

CMS 2010-11 School Assignment Options

Community Input Meeting

Myers Park High School

October 6, 2009

6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

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

Discussion: student assignment options to decrease enrollment at Myers Park High and increase enrollment at East Mecklenburg High

Attendance: approximately 450 parents, students, school personnel and community members

Scott McCully, executive director of planning and student placement, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Participants received an updated packet of information describing the three discussion options, 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 CMS distribution list for student assignment updates.

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 22nd 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 second of two to discuss the overcrowding issue at Myers Park and the decline in enrollment at East Mecklenburg (as a result of the new high school opening in Mint Hill, August 2010).

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 27th. A public hearing and the Board vote will take place on November 10th. 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
- Nancy Bartles, area superintendent, East Learning Community
- Joel Ritchie, area superintendent, Central Learning Community
- Christine Hamlett, planning specialist, Planning Services Dept.
- Jennifer Holmes, planning specialist, Planning Services Dept.
- Dennis LaCaria, planning specialist, Planning and Project Management
- Tom Spivey, principal, Myers Park Elementary School
- Bud Cesena, chief of CMS Police Department
- Judith Malveaux, media relations specialist, Communications Dept.

After presentation from staff, participants were given 30 minutes to look over and discuss the options in small groups at their tables and to report back to attendees which option they preferred or what solution they would recommend. Before we began a clarifying question was asked:

Question: How can we get additional ideas to the staff after tonight?

Answer: Use your index card to submit your contact information to us. Also use the booklet to make notes to staff. Due to time constraints the index cards will allow us to receive additional comments.

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 following were comments from each table:

Comment: Concern about the International Baccalaureate (IB), this will not solve the problem but cause overcrowding at home school.

Comment: Looking at the numbers both schools will be overcrowded.

Comment: Myers Park has a great IB program, with a successful graduation rate. It should not be change.

Comments: Moving the IB program may be the answer but not a solution. Why not make a boundary change? Why is this not an option?

Comment: Confusion between overcrowding and classroom size. We don't want large class sizes. Overcrowding does not exist. We are not in the auditorium for classroom space. Can you open the magnet at East Mecklenburg for larger enrollment? The solution on the table is directed by Myers Park and not East Mecklenburg. The question is how to increase the enrollment at East Mecklenburg to pull in students from other feeder zones.

Comment: Maximize academic achievement. Why not move 390 Myers Park students.

Comment: We surveyed IB families and the results showed that students would stay & enroll in Advance Placement AP courses at Myers Park and not change schools to East Mecklenburg. This is an opportunity for a county wide magnet at East Mecklenburg high school.

Comment: McClintock middle needs to be readdressed. Don't fix a problem with another problem.

Comment: Don't cancel the IB program. Redraw the district boundaries. Give us another option.

Comment: East Mecklenburg teacher discussed her visit to the nation's capitol, Washington DC. We need someone to fight for education reform. How can both schools offer the same courses when the enrollment is so different at each school? Myers Park has 900 more students than any other school. Let's look at Brown vs. Board of Education.

Comment: East Mecklenburg teacher concerned about the 2010-11 school year. What are the options for East Mecklenburg? We lost more teachers than Myers Park in the budget reduction. We need something done so we do not lose teachers next year after the opening of the new high school in Mint Hill.

Comment: The role of IB is key to the success of both schools. This needs to be the ultimately a boundary issue.

Comment: Before you come up with a solution, identify the problem. When to use or not use student assignment, including feeder schools. What solution fits this problem? Lift the cap on IB and bring Piney Grove back to East Mecklenburg. Commit to East Mecklenburg and its resources. Right size solutions to fit problem.

Comment: Where is the problem with overcrowding? We feel the boundary was not properly drawn. Make East Mecklenburg a full magnet.

Comment: Bring back Piney Grove to East Mecklenburg.

Comment: We don't have problems with Myers Park and East Mecklenburg. The IB sets the tone for students, so they can come and be accepted.

Comment: East Mecklenburg needs to have their population addressed. IB is not the problem. If you enforce the rules already in place then about 200 students can be moved from Myers Park due to siblings that are no longer in IB program, etc.

Comment: Look at strengthening the other programs at East Mecklenburg and use the feeder school, Randolph.

Comment: Student comment, if an IB student is moved we feel it will lower the school statistics. We want IB to stay here at Myers Park.

Comment: Look at option A, Will there be enough students? There would be a loss of diversity. And there is no big difference between option A and B. Why without transportation? Need to reconsider this. Options C, Can East Mecklenburg support all these students? Can CMS support all these IB students? Our solution, CMS needs to look at schools, is busing necessary. We are forcing families out of Mecklenburg County. Look at boundary and all schools, middle and elementary. The IB benefits everyone. Look at people, students and teachers.

Comment: Student comment, shuffling students is disruptive to our learning. Being split from our friends may not be worth it.

Comment: Thank you for the informative session. Making these IB changes will not help East Mecklenburg high. There's a better chance of winning in Las Vegas than with these options. Indeed we are part of a large community East Mecklenburg and Myers Park. Our idea to share is removing the current options from the table as they will not populate East Mecklenburg high.

Comment: East Mecklenburg teacher comment, this was never intended to be a battle between schools.

Comment: Our East Mecklenburg projected enrollment is incorrect. Seniors will not provide their own transportation with the boundary change due to new "mint hill" high. Also the IB certificate program is going away so we will lose more students because of this. We suggest: Let us continue our certificate program for at least two more years. This will help increase enrollment. Also return students from the boundary change decision, Move Albemarle Road middle school area to East Mecklenburg; make the culinary arts program and tech program a magnet. Also what is the ideal teacher/ student ratio?

Comment: Option A, B, and C really moves numbers. It is not a solution to the problem. It will only cause difficulties. We need a workable solution to the problem. Make East Mecklenburg stronger in areas it's already excelling in.

Comment: Why is transportation an issue? How about McClintock, put a program there for the feeder? Have a partial IB at Myers Park instead of at East Mecklenburg. How about advertise alternative programs, student parking at East Mecklenburg? Recapture the students that are opting out of the home school. Do small things to make changes.

Comment: Option C, if we asking the community, is there a way to assign students without drawing lines? Then these arguments may be eliminated. Make students assignment by lottery, proximity, etc. Is there a way to equalize student teacher ratios? What is most important and then have everyone play by these rules?

Comment: Senior IB student comment, the population at Myers Park and East Mecklenburg are being compared. The Myers Park building utilization is efficient. We feel the overcrowding is due to teacher reductions. Do not cut what is working, we need to improve and look at what is not working.

Comment: What is the impact of losing teachers? Look at the new “mint hill” high school. It impacts East Mecklenburg. How can we positively affect East Mecklenburg?

Comment: Between August 11th and September 11th, the East Mecklenburg capacity changed due to the budget cut of staff teachers; we now have more students in each classroom. Bring Piney Grove and Crown Point back to East Mecklenburg high. Look at the boundary again.

Comment: Sophomore Myers Park student comment, it is important for students and teachers to have a meeting. There is currently, a disproportion of students and this issue now is important to us. We want a gradual change; we would like to postpone the option.

Comment: Student comment, this is not an East Mecklenburg and Myers Park issue. We want East Mecklenburg stronger and not make Myers Park weaker. Also make East Mecklenburg a countywide magnet and a partial IB at McClintock middle to strengthen and then go to East Mecklenburg high. A short term solution would be to strengthen South Mecklenburg high. Also when the new census data is available, look at the other boundaries and make changes.

Comment: Why are 349 students opting out of East Mecklenburg high? You need to recapture students to the school.

Comment: Option A, B, and C decimates the program. What is the rush? Please review the guiding principles, they are five years old.

Comment: Senior Myers Park student comment, we consider IB very successful with high academic achievement. A successful IB program takes more than one year to build. IB is a commitment by family and school administrators. Myers Park will not be the same without the IB program. Investments cannot be transferred. We are proud of Myers Park.

Comment: Junior IB Myers Park student comment, transferring programs will not help East Mecklenburg school, students will not follow. You need to look at all schools, E.E. Waddell, Ardrey Kell, etc. We do not want to create more problems.

Comment: We moved from London and our students attend the IB program. Do not compromise the program, this is not an “us” versus “them” issue. We are asking the school board to come up with more solutions.

Comment: Student comment, Myers Park is the first IB program and it affects other schools. If students are moved it would weaken the program. This is not a long term solution. Bring students into East Mecklenburg high without removing them from Myers Park.

Comment: The survey showed that the number of students would not go to East Mecklenburg high. A change in policy is not necessary.

Comment: I changed schools 12 times during my tenure. We need stability. My home school is not Myers Park. I see that everyone wants a piece of the pie. No option presented is a good option. We should not let other schools go underutilized, South Mecklenburg, E.E. Waddell, Olympic. Waddell has empty classrooms and teachers with grant money, but not enough students. Try to establish an IB program at Waddell and use them. They can be a partial or full magnet.

Comment: Myers Park student comment, the social environment is being overlooked. Myers Park is the best place. I can fit in here, be normal. Students here are interested in the same thing – a sense of belonging. Please consider social fit.

Comment: I hope our concerns are not falling on deaf ears. Keep students at East Mecklenburg high not new “mint hill.”

Comment: Good teachers helped me to be successful now in my life. Put the priority on students. It is time to realign and rethink. Other countries are investing in education. We need to address education. Dramatic change in education is harmful.

-End of comments from table groups-

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