

From the desk of Superintendent Michelle Jensen...

“I know it is a real problem, and I’m not sure of the solution, but here is one thing we can do now.”
-Henry Ford

Recently the district has been assessing the current challenges with the middle school/high school front entrance and office space. At a special board meeting on Feb. 22nd, those challenges and possible solutions were shared with the board and community members. While further research is taking place on some of the options presented, I thought it would be useful to provide a brief summary to the community.

As part of the 1978 MS/HS building remodel, the superintendent was moved from the elementary school and added into the current office space with the high school principal. The new floor plan also included an extra office, work room, health/restrooms and two large conference rooms. Thirty years ago, the average class size was 51 students coming to school in an era of fewer state and federal mandates and little interaction with outside service agencies to support students and families. Today, the same space houses 8 offices, detention room, small conference room along with the work room and health/restrooms. The average class size is 62 students with increased mandates requiring additional district staff and support services from outside agencies.

Our current challenges are many. The need for a safe and secure entrance to manage traffic flow in and out of the building is essential. The challenge of providing private and confidential meeting space for students, families and staff is necessary to meet current laws. Adequate space to handle students and families in times of crisis or intervention is lacking. Open work spaces are unsecure for the tasks performed and district offices offer little confidentiality with curtain dividers and open access. Essentially, the volume of use and needs has outgrown the work space within the current office floor plan.

Acknowledging those challenges has led to exploring a wide-variety of solutions. At the meeting we shared on-site options including remodel plans, expansions, build-outs, and modulars. Some which are feasible but do not plan for future growth while others are too expensive. We also shared off-site options including office lease space within the village to temporarily house the district office. This latter option raises concerns and questions about the district office being removed from the daily interactions of the school setting.

At the close of the meeting no decisions were made. The board will take a thorough walk-through of the middle/high school building. The administrative team will assess classroom and storage use throughout the district buildings for possible reconfiguration. And the board will discuss in depth the options presented at the special board meeting.

The challenges of our current situation are real but they are not easy to solve. The school board, administration and office staff will continue to examine the options and work together to create a plan that meets the future needs of our district as we continue to grow. Please feel free to contact me at 764-5431 if you have suggestions which could assist us in our future planning.