

## **CMS 2010-11 School Assignment Options Community Input Meeting**

East Mecklenburg High School  
October 1, 2009  
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Purpose: to involve parents & community in the development of student assignment

Discussion: student assignment options for overcrowding relief at Myers Park High

Attendance: approximately 200 parents, students, school personnel and community members

Scott McCully, executive director of planning and student placement, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Upon arrival, participants received an updated packet of information detailing the three discussion options created by the Planning Services Department, a map of the 2010-11 adopted boundaries for Independence High, Butler High, East Mecklenburg High and the new high school located in Mint Hill, and a data sheet with current and projected student enrollment for East Mecklenburg and Myers Park high schools. Participants were also given the opportunity to provide their email address on an index card if they wish to be included on a distribution list for assignment update emails.

On August 11, 2009, in conjunction with the adoption of the boundary for the new high school built in Mint Hill, the School Board requested that the Planning Department look into the possibilities of increasing the number of students assigned to East Mecklenburg and decreasing the number of students assigned to Myers Park High. Tonight CMS staff will present three discussion options (boundary option previously presented to the Board of Education is omitted based on feedback from Board at September 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting) which address the directive from the Board. In summary, the three discussion options include: 1) modification of Myers Park IB program 2) postpone until after review of guiding principles 3) postpone indefinitely until new relief high school boundaries are drawn. Staff was also present to listen and record input from parents, students, teachers and community members and to answer questions. Participants were given the opportunity to give ideas and provide feedback on the three options presented by staff. Tonight's meeting is the first of two to discuss the overcrowding issue at Myers Park High and the decline in enrollment at East Mecklenburg (as a result of the new high school opening in Mint Hill, August 2010). The second meeting will be held on Tuesday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Myers Park High School. (The second meeting will be a duplicate of the first; it is not necessary to attend both.)

The student assignment process timeline is as follows: public engagement meetings will be held in September and October. The staff recommendation will be presented in a report to the School Board on October 27<sup>th</sup>. A public hearing and the Board vote will take place on November 10<sup>th</sup>. The student assignment lottery process begins in January.

Mr. McCully introduced the CMS staff present:

- Molly Griffin, school board chairperson, District 5

- Tom Tate, school board member, District 4
- Carol Owen, executive director, East Learning Community
- Christine Hamlett, planning specialist, Planning Services Dept.
- Jennifer Holmes, planning specialist, Planning Services Dept.
- Dennis Lacaria, planning specialist, Planning and Project Management
- Cynthia Robbins Shah Khan, media relations supervisor, Communications Dept.

Attention was directed to the information packet prepared for the meeting. The packet includes the following information: building level data for East Mecklenburg High, 2009-10 20<sup>th</sup> day data and home school information for all IB students at East Meck and Myers Park, and 3 student assignment options for discussion.

At this point, participants were given a few minutes to look over the options, decide which they prefer, and provide feedback in writing on the cards provided. Planning specialists will use this feedback to look for a common thread from the input received and possibly create a community boundary option. After all input is analyzed and considered, one recommendation will be finalized to be presented to the School Board on October 27<sup>th</sup>. Throughout the process, up-to-date information can be found on the Planning Services Department website.

<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/cmsdepartments/StudentPlacement/PlanningServices/Pages/Planning.aspx>

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to a question/answer/comment period. Please see below...

*Question:* What implication does Randolph IB have in terms of its recent authorization?

*Answer:* It is linked with Myers Park IB, so if Myers Park IB goes away, Randolph will need to recertify as a stand-alone program.

*Question:* What precipitated this meeting?

*Answer:* The move of East Mecklenburg students to Butler as a result of the new high school located in Mint Hill and the need to relieve overcrowding at Myers Park High. The Board directed planning staff to expand consideration of the boundaries for East Mecklenburg by looking at Myers Park in an effort to increase the number of students at East Mecklenburg and decrease the number of students at Myers Park.

*Question:* Explain the map and data sheet.

*Answer:* The map is the 2010-11 adopted boundary for the new high school in Mint Hill. The data sheet is 2009-10 demographics for East Mecklenburg and Myers Park based on the 20<sup>th</sup> day enrollment (official FRL data is counted on the 40<sup>th</sup> day.)

*Question:* I feel that 2 IB programs are being pitted against each other. Both are good programs. What is the goal that you are trying to achieve?

*Answer:* The School Board expressed a concern about the drop in students at East Mecklenburg and the danger that could result to their academic programs. The Board asked Planning Services to look into increasing the number of students at East Mecklenburg and relieving overcrowding at Myers Park.

*Question:* How many students need to move?

*Answer:* The superintendent is pleased with the numbers at each school. The Board has asked for the review.

*Question:* East Mecklenburg believes that the school will be damaged if enrollment drops to the level expected. The solution of moving IB students seems imperfect. There has to be a better solution. If the IB program at Myers Park is divided, participation in IB will drop. How can we continue to support IB programs at 5 schools?

*Answer:* Most IB schools had wait pools this year. We anticipate that students will want to choose the IB program.

*Question:* The IB program at Myers Park is very successful. East Mecklenburg has needs, but I don't believe that moving IB kids from Myers Park to East Mecklenburg is a solution. Why can you just add more IB students to East Mecklenburg from the general student population?

*Answer:* The East Mecklenburg staff and School Board support leaving the East Mecklenburg IB program as it is.

*Question:* Could East Mecklenburg handle all of the Myers Park IB students?

*Answer:* Yes, with mobile units.

*Question:* With half of the students gone from East Mecklenburg, resulting in half of the teachers gone, how is it possible that the teacher cuts will not affect classes offered to remaining students?

*Answer:* The East Learning Community is committed to see that excellent teachers can continue teaching in CMS, hopefully at East Mecklenburg. The East LC is committed to working with the school to ensure that challenging classes are offered to students.

*Question:* Why is building a relief school an option? Why incur this cost when we have under-utilized schools?

*Answer:* A relief school for this area is a part of a larger comprehensive view / part of the long range master plan.

*Question:* From an East Mecklenburg teacher – East Mecklenburg is a one-of-a-kind school. What is the academic impact with the loss of teachers?

*Answer:* The East Learning Community is committed to retaining the best teachers for East Mecklenburg. We are committed to providing a challenging academic program to the students.

*Question:* As a parent of a Myers Park IB student, I feel that moving the IB program is not the solution. Combining the two programs would make competition between the students fierce – entrance to college, etc. You said that you have wait pools. Why can't you just pull students in from the wait pool?

*Answer:* Wait pools close on the 20<sup>th</sup> day of school. Not all students who apply can be placed. Magnet programs have caps.

*Question:* From a Media Specialist – when forced with cutbacks, I too only wanted to work at East Mecklenburg. How can you guarantee the students' stability with staff reductions?

*Answer:* There is a need to reassign students to a different school to relieve overcrowding. That will mean that some teachers are reassigned also. However, the East Learning Community will work with staff and students to ensure a quality education and learning environment.

*Question:* From a Spanish teacher at East Mecklenburg.... we just want more students. We already have a 95-98% teacher retention rate. Teacher moral is important in all schools. How will the reduction of students and staff at East Mecklenburg affect moral?

*Answer:* There is no way to really answer your question. However, one thing that we have to do is preserve capacity and utilization in schools.

*Question:* I am an East Mecklenburg teacher who found out in the Observer that I was laid off. How will you notify any teachers laid off at East Mecklenburg?

*Answer:* Layoffs are a budget issue. Most teachers are reassigned; they move to a school that has need.

*Question:* Do you consider Myers Park overcrowded?

*Answer:* It is at 137% building utilization. Yes, that is more student than is meant to be assigned there. Mobiles have to be used.

*Question:* If the Board opts to postpone any decision about Myers Park, what can CMS do to protect the courses, academics, sports, staff, etc.? Can you make certain IB students get classes needed?

*Answer:* Every effort will be made to keep all courses currently offered.

*Question:* At East Mecklenburg, about a half million dollars has been raised by the alumni association for teaching initiative. Will this time and money be wasted if these teachers do not remain at East Mecklenburg?

*Answer:* Teachers will always be able to use their training at another school. However, we will look into this and address it at a later date.

*Question:* Myers Park only pulls a few students from attendance zones where parents are pleased with their schools. Why do you think the IB program would provide needed students?

*Answer:* We are not making assumptions, just looking at data.

*Question:* I have two regular program students at East Mecklenburg. CMS says that the best size for a high school is 2000 students. Shouldn't this change at Myers Park been considered last year? With Myers Park being twice the size as East Mecklenburg, will Myers Park have more course offerings? How do you justify children living in the same neighborhood, on the same street, receiving totally different school opportunities?

*Answer:* For each school, the number of classroom, students and staff play into figuring capacity. The higher the FRL percentage, there will be more teachers for fewer students. The schedule and scheduler have a big impact on the students. Some classes do get full. However, we do all we can to offer what classes students need and want with the staff allotted.

*Question:* I am a junior at Myers Park High. We lost 25 teachers last year, which is more than any other school in the district. Overcrowding is a result of student to teacher ratio. If you move teachers along with students to East Mecklenburg, is Myers Park going to still be overcrowded.

*Answer:* The FRL percentages determine the number of teachers. It also affects how many teachers will be allotted to stay.

*Question:* Myers Park IB surveyed over 500 families. If the program moves to East Mecklenburg, only 44 IB students say they will remain in the program. How will this help East Mecklenburg and what is your back-up plan?

*Answer:* We have no way of knowing how many students will choose to remain in the program. This is just one of the options being discussed.

*Question:* I am an East Mecklenburg parent. The comment has been made about Myers Park – “why take it away when it is working?” What about East Mecklenburg and the loss of its students? What will it cost to move the mobiles?

*Answer:* Renovations are planned for East Mecklenburg. Construction cannot be done until the mobiles are moved and all students are in the building. It costs about \$20,000.00 to move a mobile. But keep in mind that they are meant to be temporary and can be allocated where needed.

*Question:* CMS plans to spend \$14 million dollars for a new gym at Myers Park. Does that help with overcrowding?

*Answer:* No, this is a standard upgrade.

*Question:* East Mecklenburg alumni have raised money and paid for the All Star Teacher Initiative. Now these teachers are leaving. Why should we donate money if teachers are going to leave?

*Answer:* We will check on the money issue surrounding this.

*Question:* Two students from East Mecklenburg spoke concerning the changes caused by the boundary for the new high school. Reducing membership and moving attendance lines causes destruction of schools. They reference their middle school as an example.

*Answer:* Be assured that the East Learning Community will be involved with the schools and work with the schools to ensure that courses needed are available.

*Question:* How can you guarantee that all IB classes will be available? Will there be staff to teach the classes?

*Answer:* Scheduling plays a big part in this. Every effort will be made to provide classes that prepare students for college and beyond.

*Question:* Can't you leave both schools alone? If you move students from Myers Park, staff will be cut there. This issue arose with the creation of the new school boundary. Why can't you start the new school small and allow it to grow. Leave the existing schools alone.

*Answer:* With the creation of the new high school boundary, approximately 675 East Mecklenburg students will be reassigned to Butler. If a situation allowed the students in the Piney Grove attendance area to stay at East Mecklenburg, what would be your reaction to that option? (Everyone seemed to like that idea.)

*Question:* I have an alternative option. What if next year, East Mecklenburg was opened to students who want to go here? Advertise what we have. Offer changes like a later start time, block courses or AB days, etc. to draw students. You have presented us with no good options. Continue to look for a solution.

*Answer:* Please provide us your ideas. Anyone may email us at [planning@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:planning@cms.k12.nc.us).

*Question:* I am a sophomore at Myers Park IB. I want to stay at Myers Park. Can I stay and receive transportation?

*Answer:* In the discussion options, rising juniors and seniors will be allowed to stay, but no transportation will be provided. However, that could be something that we ask the Board to reconsider.

*Comment:* There seems to be a lot of bad feelings – like East Mecklenburg is trying to steal the IB students from Myers Park. We are not. We just want to maintain students to rescue the East Mecklenburg IB program. If you put off the decision, East Mecklenburg will have 30% less students

and resources will be cut. Then the next year, you would still be trying to make another decision as to how to add students to East Mecklenburg. Please don't delay making a decision. We want a significant student population so that the IB, AP and Honors class offering can be maintained. We are a good school with a diverse population.

*Comment:* The Myers Park IB program will be destroyed in all these options. Do we destroy it to increase the enrollment at East Mecklenburg?

*Comment:* I am an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at Randolph IB. My goal is to attend the Myers Park IB program. If you make a change and East Mecklenburg IB is my only choice, then for various reasons I cannot participate in the program. Please do not take the IB program from Myers Park.

*Comment:* There is a perceived perception of overcrowding at Myers Park. But our kids are not bothered. Look at the achievement! The student assignment plan states that students will have reasonable access to magnet programs while keeping transportation to a minimum. What you are proposing is against the student assignment plan.

*Comment:* My daughter didn't feel crowded or neglected by the staff at Myers Park IB. We don't feel that overcrowding is an issue. The options presented will cause safety issues at the bus stops and increased transportation costs. My suggestion is that you allow families to choose which IB program they wish to attend.

*Comment:* From an English teacher who was laid off last year.... I waited to be called back to work and only wanted to work at East Mecklenburg. The addition of 2 teachers raised EOC grades by 5%. Can you ensure that academics will not suffer if teachers leave?

*Comment:* From an East Mecklenburg student – I don't mind going to classes in mobile units.

*Comment:* An East Mecklenburg teacher spoke about East Mecklenburg... I would like to see CMS committed to East Mecklenburg High and have the building renovations done. Important decisions are being made without input from the parents. Please allow East Mecklenburg to do some different things to attract student. Maybe even make it a county-wide school.

*Comment:* East Mecklenburg just wants fairness and justice, but the School Board gave no option that gives that to East Mecklenburg. The Board didn't mention what goes on inside of a building, the staff and students. They are more concerned about the facility. Teachers are also coaches. Take them away and the sports program will suffer. What will happen to those coaches? The Board needs to consider this.

*Comment:* We care about students and want something – we want students to remain stable with no interference in their education. Are there not other options rather than disrupting the schools? CMS needs to find a solution to preserve two of Charlotte's best high schools.

*Comment:* The Board directive was to look at boundaries to increase East Mecklenburg and decrease Myers Park enrollment. For about 60 years both school were at about 2000 students each. It has been just in the last 5 to 6 years that Myers Park has become overcrowded. There are 6 PE classes in the gym at the same time. East Mecklenburg has the space. Why not let the students move. It seems that Myers Park is being favored.

*Comment:* Concerning the IB issue at East Mecklenburg, a case could be made for combining the IB programs. I ask that Planning Services do a full study of the IB programs and possibly combine some programs?

-End of comments-

Mr. McCully thanked all participants and parents for their comments and patience.