



Master Plan for the Future

Simsbury Public Schools

Facilities Master Plan and Reconfiguration Study



1 Update & Recap of our March 4th Public Forum

Thank you to those who attended our third public forum on March 4th at Simsbury High School where we discussed the feedback from our neighborhood meetings, the educational merits of the location of 6th grade, the scope of possible building additions and renovations, order of magnitude costs, and the schedule for **Step 1 of the Long-Range Master Plan**.

There are **two current options** being considered:

“6th Grade Addition to HJMS + Latimer Lane” ~

1st Step -- Constructing a 6th grade addition to the Henry James Memorial School and various improvements to the core (ex. cafeteria) spaces of the building + plan to “renovate as new” at Latimer Lane Elementary School.

Master Plan -- This option eventually reconfigures, renovates, or adds to all five elementary schools, making them Kindergarten through fifth grade, geographically distributes the “Ready, Set, Go” special education program to three elementary schools, and has an option to add Pre-Kindergarten to each school.

“Elementary Renewal” ~

1st Step -- Maintain existing grade configuration and provide additions and renovations to Latimer Lane Elementary School.

Master Plan -- This option eventually renovates, adds, or potentially proposes new construction at all five elementary schools, geographically distributes the “Ready, Set, Go” special education program to three elementary schools and has an option to add Pre-Kindergarten at each school.

2 What we presented

- Discussion of recent Board of Education activities ~ ruling out options for a new 5-6 school or a status quo approach (maintenance projects only).
- Review of neighborhood meetings ~ Community asked for focus on the educational aspect not just the buildings; many participants stated they will not support any school closing and noted that schools are outdated and at capacity.
- Staff & Community Survey ~ Results included a strong majority of faculty support for the 6-8 model, and mixed opinions from the community. Both surveys acknowledged that capital improvements are needed and would be generally supported as part of an affordable long-range plan.
- Cost Methodology for Step 1 of each option (total costs and reimbursements).
- Middle Level Education – Opportunities and challenges of the options considered, student and parent feedback, and what is gained bringing 6th grade to HJMS.

3 What we Heard

The feedback during the forum was thoughtful, informative, and rooted in what is best for our students:

- Many stated that every discussion should be about how the plan will support the students, based on faculty input and reliance on the experts.
- Concerns were raised about the extent and frequency of redistricting.
- Several individuals cited national surveys and research both for and against the reconfiguration and location of 6th grade.
- Participants stated the need to communicate both cost and impact of Step 1 and the long-range plan (what projects will follow and when).
- More thought and planning must be given to student's transitioning from one school to another.
- Comments were made about the capacity of schools and class size, stating some of the existing conditions are an embarrassment.
- Parents like the idea of Pre-Kindergarten in all elementary schools (positive vertical alignment and better use of specialists).

4 Current Status

During the time that school has been closed discussions have included

- Meetings with faculty on educational models to identify the preferred placement for 6th grade.
- Presentation to the Board of Education recapping the March 4th Public Forum, feedback from the community, and remaining options.
- Board of Education Curriculum Committee meeting to review educational aspect of the plan, in particular the location of 6th grade.

5 Next Steps

Over the next month, we will continue to discuss the opportunities and challenges of the options being considered and plan to schedule more discussions including

- Review by the Facilities & Enrollment Task Force (FETF).
- Approval of plan by the Board of Education.
- Provide Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen with progress updates.
- Work with Board of Finance to model costs related to the reconfiguration options.

Thank you all again for the valuable feedback and we look forward to continuing the dialogue in order to identify the best plan for the future of our community, its schools, and the students we serve.