
District Planning Update 11-18-18

Westport School District Outreach Message <Connect-ED@westportps.org>
Reply-To: Connect-ED@westportps.org

Sun, Nov 18, 2018 at 9:39 AM



WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Dear Families of Westport Students,

- The newly formed **Community Advisory Committee of the Board of Education will hold its first meeting today at 5:00 p.m. in the auditorium of Town Hall.** The meeting is open to the public and will be taped and broadcast on Channel 79 Cablevision and 6020 Frontier. The agenda will include a presentation of the preliminary options for housing students in 2019-20.
- Tomorrow, Monday, November 19, the BoF and BoS will have a presentation/discussion with KG&D, the architectural firm that assessed CMS, at 10:00 a.m. in room 201 in Town Hall.
- Tomorrow evening, Monday, November 19, at 7:30 p.m. an update on CMS will be provided at the regular BoE meeting, including a presentation to the BoE on the current preliminary options for 2019-20.
- The RFP for modulars at BMS has prompted serious interest by several vendors and the District was able to negotiate a deposit with one of the vendors to have right of first refusal.
- The link for all updated information regarding these matters has been added to the District's homepage on its website, as this is a District issue, not that of just one school.
- The principals of CMS and BMS have responded to commonly asked questions about conditions this year, and that is posted below.

Sincerely,
Colleen Palmer

Middle School Message of 11-16-18

Dear Middle School Families,

Each day we assess our schools and make changes to ensure that your children's academic and social emotional needs are being met. We will continue to keep families informed of the current situation for BMS and CMS. Please read through this information and contact us if you have any questions of concerns.

Sincerely,
Dr. Rosen, Principal BMS
Mrs. Szabo, Principal CMS

Introduction: Explanation of the New Schedule

The new master schedule, which was implemented on Monday, October 29th, successfully solved a number of substantial issues for both students and teachers. For students, the new master schedule reinstated daily homeroom, which affords students time to organize, communicate, review and prepare for their school day. Please note, the two different time slots for homeroom (8 a.m. on M, W, F; 10 a.m. on T, Th) allows for the continued daily rotation of classes. For example, a student that attends math in the afternoon will have math in the morning of the following school day. The new schedule also maintains 30 minute lunch waves for all students. During lunch, students at BMS have the option of participating in outdoor recess or visiting the library media center. In addition, the new schedule was designed to keep students with their existing core teachers and specials teachers as much as possible with some exceptions. To make all this work, the schedule includes a daily 15 minute reading block. This reading block aligns with our literacy goals for the district, is supported by research and is linked to higher-order literacy proficiencies. This is an opportunity for our students to expand their independent reading time during school. In addition to this being an integral part of reading workshop, research tells us that in order to progress as readers, readers must have ample time to read a lot and they must have texts they can read independently. All in all instructional time remains closely aligned what was in place previous to the transition. For teachers, the new master schedule allows adequate travel time between school buildings and more optimal use of available spaces in both BMS and SHS.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does this new schedule include daily homeroom?

The new master schedule reinstates daily homeroom. Homeroom affords students time to organize, communicate, review and prepare for their school day. Homeroom runs from 8-8:12 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and from 10:06-10:18 on Tuesday and Thursday. Attendance will be recorded in PowerSchool during homeroom on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; attendance will be recorded during the 1st period class on Tuesday and Thursday.

How are PE classes currently scheduled?

The BMS gymnasium has 5 spaces for PE classes. Occasionally, there are 6 simultaneous PE sections scheduled at the same time. On fair-weather days, PE instruction is outdoors on the Wakeman fields. When the weather prevents PE classes from running outdoors at the same time 6 sections are scheduled, the BMS cafeteria is used as an instructional space; appropriate activities for this space are selected by the PE teachers. Grade 8 students use the field and field house at SHS.

Do the CMS Grade 8 Students in Music & Tech have access to technology?

The district has outfitted a classroom at SHS to accommodate the music and technology program for the CMS Grade 8 students. The equipment and furniture will be relocated to SHS in order to provide the appropriate materials and space to support this program.

Where are the workshop classes taught at BMS and SHS?

In advance of the installation of portable classrooms on the BMS property, all spaces at BMS have to be utilized. The Workshop program for identified gifted students meets under the stairs in the BMS cafeteria and also in the original Workshop classroom on a daily basis.

What is the status of Science and STEM for the middle schools?

Dr. Scheetz, Science Department Coordinator, has worked with Mr. D'Amico and Kris Szabo to transform two classrooms at SHS being used by CMS grade 8. Ms. DeManche's and Ms. DuPuis' classrooms have been outfitted with large tables more conducive to conducting science labs and experiments. The furniture was installed over the weekend. These rooms will also be used by the STEM teachers during the specials classes. Tables from the CMS STEM rooms have been moved to BMS to outfit the Patriots Science teachers' classroom. Mr. Scavone, Art Coordinator, and Mr. D'Amico have secured an art room at SHS for our grade 8 students. Students and staff will have access to the Art room as of November 12. Additionally, we are moving the music and tech equipment over to SHS and it will be installed to provide our students access to technology.

Did the schedule change impact students' core academic teacher assignments or special/encore teacher assignments?

The schedule change maintained students' core team teacher assignments. Core academics include: math, science, social studies, and language arts. Some students have new teachers for specials/encore classes due to the new schedule changes.

Have CMS and BMS students been combined into the same classes?

While the schedule maintains CMS and BMS as separate schools, there are some examples of classes where students from the two middle schools are combined in Health, STEM, Theater Arts, and off-team Math (i.e. grade 6 students scheduled for Algebra I or a grade 7 student scheduled for geometry). This allowed for efficient scheduling of teachers and room usage.

Are all middle school art classes being scheduled in art classrooms?

At BMS, most art classes are scheduled into the three Art studios. Due to space limitations, a small number of art classes are currently being taught in classrooms. At SHS, effective the week of November 12th, most of the CMS Grade 8 Art classes will be scheduled in a designated Art studio.

Does the new schedule provide the same amount of instructional time?

The middle school schedule still maintains an 8 period day with a 15 minutes homeroom period. In the original schedule class periods were 42 minutes. In the new schedule classes are 40, 42, or 45 minutes (with the exception of period 6). All classes, except period 6 rotate and class time will average 42.3 minutes per class. The period 6 class includes a 15 minutes sustained silent reading block. This provides students with an opportunity to read during the school and aligns with our district literacy goals. This is an opportunity for our students to expand their independent reading time during school. In addition to this being an integral part of reading workshop, research tells us that in order to progress as readers, readers must have ample time to read a lot and they must have texts they can read independently. All in all instructional time remains closely aligned what was in place previous to the transition.

What is the status of the extracurricular clubs and activities since the merger of CMS, BMS and SHS?

Most clubs and activities are running as planned before the merger. In some cases, however we've elected to combine clubs. For example, the Robotics club now combines students from both CMS and BMS. The CMS and BMS morning televised news programs have joined forces and is now BC-TV, which stands for Bedford Coleytown TV. Interested CMS and BMS students are scheduled into the BC-TV homeroom, which meets daily. Students in BC-TV periodically come into school extra-early and stay after school to work on shows and production. We have three adults (2 teachers and a para) leading this activity. The first show is Monday. CMS staff is speaking with SHS staff regarding options for 8th graders to participate in the TV program at SHS.

Ursus student newspaper is running and has never stopped running; we are temporarily publishing online. The BMS and CMS PTAs are working diligently to run the Talent Show in February 2019; stay tuned!

CMS All School Musical and Grade 6 Fall Theater Productions will continue at originally scheduled.

Have Open Cluster (CMS) and Open Pod (BMS) been cancelled indefinitely?

At this time the Open Cluster and Open Pod meetings have been postponed. In lieu of the meetings the schools will be sending a Curriculum Update Newsletters. At this time we are continuing to investigate the feasibility of having these meetings as there are significant limitations to availability of space in the school during the day and parking for parents visiting BMS.

Did the CMS grades 6 and 7 students get lockers at BMS?

The district installed hallway lockers at BMS for CMS grades 6 and 7 students. Students have been assigned lockers during the week of November 5. The lockers are smaller in size than the standard locker at CMS. Students will be permitted to carry items in their backpacks during the day and keep coats and personal items in the lockers.

Do all students have access to science labs/classrooms?

Currently at BMS, science for the CMS grade 7 Patriots team is taking place in a regular classroom; administrators are working to schedule this team into science labs at BMS and also make physical changes to a classroom to allow for safe science investigations. At SHS, the CMS Grade 8 students currently do not have access to a science lab and have also been receiving science instruction in regular classrooms. The administration and department coordinators are reviewing possible options that will allow CMS Grade 8 students to access science labs at SHS. The plan is to redesign two of the grade 8 classrooms to accommodate the science lab space, equipment, and furniture.

Did the new schedule change students' specials and encore teachers?

The administration was able to keep all students with their core team teachers (math, science, social studies, and language arts). Some students' special/encore teachers were changed to accommodate the new schedule changes to address instructional time and spaces issues.

When will the portable classrooms arrive at BMS?

We anticipate modular classrooms installed and ready for instruction in January 2019. The district is currently working to have 6 portable classrooms installed at BMS (one double classroom unit and one quadruple classroom unit). The administration reviewing instructional space needs across all programming and aims to solve instances where instruction is occurring in less than ideal locations at BMS. For security, the district is providing security fencing with swipe card access for staff, security cameras and locked secured doors.

Has the district addressed appropriate spaces for CMS resource and small group classes at BMS?

Teacher workspaces have been modified to create bonafied resource rooms for students and teachers; CMS now has 4 resource rooms apportioned at BMS. Student and teacher furniture and instructional technology has been added to these teaching and learning spaces.

Have the students participated in safety and security drills?

CMS grade 8 students have participated in a lockdown drill at SHS in addition to an unplanned evacuation of the building. Since the merger, BMS has conducted two fire drills with WFD officials and two lockdown drills with Westport police inside the school in the role of observers and advisors. Administrators will continue to conduct monthly drills at both locations and provide students and staff with feedback. Once the modular classrooms are installed on the property, we will update students, staff and families regarding emergency preparedness and drills.

How will winter and spring concerts be scheduled for BMS and CMS?

The Music Coordinator has met with the middle school music staff for BMS and CMS. Adjustments to the winter and spring schedules have been made. This information will be updated and shared with families accordingly. Some concerts will feature combined groups from both schools. Updated schedules forthcoming.

Can middle school students access the library media centers at BMS and SHS?

At SHS, the CMS students are accessing the library online and books are being delivered to their classrooms; the administration continues to examine the possibility of the 8th grade students directly accessing the library at SHS. At BMS, all students have access to the library through their classes, student requests and lunchtime recess option.

What is the status of the CMS building?

Dr. Palmer provided a detailed update to the district about the events and circumstances regarding CMS and the relocation of staff and students CMS will remain at BMS and SHS for the remainder of the school year. At the November 5th BOE meeting the architectural firm provided a comprehensive report regarding the status of CMS and possible recommendations to address the issues with the building. Dr. Palmer presented several variations of ways to accommodate the need to remain out of CMS for the next year or longer. For up-to-date information regarding the CMS Facilities please refer to the CMS Facilities Update link on the CMS homepage.

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