

Middle School Task Force Executive Summary

A Middle School Task Force met from September 2000 to September 2001 to study and make recommendations for short- and long-term solutions to space concerns at the Pollard Middle School and the impact on students, staff, and the educational program. At the time, there were 1,051 students in the school. A study by DiNisco Design Partnership has put the capacity at 780. The Task Force identified many consequences of the overcrowding on staff and students including:

- The master schedule had to be changed to make maximum use of space, resulting in a 10% reduction in core instruction time.
- Class and cluster sizes were larger than acceptable.
- Teachers had to share classroom space.
- Small classrooms were inadequate for project-based learning, special education equipment, and technology.
- There were not enough labs for science.
- Special education students needed to be placed in out-of-district schools because of a lack of program space.
- The building had insufficient places for storage, teacher work, and offices.
- The auditorium and cafeteria were too small.
- The number of rest room facilities was inadequate for staff or students.
- Parking was a problem.
- Hallways and common areas were overcrowded and considered unsafe.

The committee's short-term recommendation was for modular classrooms to be installed. This recommendation was implemented, and the school added 10 modular classrooms in September 2002.

The Task Force also strongly and unanimously recommended the creation of a second middle school. The primary reasons were:

- 1) Even with the additional modular classrooms, the lack of space continued to impact the quality of education as well as the morale of staff. Many of the issues listed above were not solved by the 10 classrooms.
- 2) Research suggested that smaller middle schools enhanced the education of students as well as decreased the likelihood for violent episodes in school.
- 3) A second middle school would provide more flexibility for enrollment increases, changes in educational programs, after school programming, and community use.

At the time of the Task Force, enrollment was predicted to peak in 2011-2012 at 1116 students. Current enrollment projections have been revised to predict close to 1300 students in the school within 10 years.

In response to the recommendation for a second middle school, the Town employed the DiNisco Design Partnership to study the feasibility of construction of a middle school "through addition, renovation, demolition/new construction" on the site currently occupied by the High Rock School

building. After completing their study, the DiNisco report concluded that the site was sufficient for a 650-student middle school. However, they identified a number of issues which still required analysis including traffic issues in and around the site and how a final design might be influenced by wetlands designations.

Reference: Interim Middle School Task Force Report – December 15, 2000

Middle School Task Force Report – September 7, 2001

Middle School Feasibility Study by DiNisco Design Partnership – December 11, 2002