

Parent/Guardian Questions Regarding CMS Status 10-8-18

General Questions

- 1. Is there a sub-committee from BOE related to handling the issues related to the relocation of CMS at this time?**
 - a. The Board of Education has a newly formed Finance and Facilities Committee that has a meeting schedule of every two weeks while the District deals with the issues of the CMS facility and issues of the educational program related to the temporary relocation of the school. These meetings are public, typically broadcast live, video-recorded and posted on the District website. The next meeting will be this Thursday, October 11, at 7:30 a.m. in rooms 307/309 of Town Hall.

- 2. How often are Central Office administrators walking through BMS and SHS to see how the transition is going?**
 - a. The Superintendent and all members of the Executive Leadership Team (Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services, Director of Human Resources, and the Chief Financial Officer) all regularly visit both schools since this transition took place in order to ensure that there is firsthand information on the conditions of both schools while they serve as host facilities for 450 additional students.

- 3. Who is handling the portable classroom process with P&Z? Why couldn't the meetings with P&Z have happened sooner, just to be prepared?**
 - a. Elio Longo, Chief Financial Officer (who also oversees all operations), and Ted Hunyadi, Director of Facilities are taking the lead on this initiative. The lead time on this is approximately eight weeks, at best. The exact location of the structures, the number, and the configuration need to be determined first prior to any formal request to P&Z. That preliminary work is underway and has been for the past two weeks. As soon as the District has a preliminary plan from both the work of the vendor and the District, a plan can be submitted to the P&Z for review.

- 4. I heard the Superintendent say it would take until December to get module classrooms on site. Why would this take so long?**
 - a. The units have to be located as already constructed to reduce wait time. Site inspection must be completed to make sure that the location will meet all applicable codes.
 - b. If the structure is planned to be in use for over 180 days, the requirements of the State Building Code and the Connecticut State Fire Safety Code both apply. Both codes have been revised on 10/1/18.
 - c. The Fire Marshall will need to perform a plan review of both the site (location on the BMS property) and the structure(s).

- d. Plan reviews will need to include exiting (number, separation, travel distances, occupancy load), emergency systems, fire alarms, and required fire sprinklers.
- e. Special anchoring for high wind events must be incorporated into the design.
- f. Power and technology resources must be integrated to the modular.
- g. Plans must be prepared by a CT licensed professional (architect or engineer).
- h. Contact the Building Dept. for their code requirements as well.

5. Can we get ASAP realistic time frames for CMS staff/students returning or not returning to the building?

- a. The final engineering report of the assessment of CMS is due in three more weeks, at which time we will have the information whether or not the short-term remediation for the facility (to make the facility acceptable until June 2018 at which time permanent remediation could begin). Preliminary results of this engineering review will be discussed at the upcoming Finance and Facilities Committee meeting on Thursday, October 11, at 7:30 a.m. in Town Hall. If there are no acceptable pathways to provide short-term remediation at the preliminary or final report of the engineers, the decision to stay out for the year will be made. If the engineers report that temporary provisions can be put in place for the remainder of the year, the results of the forensic industrial hygienist will be reviewed through the lens of medical advisors to provide further information regarding whether returning to the school would be acceptable. If the air quality were of concern, students and staff would not return to the school this year. While this determination might be made as early as several weeks from now, depending on various results of the forensic industrial hygienist, the outside timeline is anticipated to be no later than Thanksgiving. As the District begins to receive the reports of the various experts working on these issues, it will be able to better refine the timeline.

6. Whether or not CMS staff/students return to CMS, how will you provide space and staff to ensure high quality education to students?

- a. After the initial few weeks in space at SHS, the Eighth-Grade Academy has settled into its new space with very little disruption to its educational program. The students are housed on the first floor of SHS, in the high school world language classrooms near the Continuing Education Office. Adding approximately 300 students to BMS has been a bit more challenging, but we continue to be in awe of the creative and collaborative way the professionals are utilizing space. At this time, there are still some adjustments being made to locations of classes, and one pressure point is facilities for physical education. While fall weather permits many classes to enjoy outdoor activities for P.E., as the winter approaches, going outside will become more difficult. We are working with the Dept. Coordinator for P.E. and Health to address this specialized learning space. Additionally, plans are underway to add four modular general use classrooms on the side of the school near the bus drop-off. We are exploring a

connecting hallway to the school from this proposed modular structure, but there are further requirements to add to this which could prohibit or delay the implementation of this hallway space. If CMS students remain in BMS through the end of the school year, this additional modular space will provide some valuable flex space for instruction.

7. How can unimpacted families (e.g. those currently with younger children and families not from KHS/CES) help? And how can they feel comfortable that potential disruption will not impact them in the future.

- a. The District has a thorough, in-depth plan to determine the future pathway of correcting the facility issues at CMS or determining that if the issues are so great to correct and prohibitively costly, the Town should invest in a new facility. In the event that the District opts to remediate the facility once all the investigation is complete, if the scope of the remediation work is so extensive that it cannot be completed by fall 2019, the District has already begun contingency planning for a year from now if it had seven schools it could utilize. In the event that the community decides to build a new school, there will be an extended period of time of a few years that the District would need to map that out as well. Given the lead time of planning for fall 2019, the District may seek to find alternative ways to house its students than the current model which was put in place with a constricted timeline. The information from the engineers, which will be available in three weeks, will illuminate options for remediating the facility. At that time, the District would need to assess the best long-term solution for the community.
- b. The question was about disruption for our younger students coming up through the grades. No matter what is decided for CMS, the District will have almost a full year of planning to address any space needs that could occur, and to ensure a smooth opening next year. It would not be the preferred option of the Superintendent or the Executive Leadership Team to keep 1,100 students at BMS or the CMS 8th grade at SHS for the 2019-20 school year if we could not return to CMS. There are various other scenarios which are being explored as contingency scenario planning now just in case they would be needed for next fall.

Facilities & Maintenance

8. We've heard a lot of blame put on the energy savings equipment this summer - i.e., that the A/C being off through unused portions of the CMS building is a major cause of the continuing failures. Do BMS and Staples (as well as other schools?) currently use the same system? If it works in other buildings but not CMS, doesn't that suggest that there's a problem with CMS itself?

- a. The air conditioning system was never completely turned off at CMS. The set point was raised, and carbon dioxide detectors installed in classrooms turned off the circulating fans when no one was occupying the room. The air conditioning was turned with the circulating fans on when the temperature reached 80 degrees, but then the energy efficiency measure turned them off when the temperature went below 80 degrees. These measures were deactivated in August when the mold problem was discovered. This was an extraordinarily hot and humid

summer, creating mold problems in schools across the state. The converted two-pipe heating system in the older CMS to also accommodate air conditioning over the years provided some cooler air, but did not have the modern dehumidification capacity of current systems, such as that at BMS. The external conditions overwhelmed the older CMS system that was further left with diminished capacity to circulate air with the energy efficiency measures in place for the first time in the 60 years of that facility. It was a perfect storm for the growth of mold. Once the humidity level in the school reached 85% during the summer, it was imperative to bring in an auxiliary dehumidification system to bring the internal humidity to an acceptable level which would deter mold growth.

- b. BMS had similar energy efficiency devices installed in that school as well, and with feedback from staff that the inside of BMS was too hot and humid (after understanding how the devices impacted CMS), the devices at BMS were deactivated as well. In a similar way, the District has been reviewing the energy saving measures on HVAC systems in all of its schools and making modifications as needed. Saving energy is a goal, but not at the cost of creating internal environments that will lead to conditions not conducive to teaching and learning.

9. What maintenance has been deferred over the past 10 years at CMS?

- a. To my knowledge, there has been no deferred maintenance at the school. The Facilities Department has been dealing with an aging facility with many deficiencies. The District has been proactive in repairs and maintains a robust cycle of vent and ductwork cleaning.

10. If there is a short-term fix to keep the water out of the building, why hasn't the district done it yet? Why did it take so long to consult outside experts?

- a. The District has been aggressive in addressing the deficiencies of the school as issues have arisen, including excavation in areas around the foundation to reseal parts of it, sealing portions of the exterior block, and replacing insulation on HVAC piping. A part of the review at this time will be to conduct limited spot exploratory destruction to remove small areas of the external envelope of the school (take a small part of exterior wall and roof off) to see what is underneath and the extent of any internal penetration of water over time. The question at this time is to determine a remediation plan (which will be in the range of millions) that would address all of the structural and systemic issues of an aging facility or to take the path of replacing the school.

11. What happened with consulting Yale? Isn't there something shorter/more immediately useful they could offer than their original proposal (which has never been made public)? Parents are suggesting that the district didn't like what Yale had to say and is now shopping for "independent" health approval from someone who simply echoes what the district already believes (i.e. the Westport Weston Health District)

- a. The first proposal from Yale was in the range well over \$200k as a general fiscal target to complete its work over eight weeks. The District continues to work to remove duplication of work from the contract and refine the outcomes so that the

information will help inform if students/staff can return to the school in terms of air quality, while doing so without being billed for redundancy of tests.

- b. The Westport Weston Health District has offered to be an additional, independent source to also verify if the building could be reopened, but not the sole source.
- c. The District is exploring connecting with another medical group focusing on environmental concerns as a back-up if acceptable terms cannot be reached with Yale.

12. Where can we find out what maintenance needs to be done on all school buildings in the district?

- a. The annual budget contains the 5-yr. capital plan for the District. However, the Superintendent has planned an independent review of all of its schools during the 2019-20 school year. The funds for this (estimated at approximately \$200K) will be built into the budget for next year. The review will provide a 10-yr. plan of what should be spent/improved at each school, each of the 10 years. This approach will provide a roadmap to address any needs at any of our schools, e.g. LLS has single-pane windows, KHS is not fully handicapped-accessible, etc.

13. What are the options on the table for CMS? Please give a full range of options from tear-down (unlikely), gut the inside out, a new HVAC system, and what else? Is there enough time in 9 weeks of summer to truly fix the moisture issue at CMS or will we be faced with similar problems next school year? Seems like starting now and doing it right with a long term solution is the way to go.

- a. Most of these questions have been answered in previous ones of this document. If major renovations would be required, the project would need to be designed, bid, and funded before anything could be done. It would not be possible to truly start a major renovation before late winter. Yes, it is possible that if the scope of the project is so extensive, the summer may not be enough time to complete all work, even if the work could be started in the spring. We have to wait for the engineering report at this time.

14. We have heard that \$700,000 has been spent so far on CMS. Is that true? Is that just the price tag for outside vendors or does it include all associated expenses?

- a. The total cost for CMS this year currently approaches \$800k for all expenses.

BMS

15. How do you respond to the statement that BMS is overcrowded & unsafe ... that the capacity allowed per the Fire Marshall includes full use of the cafeteria, gym and auditorium? That the regular use classrooms, etc., are, in fact, an unsafe environment?

- a. BMS was deemed safe by the Fire Marshall or the Police Chief. The number of occupants in each area is limited by space (classrooms, cafeteria, etc.), and the Fire Marshall assesses points of egress to ensure that given all spaces occupied, everyone can safely exit the school. If any public safety official informed us that BMS was not safe with 1,100 students, we would have requested that the school

be put on double sessions with some students going to school from 7:00 a.m. to noon and the remaining students going to school from 12:40 p.m. to 5:40 p.m. Double sessions shorten the instructional time to bare minimum required by law and create major disruptions to the lives of the students and their families. It was the overwhelming recommendation of our entire middle school administrative team that even if there were some pressure points on space and scheduling, that having students have a “normal” school day would be preferred to pure double sessions.

- b. If the current model cannot be sustained for the entire year, beyond the pure double sessions approach, a model of tiered sessions would also be considered where one or two grades arrive at the regular time and the remaining students begin their school day approximately 90 minutes later or two class periods later. This arrangement would have two separate dismissal times, but permit the use of the entire facility to a greater extent. This would require considerable reworking of all student and staff schedules to achieve.

16. How can we get lockers for all CMS students in BMS? If there is a plan, when can we expect to see them?

- a. The District has been working with vendors and the Fire Marshall to design a safe way to install either temporary rented lockers in spaces or some system of hook/storage for our students. The goal is to have a system in place before students start needing heavy coats for school. It is also possible that students may need to share lockers if there is no approved way to add lockers in existing space. This would not be ideal, but all students need a place for coats.

17. Who is paying for the two policemen that are in BMS? How long will they be in the school?

- a. For the first ten days of school with the CMS students at BMS, the District paid one policeman per day to be on hand to help with traffic, and to help facilitate the transition. That time has passed, and there are no plans to have any police at BMS going forward.

18. You have heard that the BMS hallways during passing periods "are like Times Square at Christmas." If CMS's stay @ BMS extends into the cold months, what is the plan for coats, bags, etc.? At present, the kids are lugging their belongings around, and must use the floor in passing time to switch and search bags. As a result, there are tripping hazards in the hallway. How will BMS alleviate hallway overcrowding? How will students account for belongings?

- a. Yes, please see question above for response to coats and bags. The hallways are busy, but they do move and students are getting to class on time. The majority of the movement for students is within each pod, not in the halls. It is when students go to other classes, lunch, or their core classes are not in a pod that they head to the halls. It has not been noted by school administrators that students are using the floor to switch bags, and this note will be forwarded to them to monitor.

19. What is the long-term plan for the use of BMS's LMC? Kids are not allowed to visit the library to check out books, either for classroom or recreational purposes. The library is, in effect, closed for library use. Additionally, kids having social difficulties used the library as a respite during lunch. That space/sanctuary is no longer available. When will the library reopen for book check out and as a student safe space during lunch?

- a. The general open areas in the pods are not all being utilized at this time, and some classes in the LMC will be moved out shortly. Additionally, if the stay extends and portable classrooms are added, this will provide further space to open up the LMC. Regarding the concern about a quiet place for some students at lunch, this will also be forwarded to our administrators and counselors. I am confident that if they have not already mapped out a solution, they will.
- b. The BMS LMC never stopped permitting students to check-out books, and in fact, circulation has sharply risen due to the increase in student population. The LMC is open and working on creative ways to permit students to visit the LMC during lunch waves.
- c. A LMC is so much more than checking books out. A library media specialist is a trained educator who commonly pushes out into classrooms to teach, and that can continue without interruption with our current use of the space.

20. At a BOE meeting last spring, the board voted to downsize a LMC position from both BMS and CMS. Under the old system, kids having Chromebook issues could go straight to the LMC for immediate assistance. Under this year's new downsized crew, kids must "take out a ticket". It was taking upwards of a week to get computers back/ issues resolved. With the addition of CMS 6th & 7th graders, tickets are taking longer. How is this an effective system?

- a. Jennifer Cirino, an expert in technology and LMC, helps to coordinate the work of the LMC. She is located at BMS, providing tremendous support with the regular BMS LMC staff.
- b. During the transition of CMS to BMS and SHS, it has been an all-hands-on-deck approach of our technology team to get the technology moved and up and running in new locations. As students and staff settle into their new homes, the turn-around time of repairs should improve, and this will be monitored going forward. If other resources need to be reallocated from within the District, this will be considered.

21. Homeroom has been eliminated, removing the buffer period for late buses. (Please note that buses are frequently late. This is a result of both BMS buses running SHS kids immediately before *and* traffic on North Ave.) When this happens, kids must race into school, with 1st period already started. Even on a day when they arrive on time, gone is the time for students to seek out a teacher with questions and concerns, or turn in missed assignments (due to absence/ instrument lesson, etc.). What is the plan to fix this?

- a. Our Director of Transportation tracks the arrival of every bus every day. Her data indicate that the buses have been arriving on time. There have been a few exceptions the very first few days, but buses are rolling effectively. Arriving late

to school is not acceptable, and I have informed the Director of Transportation that if we needed to move our pick-up times of all our high school students up by 5 minutes to provide more time for the BMS buses to get to school, we could do that. Currently, she does not feel there is any need to adjust the times.

- b. The principals have heard feedback on their decision not to hold homeroom, and they are evaluating.
- 22. 7th graders operate one class per day on a "split schedule." They go to a class for 30 minutes, leave and go to lunch for 30 minutes, then return to that class again for 30 minutes. The "first section" is truncated, disallowing teachers to get through all expected material. Momentum is difficult to regain for the "second section," so teachers are telling kids to read or start homework. What is your plan to reinstate these critical lost minutes of instructional time?**
- a. This has not been reported or commonly observed. This note will be forwarded to our cadre of 10 Dept. Coordinators who coach our teachers and to our principals. There is no reason to lose any instructional time, and as indicated, there are no data thus far that this is happening in a widespread manner. If a teacher needs support how to structure learning in this time, we can do that!
 - b. Additionally, there are two sections of BMS art classes split between grade 7 lunch in which the teaching capacity of one teacher after lunch is stretched to two classes. This is not acceptable, and this will be resolved to ensure a full period of instruction for both classes.
- 23. Since more buses are in the loop, timing is slowed down (morning and afternoon). I.e. my child now arrives home at least 10 minutes later than she used to each afternoon. As a result, many parents who didn't pick up before are now forced to pick up to make doctor and orthodontist appointments, plus practices and classes. The extra cars increase traffic and slow down buses on North Ave. What is the plan to speed up student discharge/boarding and also alleviate traffic?**
- a. The more parents try to pick up students after school, the slower the departure will be. Also, the CMS buses arrive about 8 minutes before the BMS buses based on completion of SHS runs. The CMS students are loaded and those buses are departing before many of the BMS even arrive, so not all the buses are picking up students at the same time. There is not an easy solution for busy roads and the density of our student population. Students arriving home 10 minutes later is not a significant delay over previous times.
- 24. What is the latest on Aquarion's plan to do a multi-year construction project on North Ave? As this will affect everything about the traffic to and from SHS and BMS, is this project being considered by the town?**
- a. I have no information on this project, but it is very common to place restrictions on construction trucks arriving or departing during certain times when it impacts schools.
- 25. Once it gets colder, there won't be enough room for all gym classes. What can be done? Having gym class in the hallway is not optimal.**

- a. Students will not be permitted to have the type of P.E. classes in spaces that are not safe for the activity. Some activities of limited movement can be conducted in areas outside the gym, but our Dept. Coordinator for P.E. and Health will oversee the placement of any activity outside of the gym. It is possible that the school will need to modify the curriculum to offer less strenuous movement classes and integrate healthier learning lifestyle classes. Gym space will be a pressure point in the cold months when outside fields cannot be used.

26. The 8th grade BMS RED pod was told their lockers may be taken away for the CMS students. Is this true?

- a. The 8th grade BMS students were relocated from their pod to provide an area for 6th grade CMS students, but the grade 8 students continue to use their lockers. A comprehensive plan for storage area/lockers for all students is a major focus at this time. There are several solutions being vetted, and we expect to have resolution soon.

27. A parent asked if consideration would be given to BMS RED 8th grade grading (especially in the classrooms that are held in spaces that are housing multiple classes at once).

- a. All educators who serve our students in both middle schools will continue to be flexible and accommodating to students as the schools settle into new routines. However, with each passing day, routines continue to improve and professional staff will balance appropriate academic expectations with impact of any disruptions. If any parent/guardian has a specific question regarding their student's situation, the respective teacher and/or guidance counselor should be contacted. If the issue has not been resolved, the appropriate building administrator should be contacted.

8th Grade Academy

28. How are 8th grade academy students getting art instruction?

- a. The art teacher is providing that instruction in their regular classrooms.

29. How are 8th grade academy students getting science instruction? Do they have use of science labs?

- a. The students will have access to SHS science labs as needed. Teachers will escort them as a group to the lab.

30. Will you consider (when) letting 8th grade academy students use the building, unescorted by teachers, and Staples students to (quietly, respectfully) use their hallway? The schedule means they would not be passing in the halls at the same time.

- a. It was a deliberate and purposeful decision to limit the interactions of the middle school students with the high school students. As the Academy moves forward, we will take feedback from both Kris Szabo and James D'Amico about any relaxation of this rigid separation, especially if the time extends to the end of the

school year. We don't want the middle school students to feel that they have no freedom at all, but we also would not want any middle school student in a situation that s/he could not navigate with older students.

Faculty and Staff

31. How is staff morale? How are you measuring that?

- a. We have an incredible team of professionals who prioritize the students' needs first. They are working hard, and days can be more challenging, but everyone has stepped up to make the day a regular school day for each student.
- b. There are formal and informal meetings and ways of getting feedback to ensure that the District is supporting all staff members.

32. Now that some teachers have no offices, they need to use backpacks or bags to transport their materials. They have nowhere to grade papers, make a private phone call to parents or keep their things. Could we create some kind of office space for all teachers? How can this be resolved - especially if BMS & CMS will be sharing the building long-term.

- a. The principals have mapped out areas where teachers can make phone calls and have quiet work areas. It is not accurate to report that they do not have space to grade papers, etc. I am confident that the principals can address these needs with the resources we have.

33. Who is looking into part-time hiring of extra teachers? The turnaround time needs to be quicker.

- a. The District will be putting a continuous van route in place for teachers who are assigned to teach in both BMS and SHS to reduce travel time.
- b. A team of District administrators and CMS and BMS administrators will be meeting this week to work on fine tuning the master schedule to reduce the number of tight time frames that teacher have to move between schools.
- c. I have authorized some additional staff that would alleviate some pressures, but finding a .2 FTE or .4 FTE in Spanish, music or one of the other areas tough to find great teachers is very difficult. It is not a matter of funds here – it is having the talent at the right place at the right time. We are optimistic some further scheduling will alleviate some travel issues as well.
