

March 22 Community Meeting **Master Planning and Visioning**

South Burlington School District Review of Educational Opportunities

Part 1: History of Our District **Speaker: David Young**

[SLIDES 1-4]

Good evening.

Tonight I am honored to share with our community examples of how our educational values are integral to any decision we make in our school district. These examples will be offered in three stages: a glimpse of the past, a picture of the present, a vision for the future.

Our School Board laid out the steps that brought us to tonight and the questions that still remain. Decision-making in our South Burlington School District has been, is, and will continue to be based on our educational values as a community.

History informs us that the community of South Burlington has been active in making decisions relevant to the delivery of education as well as school configuration for more than 100 years.

A history of South Burlington published by the League of Women Voters in 1965 records the following growth and change in the South Burlington schools over a 150-year period. The decisions made responded to the growing needs of a growing community; the shift from farms to neighborhoods; the evolution of one-room schoolhouses to thriving, classroom-filled buildings.

“Stout Individuality” [SLIDES 5-6]

- South Burlington was founded in 1865.
- At that time the community was divided into six distinct school districts with six separate schools.
- Each school had a single teacher and often just a handful of students of different ages and different abilities.
- Schools operated on their own with no organized connection to the next.
- South Burlington was a farming community, so children came to school when their families could spare them from work in the fields and the barns.

Greater Cohesion

- By **1881** these separate schools were no longer individual islands but were joined by the establishment of a superintendent of schools who oversaw them.
- This cohesion allowed for the delivery of education to be more equitable: all schools followed a consistent calendar, and excellence in teaching was stressed to ensure the finest education for each student.

Growth and Expansion

- **1911** marked another turning point in our city’s schools: a central board was established for the first time, the school year lengthened, student population increased as the community grew.
- Growth marked the next several decades: In **1948** we had 12 teachers in the entire system, and by **1965** we had 107 teachers.
- **[SLIDE 7-8]** New school buildings were constructed to better serve the needs of a growing population of students.
- **[SLIDES 9]** In **1959** the South Burlington Educational Advisory Committee put together a report outlining the need for a South Burlington High School. Up to that point, South Burlington students had attended Burlington High School. However, BHS had informed South Burlington that as of 1961 that would no longer be an option.

Equity and Inclusion

- In the 1959 report, the Advisory Committee outlined “what [the new high school] will provide for our young people”:
 - “A variety of courses of study...to meet the needs and requirements of all students.”
 - “Opportunities for [middle school] students to take subjects that have been too long denied them.”
 - “A well-balanced schedule of extra-curricular activities.”
 - “Better coordination of the elementary, [middle school], and [high school] work.”
 - “The best curriculum possible.”
- This decision to build a new high school set the leaders of South Burlington into motion to determine the best option for the students immediately affected as well as for those who would follow, an option that would ensure consistent, equity-filled opportunities for all students. The decision was both proactive and responsive, serving with distinction thousands of students for more than 50 years.
- **[SLIDES 10-11]** Responding to a growing need in our community as well as changes in how middle school education was most effectively offered to students, Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School was designed and built over the years 1967-1969.

A Proud Tradition Continues with Educational Tools and Enhanced Data

- **Decisions that inspire change are never easy.** The generations of South Burlington residents who came before us wrestled with tough decisions as we continue to do today. This shared history connects all of us.
- **In recent years we have more research to help advise our decisions** in our schools to ensure all students know *they make a difference in the world.*
- **This review of our history affirms our community’s continued commitment to best serve each young person in our schools.** This significant commitment toward each student’s well-being has been, is, and will continue to be what makes the South Burlington School District a great place to learn, work and live.
- **The need to make some decisions based on student educational opportunities is upon us again today.**
- Issues informing those decisions include but are not limited to the following:
 1. The removal of over 100 homes around Burlington International Airport.

2. Concerns on increased airport noise exposure.
 3. The impact of a proposed City Center on our schools and the potential safety issues including but not limited to increased traffic.
 4. Slight decline in enrollment in our school district and its impact on class size, equity, and educational opportunities.
 5. And finally the research we have available that informs us what our young people need socially and emotionally as they navigate growing up and ready themselves for the world they will inherit.
- In addressing these concerns, the administrative team examined what we valued most in our school district overall. To best explain that, our principals will outline some of those important values in their individual schools.

Part 2: Complete List of Educational Opportunities

Speakers: Holly Rouelle, Mark Trifilio, Brent Coon, Karsten Schlenter, and Patrick Burke

- Chamberlin School Overview
- Orchard School Overview
- Rick Marcotte Central School Overview
- Frederick H. Tuttle Middle School Overview
- South Burlington High School Overview

Part 3: Identifying All Five Scenarios

Speaker: David Young

[SLIDES 12-13]

Scenario 1: All schools remain open. Stewardship only.

Scenario 2: All schools remain open. Stewardship/upgrades to all.

Scenario 3: Close Chamberlin. Stewardship to all others. Upgrades to Orchard & RMCS (Pre-K to 4). Upgrades to FHTMS (5-8) & SBHS.

Scenario 4: Close Chamberlin & RMCS. Stewardship to all others. Upgrades to Orchard (Pre-K to 2). Build new 3-5 school. Upgrades to FHTMS (6-8) & SBHS.

Scenario 5: Close all elementaries. Stewardship/upgrades to FHTMS & SBHS. FHTMS is 5-8. Build new Pre-K to 4 school.

Part 4: Review of Scenarios and How Options Are Satisfied

Speaker: David Young

What We Know

- *In the SBSB, we use tools to assess the many sides of any decision. Some of those tools [Invite participants to refer to the handout] are ones already implemented in our schools: our District Ends Policy, MTSS, and NGSS. Others are just beginning to be expanded in our schools: PLPs and PBGRs. All of these collectively help ensure we meet our District Ends and ensure we offer the finest education to each student in our schools.*
- *Based on educational research, our school district's guiding principles, and the facts that inform our decision-making in South Burlington, here's what we know to be true.*

1. Academic Excellence and Consistency: [SLIDE 14] Information from a recent study done with this year's kindergarten class families confirmed what we know to be true: people move to South Burlington for our schools and for the other amenities our community offers. [SLIDES 15-16]

- Our students traditionally have performed extremely well on standardized tests as well as state and national assessments. Additionally, our school district regularly appears in national rankings of the best school districts in the state of Vermont. We value this.
- At the same time we recognize that not all students have access to the same opportunities. Consistency in our classrooms and in our schools will contribute to greater access to opportunities for more students. A pre-K-4 elementary school and 5-8 middle school will lengthen the time students are in school buildings and allow for greater equity between school classrooms.
- Additionally, we know we have work to do in allowing all our students access to world language and greater access to the arts at younger ages. A recent report from PBS notes, "Research has found that learning music facilitates learning other subjects and enhances skills that children inevitably use in other areas" (<http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/music-arts/the-benefits-of-music-education/>) And a compilation of research-based information by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language explains, "There is evidence that early language learning improves cognitive abilities" (http://www.actfl.org/advocacy/what-the-research-shows#academic_achievement)
- [SLIDES 17-19] Finally, to sustain academic excellence and consistency well into this 21st century and best prepare our students for the demands of careers they will inherit, we know any space configurations must include maker spaces for hands-on learning and other architectural designs to allow for small-group interaction and creativity. The slides offer several examples of this type of space.

2. Diversity/Equity/Inclusion: [SLIDES 20-22] This map shows how our community is divided to feed into our current elementary schools. Over time our neighborhoods in South Burlington have grown and transformed as we have welcomed new families and community members into our city. As a result the demographics in our elementary school buildings are widely varied. In order to ensure equity and inclusion in our schools – a goal of our District Ends – rethinking this map is necessary. Redistricting has the potential to create division, as shown in this example. [SLIDE 23] In contrast, gathering all pre-K-4 learners together under one roof ensures equity and inclusion in the critical pre-K through 4th-grade years, confirms greater conformity in class size, and offers a stability that redistricting does not. [SLIDES 24-25] This will be especially crucial in the

years to come as we look at predictors of the variances in growth in our current elementary schools.

- Additionally, we need to ensure that our school buildings respect (1) all learning styles and (2) the physical and mental needs of all students and staff.
- 3. Safety and Well-Being: [SLIDES 26-27]** The safety and well-being of our students is of highest priority in the South Burlington School District. Building security, traffic, noise levels, and other safety-related concerns are just some of the issues we must consider when making decisions. We continue to focus attention on the impact of safety concerns on students and staff. Any final decision reached must reflect the fact that safety is paramount.
 - 4. Interpersonal Relationships: [SLIDE 28-31]** Research from the Search Institute has “identified the building blocks of healthy development -- known as Developmental Assets -- that help young children grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.” **[Invite participants to refer to the handout]** We know from this research the critical importance of young people developing healthy relationships with charismatic adults and peers. Additionally, our District Ends identifies “building supportive relationships,” “collaborating with others,” and “considering different perspectives” to be integral to our school values. We want to give our students opportunities to find many charismatic adults and mentors in their school days, and we want those adults to have opportunities to reach for professional excellence by being inspired by one another. We know this will then have a positive impact on our students. We want our students’ lives to be enriched by meeting peers who have different perspectives than they do, who are from families with many children as well as those with single children, who come from many different places in the world, who speak multiple languages, who learn in a wonderfully varied ways. This leads to growth and learning and recognizing that we all have much to learn from each member of our community.

[SLIDES 32-39 & discussion of each]

Part 5: Closing Remarks: How History Informs Us

Speaker: David Young

[SLIDE 40]

Our goal in the South Burlington School District has always been and will continue to be one that preserves or improves upon the delivery of a quality education.

We are committed to offering that quality education to each one of our students.

Tonight we have looked at the history of our school district. Our story includes drivers such as population growth that have prompted change in our past – the move away from six separate schools to one united school district, the addition of a high school and middle school.

Today we are able to see, as our forebears did before us, that to enhance quality education while responding to an ever-evolving world, change is necessary.

We again have drivers prompting that change that reflect our thriving community and 21st century world, and include the following:

- The removal of over 100 homes around Burlington International Airport.
- Concerns on increased airport noise exposure.
- The impact of a proposed City Center on our schools, specifically RMCS, and the potential safety issues including but not limited to increased traffic.
- Slight decline in enrollment in our school district and its impact on class size, equity, and educational opportunities.
- And finally the research we have available that informs us what our young people need to best prepare them for the world they will inherit.

When considering any change, the North Star for our direction is academic excellence and consistency, diversity/equity/inclusion, safety, space configurations, and interpersonal relationships to inspire all learners to make a difference in the world.

Based on the findings presented above, the developments currently occurring in South Burlington, and the research from our documented Multi-Tiered System of Support -- which is the tool by which important decisions impacting our students are made -- **the administrators and I have concluded that Scenario 5 (Repurpose/sell all three existing elementary schools, build one new elementary school for Pre-K-4, and move grade 5 to FHTMS) enhances and more strongly supports the continuation of these opportunities well into the future.**

[SLIDE 41] It feels apropos to end a discussion on Educational Opportunities Assessment with the words of a former administrator who was adept at seeking out the finest educational opportunities for each and every student under his watch. The words Fred Tuttle spoke 47 years ago still certainly hold true today: “The opportunities which lie ahead are unlimited, and the students we work with are an inspiration to us.”