
MOORESTOWN TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT *E³+P*

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Scott P. McCartney, Ed. D.
Superintendent

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Dear Moorestown School Family,

Okay, I will tell you up front... this is the longest opening letter that I have ever written and I apologize in advance! That said, it is because there are so many great things happening as we begin our school year. Please take an extra moment now that your children are back in school to read about our new mission and vision, strategic plan and referendum plan for the future.

Last year, we embarked on a strategic planning process where our stakeholders helped to shape a reframing conversation that places the learner in the center of our focus. We recognize that with a mission and vision to prepare our students for a future yet to be defined, we must all become learners, critical thinkers, risk-takers, producers and difference makers if we are to reach our fullest potential and lead fulfilling lives. To that end, our committee comprised of students, parents, school support groups, local government, the business community and our school personnel set forth the following Mission and Vision Statements.

Mission:

The Moorestown Township Public Schools, in collaboration with the community, provide opportunities and experiences based on academic, emotional, and social foundations to develop life-ready learners who contribute to and embrace an ever-changing and diverse society.

Vision:

Moorestown Township Public School students will be ethical, curious, innovative, and productive citizens who have the resiliency and the courage to be difference-makers who shape their futures, build diverse relationships and perspectives, and lead fulfilling lives.

You can learn more about the specific goals and objectives to support our strategic plan for the next several years at http://www.mtps.com/board_of_education/strategic_plan.

These concepts dovetailed perfectly with our “Reframing Moorestown PreK-8” conversation. As many of you know, the year before last, the Board of Education tasked us to look at what the district could or should look like in coming years, including expanded PreK and Full Day Kindergarten (FDK). The discussion on FDK has been robust for several years and to move forward, we needed to determine the cost and if it physically could fit in our current facilities. It became quite clear that while we could develop a program with some staffing increases, additional program materials, and the potential to offset at least some of the revenue lost through tuition-based Preschool, we were simply out of **Space**.

The space issue became the primary concern as PreK, Kindergarten, and several grades in our elementary schools were reaching class size caps with students being moved outside of their geographic home school. From early March into the beginning of this school year, the shortage of space continues to grow. As a result, students are being shuffled to different home schools and the district is forced to constantly consider raising class size beyond our policy, good education practice and the standards Moorestown has set for our classrooms.

To address space and/or the lack of it, we did several things: researched our current space utilization, researched past, present and future population growth, tasked our professionals to research construction options, including leasing space to renovate, additions/renovations to buildings, and building new facilities. We looked at what would be most cost effective and would maximize the potential of getting up to 40% funding from the State of New Jersey.

From that conversation, what was most economically feasible was several additions to the William Allen Middle School. This would allow for reconfiguration of grade levels to create much needed space, support best practice through a new model grade level configuration, and reconsider our approach to our delivery models.

Currently, our schools are configured as PreK-3 (Baker, Roberts and South Valley), 4-6 (UES), 7-8 (WAMS) and 9-12 (HS), which have served our students well.

The proposed model - PreK-2 (Baker Roberts and South Valley), 3-5 (UES), 6-8 (WAMS) and 9-12 (HS), we believe will only improve our educational delivery and opportunity for students.

By reconfiguring grades, we are able to:

- *create* much needed space for all learners and manage current and future student population increases
- *streamline* our instructional focus to more traditional developmental benchmarks
 - Baker, Roberts, and South Valley**, with a new focus on PreK-2, will be able to specialize in early childhood delivery – the foundational skills for learning and developing socially and emotionally.
 - Upper Elementary School** will be a true elementary school with a focus on learning how to use those foundational skills to learn new material.
 - William Allen Middle School** will become a true middle school giving students and families more time in the school. During these very formative years, relationships are critical and more time will help prepare our students for their high school experience.
- *create* necessary space to lower class size and consider new programs such as FDK and PreK
- *expand* our PreK programs to connect earlier with students and families, as well as generate revenue to offset the loss of potentially moving from half-day to full-day Kindergarten

By reconfiguring our grades, we will create educationally viable options for our students and maximize our personnel and physical space in the most fiscally responsible and efficient manner.

The second area we hope to improve under the referendum is in the never-ending realm of **Security**. While our schools are safe and this Board and community has been supportive in previous referenda, annual budgets and in seeking grants to protect our school community, there

is always work to be done. In addition to adding required mass notification systems under Alyssa's Law, completing a classroom door lock replacement project, and modifying internal structures, we are looking to upgrade and expand our security technology at the middle school and elementary schools to match the recent grant funded work at our high school.

Technology (cameras, digital recorders, etc.) age quickly and updates and expansion to those systems requires ongoing attention to ensure we are protecting our spaces, our students, our employees and our community – our school family. Competing for and receiving a grant for 1.2 million last year was a great win, but it was specifically limited to expansions and upgrades at the high school and there are ongoing needs at the five remaining schools. The referendum helps us to keep parity with the security in all of our schools and obtain up to 40% of the cost through State funding.

The third area of expense in the referendum is **Sustainability**. As with any structure, systems also age and need replacing. Windows, HVAC, electrical upgrades, generator replacements, lighting upgrades, asbestos removal, carpet replacement, locker room upgrades and student locker replacement are far less exciting, but critical needs that have to happen. We know the relative life span of these systems and we have met or exceeded those timeframes. With our referendum, we know that we can replace all of these items with the same 40% State share. While it is not nearly as provocative as **Space** and **Security**, it makes sense to maximize the cost sharing, and maintain the investment we have in our buildings. Through energy savings, we can free up resources to put toward academic programs, materials and staff. It is important to ensure that the spaces we have are efficient, safe, and effectively support the mission/vision and standards this community has for preparing our students, your children, for their future success. It is our schools that create and sustain the value of your home and the reason many of you choose to live in Moorestown.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me directly, frequently search the district's website for updates on the referendum, or email your questions/comments to referendum@mtps.com. We will provide information via the website, email, social media, print media and attending meetings with our community groups and several open meetings in community spaces and homes near you! As always, we encourage you to be an informed voter and to vote in December on this important question. You can also access information through the QR Code included below.

Have a great school year!

Sincerely,

Scott P. McCartney

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Superintendent

