

**Regional School District No. 14
Towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury**



**Addressing Facility and Space Needs
Board of Education Workshop
October 4, 2006**

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Superintendent of Schools**

**Regional School District No. 14
Towns of Bethlehem and Woodbury**



I have spent a good portion of my first three months in Region 14 learning everything I can about the proposed building project. In order to do this, I have spoken with:

Rusty Malik, Architect – We met and reviewed all options that were explored during the original study.

Elected Officials

Board of Education Members

Parents

Administrators

Teachers

In addition, I have done comprehensive tours of the four buildings with the administrator of each school.

Since the opening of school, I have spent a week at Mitchell School and a week at Woodbury Middle School to observe the facility when it is filled with students and faculty. This week I am at Bethlehem Elementary School and next week I will be at Nonnewaug High School.

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Document Reviews

**Planning for Our Present Needs: A Facilities Study: Grew Design
International – January 1997**

- I. Assessment of Existing Buildings and Spaces/ Proposed Modifications
 - a. Mitchell Elementary School
 - b. Bethlehem Elementary School
 - c. Woodbury Middle School
 - d. Nonnewaug High School

Space and Facilities Concerns Committee Report – October 7, 2003

Elementary Education in Region 14: A Look to the Future – November 2003

**Information on Grade 5 Move Gathered by Patricia Soracin – March 30,
2004**

**Why Should We Move Region 14 5th Grade Classes to Woodbury Middle
School?**

Bethlehem Elementary School – Requests for Transition Activities

Facilities Assessment and Space Needs Study – September 29, 2005

Material from Information Session – March 8, 2006

Material from Information Session – April 6, 2006

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Facility Considerations

Recommended Class Sizes

Kindergarten – 18

Grade 1 – 20

Grade 2 – 20

Grade 3 – 22

Grades 4-12 – 25

Each school should have:

A library.

A gymnasium.

A music room.

An art room.

A cafeteria.

A computer lab.

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Options Considered During 2003-2004

1. Purchase property with non-specific plan for its use (17 acres adjacent to Nonnewaug High School). **Status: Voted down in 2004 referendum.**
2. Build a new elementary school on the 17 acres adjacent to Nonnewaug High School.
3. Move Mitchell Elementary School to Woodbury Middle School and build a new middle school on the 17 acres adjacent to Nonnewaug High School.
4. Move 5th grades from Bethlehem Elementary School and Mitchell Elementary School to Woodbury Middle School.
5. Move only Mitchell Elementary School 5th grades to Woodbury Middle School temporarily. **Status: Completed for the start of the 2005-2006 school year.**

Facilities Study Committee – Formed in Early 2005

The Facilities Study Committee was composed of Board of Education members, members of the community, and administrators. Lessons learned by the Facilities Study Committee:

1. Both communities want fifth grades to remain at the elementary level.
2. Converting Woodbury Middle School to an elementary school was not cost effective.

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Spring 2005

Facilities Study Committee shortened list of options to:

1. Build a new elementary school on Mitchell Elementary School site.
2. Build a new elementary school on the site behind Woodbury Middle School.
3. Redesign and renovate Mitchell Elementary School to new.

Option 3 Went to Referendum in June 2006 – Failed

October 2006

**Recommendations
Reconfigure Regional School District No. 14**

1. Bethlehem Elementary School would become Bethlehem Primary School housing all kindergarten, first, and second grade students from Bethlehem and Woodbury.
2. Mitchell Elementary School would become Mitchell Intermediate School containing all of the district's third, fourth, and fifth graders.

If we do not pursue the Primary School/Intermediate School concept, I would recommend the following:

1. Go to referendum again for the renovate Mitchell Elementary School to new project. If the referendum passes, keep Mitchell's fifth grade at Woodbury Middle School until the renovation is completed. Bethlehem fifth graders would remain in Bethlehem.
2. If the referendum fails, do a large scale redistricting of elementary students – moving additional Woodbury students to Bethlehem.

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In order to use Bethlehem as a primary school:

1. The current reading room would be used as a classroom.
2. The art room would be used as a classroom. Art would be moved to the current science room.
3. Convert the current computer room to a classroom.
4. Take down walls between Rooms 115, 116, and 117. Currently, these rooms are occupied by special education resource room teachers who would need to be housed in another part of the school.

If the district were to install portable classrooms in Bethlehem, some of the changes outlined above would not have to be completed.

In order to use Mitchell as an intermediate school (not using the portable classrooms):

1. There would be one stationary computer lab in the school. This could be supplemented with a portable lab.
2. Music would need to be relocated from the portable unit where it is currently housed.

The idea of moving all fifth graders to the middle school is made more difficult because of space concerns there. With the current fifth grade classes from Mitchell currently housed at the middle school, there is little room for additional students. Rooms currently used for physical therapy, music, and health would need to be used for the additional fifth graders if Bethlehem students were relocated to the middle school.

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Benefits of a K-2 (Primary) / 3-5 (Intermediate) Configuration

1. Such an arrangement makes a better use of district resources.
2. Increases chances of delivering a guaranteed and viable curriculum in each grade throughout the district.
3. Takes the Mitchell fifth grade students out of the middle school and puts them back at the elementary level where both communities believe they belong.
 4. Students would remain on one “campus” for Grades 3-8.
5. Allows teachers of each grade level to have regular and ongoing contact with one another, sharing ideas, and giving them the opportunity to have regular and ongoing conversations about teaching and learning.
 6. Preserves Mitchell School as an educational facility.
7. Allows for the implementation of new programs. Ex. full day kindergarten and true “teaming” at the middle school.
8. Brings the children from both communities together sooner. They are already together in outside activities such as sports.
 9. Allows for focused professional development opportunities.
10. Elementary schools become more equitable in size of their student bodies.