Students access this area for many reasons including; academic support, online learning and behavioral support. The teachers in the Learning Center are available for students every period of the day and go into regular classrooms to provide support when needed.

Early into the school year, we are seeing great progress in the Learning Center. We are averaging 60-70 students per week that are gaining support through daily appointments. This is outside of the students who are already scheduled in the small group classes, online learning and GED programming that is consistently provided in the Learning Center. Of the students that the Learning Center staff is providing support to, 70% of them are there for academic support with the remaining 30% being there for socio-emotional concerns and behavioral referrals.

We are very excited about this new opportunity for our students and hope to build on the early success of the Learning Center to provide support to many more students!

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE BOARD OF EDUCATION INFORMATION



Back Row, Left to Right: Rich Deprez—Treasurer, Daniel Bartholf—President, Mary Berger—Deputy Clerk, Tim Wolff—Member, Dylan McGuire—Member
Front Row, Left to Right: Teresa Keehn—Member, Nikki Matley—Clerk, Jim Plourde—Member, Cheryl McGuire—Member

When are Board of Education Meetings?

- The Board of Education meets the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7pm.
- Most meetings are held at the District Administrative Center located on the 3rd Floor of the Monroe Public Library.
- Some meetings during the school year are held in our School District of Monroe schools.

Where Can I Find Board Meeting Agendas and Minutes?

To access Board Agendas:

- Go to www.monroeschools.com
- Hover your cursor over "District" near the top of the page
- Click on "Agendas and Minutes" under the Heading "Board of Education"
- Click on "BoardDocs" (listed in red)
- Click "Meetings" on the top toolbar
- Click on the meeting you would like to review from the list on the left side of the page
- Choose from the three options in the center of the screen
 - "View the Agenda"
 - "Print the Agenda"
 - "View Minutes"





SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE

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SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE CALENDAR

Monday, December 23, 2019 to Wednesday, January 1, 2020	No School—Winter Break
Monday, February 24, 2020	All Day School—No Early Release
Thursday, February 27 and Friday, February 28, 2020	No School
Thursday, March 12, 2020	MMS Parent Teacher Conferences
Thursday, March 26, 2020	Abraham Lincoln, Northside and Parkside Parent Teacher Conferences
Monday, March 30, 2020	Abraham Lincoln, Northside and Parkside Parent Teacher Conferences
Monday, April 6 to Friday, April 10, 2020	No School—Spring Break
Thursday, April 23, 2020	Abraham Lincoln Open House
Monday, April 27, 2020	MHS Parent Teacher Conferences
Thursday, April 30, 2020	Northside Open House
Monday, May 25, 2020	No School—Memorial Day
Sunday, May 31, 2020	MHS Graduation
Monday, June 1, 2020	All Day School—No Early Release
Friday, June 5, 2020	Potential Last Day of School



ATTENTION NON-RESIDENTS OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF MONROE

This newsletter is provided to all residents of the School District of Monroe. The most affordable process used to circulate this newsletter throughout the district is to use saturation mailing. It is costly to avoid a few non-residents from receiving our newsletter. We apologize for your inconvenience but wish to provide important information to all residents. Thank you.