Walter Johnson Cluster
Roundtable Discussion Group

Meeting #4 Agenda
March 16, 2016, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m.
Walter Johnson High School, Cafeteria

Desired Outcomes

By the end of this meeting, we will have:

- Reviewed feedback, agenda, outcomes, and process;
- Shared pluses minuses secondary school approaches;
- Determined if additional secondary school approaches are needed;
- Brainstormed elementary school approaches; and
- Discussed next steps and provided feedback.

Activity	Facilitator(s)	Process	Time
Review feedback; agenda, outcomes, and process.	Debbie Szyfer	Review	7:00-7:10 10’
Share Pluses and Minuses of Secondary School Approaches	Dana Davison/ Debbie Szyfer	Share/Clarify/Summarize Small Groups Review/Discuss Gallery Walk	7:10–8:00 50’
Determine if additional Secondary School Approaches are Needed	Debbie Szyfer	Discuss/Clarify	8:00-8:15 15’
Brainstorm Elementary School Approaches	Dana Davison/ Debbie Szyfer	Develop/List Clarify/Combine	8:15-8:50 35’
Next Steps, Observer Questions, Feedback	Debbie Szyfer	Determine/Share	8:50–9:00 10’

Ground Rules

1. Share openly
2. Give and receive constructive feedback
3. Appreciate everyone’s ideas
4. Suspend judgment
5. Limit discussions to the topic
6. Do homework and be prepared
7. Abide by decisions made by the facilitator
8. Start and end meetings on time

Walter Johnson Cluster
Roundtable Discussion Group Meeting #3
Follow-up Questions—March 3, 2015

Question
A question was asked about what was the size of the cluster schools eight years ago.

Response
Please see the attached table for the enrollment history of cluster schools for the past eight years.

Question
Are there current examples, in MCPS, of large schools ensuring extracurricular opportunities through multiple athletic teams or additional music/performance offerings (for example, sports teams or ensembles or performances designated for younger students who aren't yet competitive with older students)?

Response
High schools routinely offer options in the performing arts that accommodate the size of the school and student interest. For example, a school might offer more productions/shows, or specialized performing groups, allowing more students to participate. Schools also "double cast" parts in shows to allow more student participation.

In athletics, there is only one varsity team per school for competition. Junior varsity (JV) teams allow additional students to participate. In most schools, "cuts" to team rosters are an unfortunate but a normal part of the athletic program. This effect is more pronounced in larger schools. In smaller schools, however, some schools struggle to field a full JV team in some sports.

Question
What is the average size of high schools in MCPS?

Response
The average high school size for the 2015–2016 school year is 1920 students.

Question
What currently prevents students from enrolling in their preferred courses sometimes? An example was given where middle school students could not enroll in Spanish class, despite that it is not considered a specialized course. Is it a space, funding or staffing issue? Concerns were raised about such problems becoming more prevalent with some of the approaches under consideration.

Response

In general, availability of course offerings would be related to a staffing or having a sufficient number of students to offer a class. Staff followed up specifically about the example at raised at North Bethesda Middle School, and confirmed that the limited Spanish class offerings to 6th Grade students was a staffing capacity issue not a building capacity issue.

Question

Are Blair HS-style academies or special programs possible at a large Walter Johnson High School? Have academies at Montgomery Blair High School given students there a personalized learning environment, as intended? How do the experiences of students who do not participate in academies or special programs at Montgomery Blair High School differ? What does the academic literature have to say about "academies" and schools within schools to foster learning communities? Is there a notable study of these models that the roundtable can consider?

Response

Academies, particularly those that are organized around career programs of study and are externally validated, are successful in creating more personalized learning environments for students. For an example, see the National Academy Foundation.

Question

How many Walter Johnson High School students currently take upper level (10^{th}-12^{th} grade) courses?

Response

Currently there are 613 Grade 9 students taking the following courses:
134 AP National, State, and Local Government (NSL)
17 French 4
48 Spanish 4
6 Chinese
7 Honors Precalculus
104 Honors Algebra 2
Keep in mind that any singleton courses, including specialized electives, create restrictions in the master schedule and limit opportunities for students.

Question
What are the implications of big versus small schools for special needs populations?

Response
Positions such as school counselors, special education teachers, administrators, and other support staff are allocated by enrollment and do not differ for school size.

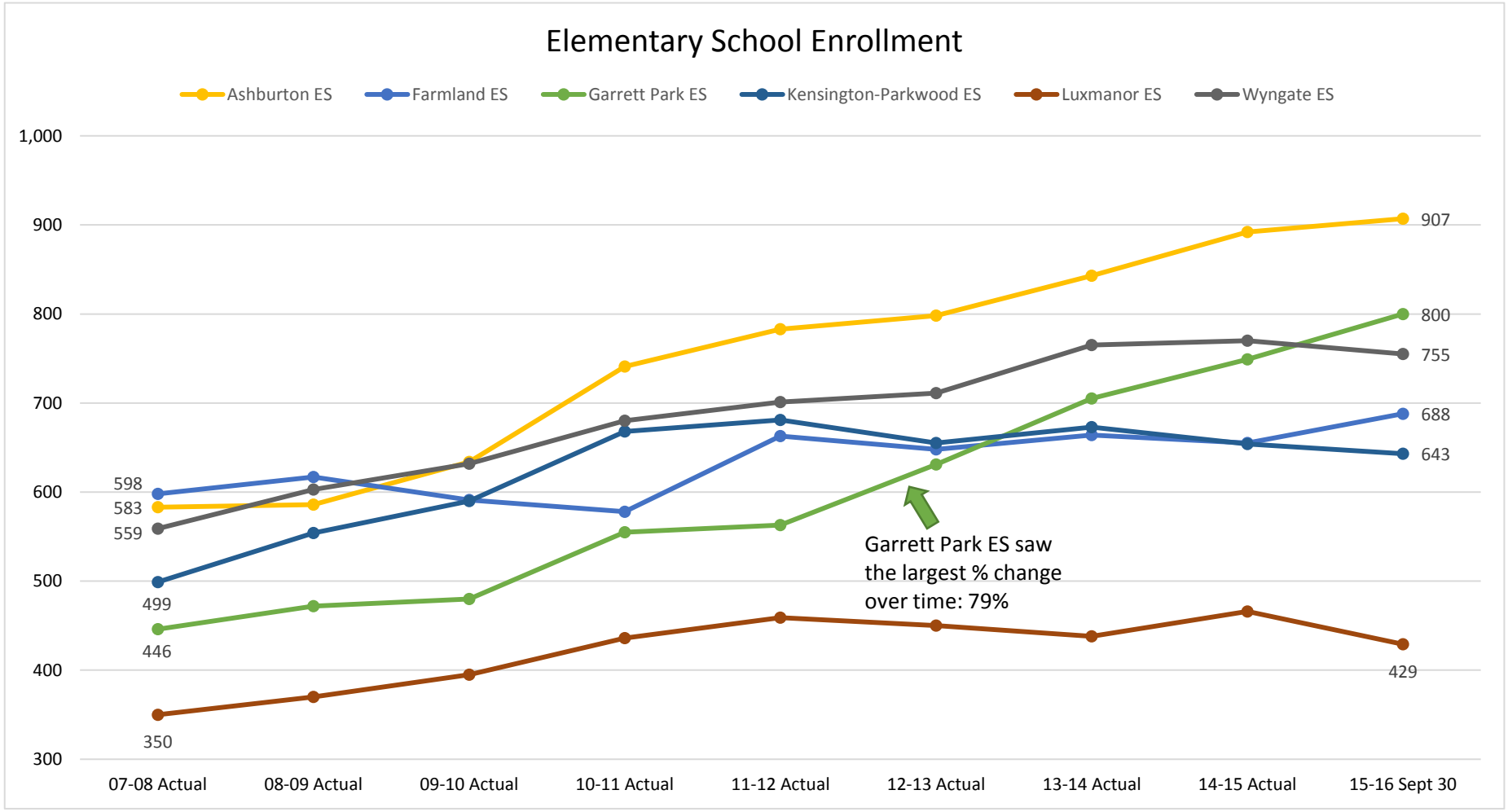
Question
Is the WMAL development included in the enrollment projections? What is the expected impact of development on this property?

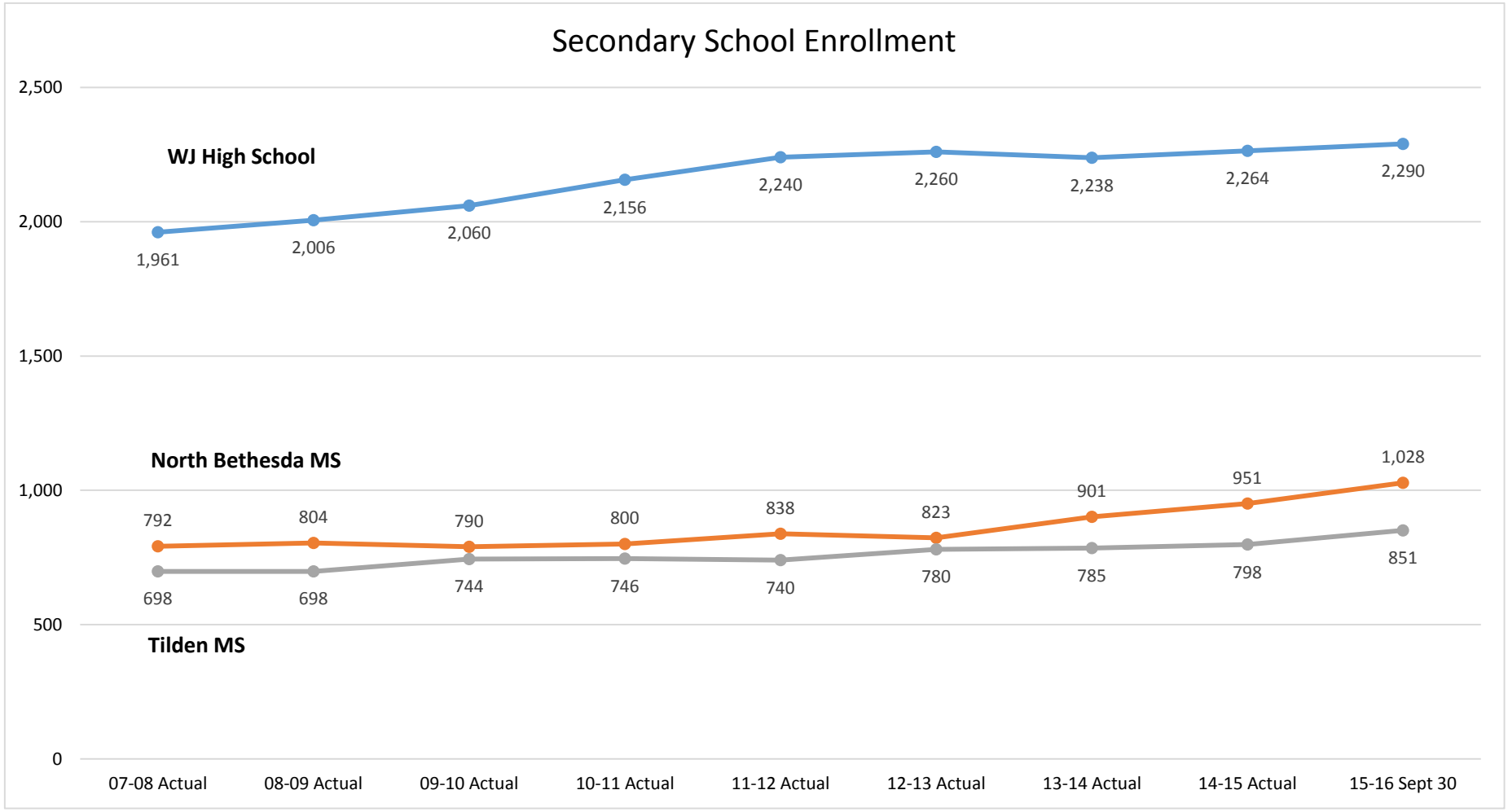
Response
The WMAL development is included in the enrollment projections and the impact is indicated in the table presented at the meeting.

Question
Are there any recommended studies on small versus large secondary schools that the roundtable can consider?

Response
Staff will address this request at the fourth meeting.

School	15-16 Sept 30	14-15 Actual	13-14 Actual	12-13 Actual	11-12 Actual	10-11 Actual	09-10 Actual	08-09 Actual	07-08 Actual
WJ High School	2,290	2,264	2,238	2,260	2,240	2,156	2,060	2,006	1,961
North Bethesda MS	1,028	951	901	823	838	800	790	804	792
Tilden MS	851	798	785	780	740	746	744	698	698
Ashburton ES	907	892	843	798	783	741	634	586	583
Farmland ES	688	655	664	648	663	578	591	617	598
Garrett Park ES	800	749	705	631	563	555	480	472	446
Kensington-Parkwood ES	643	654	673	655	681	668	590	554	499
Luxmanor ES	429	466	438	450	459	436	395	370	350
Wyngate ES	755	770	765	711	701	680	632	603	559


Elementary School Enrollment
Ashburton ES
Farmland ES
Garrett Park ES
Kensington-Parkwood ES
Luxmanor ES
Wyngate ES
1,000
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
598
583
559
499
446
350
907
800
755
688
643
429
Garrett Park ES saw the largest % change over time: 79%
07-08 Actual
08-09 Actual
09-10 Actual
10-11 Actual
11-12 Actual
12-13 Actual
13-14 Actual
14-15 Actual
15-16 Sept 30


Secondary School Enrollment
2,500
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
0
WJ High School
1,961
2,006
2,060
2,156
2,240
2,260
2,238
2,264
2,290
North Bethesda MS
792
804
790
800
838
823
901
951
1,028
Tilden MS
698
698
744
746
740
780
785
798
851
07-08 Actual
08-09 Actual
09-10 Actual
10-11 Actual
11-12 Actual
12-13 Actual
13-14 Actual
14-15 Actual
15-16 Sept 30

Walter Johnson Roundtable Discussion Group

Summary of Meeting #3 — March 2, 2016

The Walter Johnson Cluster Roundtable Discussion Group (Roundtable) met for its third meeting on March 2, 2016. The meeting was held in the cafeteria of Walter Johnson High School from 7:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. The materials handed out at the meeting follow this summary.

Ms. Deborah S. Szyfer, senior planner, Division of Long-range Planning, Department of Facilities Management, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), Dr. Michael Zarchin, director of school performance, Office of School Support and Improvement and Mr. Scott Murphy, director, Department of Secondary Curriculum and Districtwide Programs facilitated the meeting. Corinne Blackford and Julie Morris, planners, Division of Long-range Planning, assisted at this meeting.

Ms. Szyfer introduced Dr. Zarchin and Mr. Murphy. She reviewed the agenda and went over feedback from the last meeting. She reviewed the long term cluster enrollment projections to 2045 for cluster schools with the caveat that these are very soft numbers and that most master plans do not reach full build-out. She noted that most of the middle school growth is in the Tilden Middle School service area.

Projections from 2035 to 2045 assume complete build-out of White Flint I and Kensington sector plans and proposed housing not associated with these sector plans. Market conditions and the pace of redevelopment of existing properties could change the number of units built and the timing of full build-out. It is important to note that most master plans never reach full build-out. The projection for 2045 would be considered peak enrollment. However, the projection for 2045 does not include White Flint II and Rock Spring sector plans because housing unit counts for these plans are not known at this time. The longer the forecast period, the more error is possible. It is considered equally likely for enrollment to come in below the numbers as it is for enrollment to exceed them.

A question was asked as to whether these numbers include the future WMAL plans. Ms. Szyfer stated that she would follow up with Mr. Bruce Crispell.

Ms. Szyfer presented eight approaches in a similar format: description, program considerations, and enrollment impact. To develop the approaches, staff took the criteria and brainstormed ideas from the last meeting to create the approaches. Some of the ideas that were suggested during the brainstorming session were combined into one approach to simplify discussion of the approaches. Although a Grade 6–9 school was suggested during the brainstorming session, it was not presented as one of the approaches because there would not be sufficient space in the middle schools to add Grade 9 students. As a clarification, all Tilden Middle School references are for the new building that will be constructed at the Tilden Lane site.

Dr. Zarchin and Mr. Murphy gave their backgrounds and discussed programmatic pros and cons for each approach. The details for each approach are attached, following the summary for the

meeting. Below, discussion points and questions and responses relevant to each approach are summarized. Ms. Szyfer explained that the projected enrollment tables all start with 2017 because that is when planning funds are currently requested in the Board of Education's Requested FY 2017–2022 Capital Improvements Program (CIP). For the purpose of these notes, discussion and questions are summarized and grouped with the corresponding approach.

Approach 1: Construct Additions

- Construct an addition at Walter Johnson High School with a capacity for 3000 students and monitor enrollment to determine the size and timing for a future addition to bring the school to a possible capacity of 3600.
    - The initial addition could open by 2020.
    - Per the architects hired to conduct the feasibility study for a possible addition, the building could be expanded to 3600 students.
    - Based on the projected enrollment, the second addition may be needed by roughly 2040.
- Montgomery Blair High School in the Downcounty Consortium was discussed because it has a capacity and student enrollment of nearly 3000 students. Montgomery Blair High School is organized with academies and has a 9th grade academy.
- FY 2017 planning funds are currently included in the Walter Johnson HS Cluster Solution.
- Both middle schools have been master planned for larger capacities.
- Tilden MS is likely to need an addition sooner than North Bethesda MS.
- All of the assumptions on timing for the proposed additions are based on the way MCPS currently plan and fund additions.
- Larger schools allow for a wide range of courses, special interest programs, and extracurricular offerings compared to a smaller school.
- It is more difficult to personalize the learning environment and for staff to get to know the students well in larger schools. After school offerings such as varsity athletics become more competitive.
- Size of school has no impact on class size.
- All schools would have one principal regardless of size.
- In middle schools, team cohorts of 120-140 students can have a team leader and core group of teachers, which is like a school within a school and creates smaller learning environments. Sometimes middle schools hold separate back to school nights by team.
- A question was asked as to how many Walter Johnson HS ninth grade students take upper level courses? Staff will follow-up on this question.
- Questions were raised about how Montgomery Blair HS has dealt with such a large school particularly for students not in the magnet programs.
- Academies are not the same as teams and academies are typically driven by theme or career interest. They are open to any student may typically occur in groups of approximately 400 students.
- Questions were asked for feedback from the Blair HS perspective and staff will follow up.

- If MCPS were to move forward with a 3600 student capacity school, MCPS would ensure that core facilities were in place to support the programs.
- Although middle school teaming may be a challenge for students who are split from friends there would be opportunities to see friends during lunch and elective courses.
- There are different ways to implement teams and some middle schools do teambuilding exercises.
- How does a large school impact administration? Staff explained that middle and high schools are staffed differently and the number of assistant principals and counselors is based on enrollment.
- Are there schools that offer two varsity athletic teams in the county? No, but in the arts some schools offer more productions. Walter Johnson is doubling up on play parts now. In contrast, some small schools struggle to maintain junior varsity and varsity teams.
- Larger schools have greater opportunities to draw coaches from their staff as opposed to outsiders. This helps for communication and helps the staff and students build relationships.
- A question was asked on what the average MCPS high school size is. Ms. Szyfer responded that high schools are reaching the 2000-2400 range.
- Teaming is easiest for 6th grade and gets progressively more difficult by year.

<u>Approach 2: Reopen Woodward as a Grades 9-12 High School</u>

- This option is based on the timing for the revitalization/expansion of Tilden MS because the Woodward facility is not available until Tilden MS moves into the new building on Tilden Lane.
- A note of clarification: even though Woodward HS would reopen in 2022, the note is shown in the 2025 column.
- This approach would split the high school population in half.
- MCPS could design Woodward to the appropriate size to accommodate the student population but Walter Johnson would have significant space available.
- With smaller high schools, narrower course offerings could present a challenge.
- There was some discussion about whether a special program could be brought into the school.
- There could be operational costs particularly for staffing and transportation with two smaller schools and the complexity and need for specialized instructors for certain program offerings
- A question was asked about the holding centers. Ms. Szyfer said that MCPS does not have a high school holding center and that high school revitalization/expansion projects are done on site.
- While waiting for Woodward, overutilization at Walter Johnson HS could be addressed by relocatable classrooms or possibly one of the other approaches could be looked at in the short term.
- Would ACES, APEX and other special programs stay at Walter Johnson? Staff indicated that specific program offerings would not be discussed at this point in time.

- A question was asked about what the literature says about compensating for larger schools. Staff stated that when programs are done well they are effective and will follow up about whether there is a particularly good study on school size and that the quality of the staff makes a huge difference.
- A question was asked whether teachers want to be in a big or small school. Staff responded that it depends on support and that from the teacher perspective in a small school teachers may teach more courses and therefore need more time to prepare.
- The Choice Study will be discussed at the Board of Education meeting on Tuesday, March 8.

Approach 3: Reopen Woodward as a Grades 9–10 High School

- This approach is more of a split campus or a two campus model with two buildings for the same high school.
- There are transportation implications for this approach.
- Dr. Zarchin spoke to the schools he is familiar with being on the same piece of property and shared a concern for the safety of students traveling back and forth, particularly with a major road between the two facilities.
- Some schools separate the 9th grade from Grades 10–12, however, there are could be some logistics for Grade 9 students accessing upper level courses. Although there is no such model for a split campus in MCPS, MCPS could look explore this option.

Approach 4: Reopen Woodward as a Grades 8–9 School

- Woodward would reopen in 2022 with a capacity of 1850.
- Walter Johnson High School would serve Grades 10–12 students.
- The Tilden MS revitalization/expansion capacity would be designed only for 1000 students.
- No North Bethesda MS addition is needed under this approach.
- Walter Johnson HS may need an addition by 2045 but it would not necessarily need to be as large.
- All North Bethesda and Tilden MS 8th graders would attend Woodward.
- Less construction would be needed, overall.
- Some smaller rural school districts have this model but MCPS could not find evidence of large districts with this model.
- This approach would put the cluster in a similar situation as the Chevy Chase and North Chevy Chase 6th grades, in which the Grade 6 students have different experience compared to all other MCPS 6th graders. The 9th grade experience in this approach would be different.
- Staff spoke to the social and emotional needs being positive for 6th and 7th graders but was not sure what the impact would be for 8th and 9th graders
- There would be staffing implications and different credits and requirements in place for a mix of middle and high school students

- There would be sports and extracurricular issues under this approach because Grade 9 student participate in Junior Varsity and Varsity sports.
- Questions were raised with the percentage of 9th graders that would have to go to the Grade 10–12 school to take upper level classes. Electives would probably be more of a limitation than academic classes.

Approach 5: Use Nearby Commercial Space as a Grade 9 or Grades 9/10 Annex

- This approach was referred to as an Annex where students could walk between the buildings.
- This approach could possibly be short or long term and could be for one grade or a combination of grade levels.
- The Rock Spring development is closer to Walter Johnson than the Woodward facility.
- Staff spoke of an example of a middle school in California situated in an industrial park and that the inside of the building felt like being in any other school.
- Staff spoke to the safety of students walking as well as the logistics of Grade 9 course offerings that are not as "pure" as in other jurisdictions, meaning it presents a challenge that MCPS has a wide range of course offerings for all high school grade levels. A Grades 9–10 annex would open up opportunities compared to a Grade 9 annex.
- Staff wondered how departments and level-alike teachers would be housed.
- Questions were raised about the consequences for parking, and might field space be impacted. Staff responded that MCPS should be able to provide parking at the commercial building.
- A question was asked about how a lease would be funded. Staff indicated that lease costs usually come out of operating dollars but the modifications would come out of the capital budget. It would be handled as a tenant fit out.
- For core space, staff shared that further analysis would be required. Auxiliary gyms could potentially be provided but thought any field space was doubtful.

Approach 6: Alternative Schedule

- Split sessions would in essence extend/double the length of the school day.
- For the purpose of this approach, enrollment is shown as being split evenly.
- There may be overlap in the schedule but staff indicated that they were not sure how that would be handled.
- There was reference made to the recent change in bell times which pushed back high school bell times and that this could potentially mean a change to an even earlier start time than before.
- Instances where alternative schedule have been used in other school districts are typically due to emergency situations or budget shortfalls.
- This model is seen more internationally and in poorer school districts.
- Often times students are grouped by extracurricular interests.

- There was discussion about whether there would be two separate sets of teachers or whether teachers would be working longer hours and how coaches' schedules might work.
- There would be major impacts to transportation, impact on school activities and specialty classes.

Approach 7: Online Education

- The approach could begin with a small group of 100 students and grows each year to around 400 students, equating to a 400 student enrollment reduction at Walter Johnson HS at any time.
- This approach could be implemented sooner than many of the other approaches.
- An addition would still be needed at Walter Johnson HS but smaller than the in approach 1.
- Staff brought up concerns about whether MCPS would be able to offer enough online and with qualified teachers.
- Many seniors do not have a traditional schedule now.
- Although staff believed this approach could take off quickly, they shared concerns of students being at home, online and the school's ability to monitor students would be critical.
- A question was asked about how much of college education is moving to online.
    - A roundtable member shared that currently 17 AP classes are being offered online through the state.
    - There was discussion about whether MCPS could start offering other courses online.
    - Does online learning help more at big or small schools? Staff responded that it could be more helpful for space in large schools.
    - It could be possible that online classes are done at an annex instead of at home.

Approach 8: New middle and high schools

- MCPS does not have any property for new secondary schools in the cluster except for Woodward.
- There would be the cost of land to consider; land could be purchased for a school site if not dedicated.
- MCPS would need to show that there is enough deficit, in the 700-800 student range, to justify opening a new middle school in the cluster. Therefore, North Bethesda MS would not need an addition and would struggle for space for the next 6-10 years until a middle school is constructed. The revitalization/expansion at Tilden MS could be smaller.
- This approach would create 3 middle schools of around 900 students each.
- The new middle school could open around 2025 with a capacity of around 1000 students.
- At MCPS, 600 students for a middle school is a challenge; 800 is the minimum to provide a full course offerings and design a school with all the necessary laboratories.

- A question was asked as to what extent school size has an impact on special populations. Staff responded that it depends on the teachers.
- Both sides were presented with pros and cons to both big and small school sizes.
- A question was asked about what was the size of the cluster schools 8 years ago. Staff will share the enrollment history at the next meeting.

Ms. Szyfer concluded the meeting by addressing observer comments.

- What if any outdoor resources would be lost with a Walter Johnson HS addition? Ms. Szyfer responded that some practice fields, located adjacent to the Giant grocery store, would be compromised.
- Will there be any land purchased to increase the campus size? No.
- What about following the state guidelines? Many approaches do follow the state guidelines but first and foremost we follow MCPS Board of Education guidelines.
- The dates and locations of individual PTA meetings will be gathered and posted on the MCPS Division of Long-range Planning website.
- Was there any consideration for K-6, 7-9, and 10-12 schools? Ms. Szyfer responded no because of the Bethesda-Chevy Chase 3-6 elementary schools' experience and also because the elementary schools would need additions to accommodate 6th grades and have no room for additions.
- It was reiterated that there are concerns about youth being at home unsupervised.

Roundtable members should take the approaches back to their PTAs to gather plusses and minuses. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m. Feedback forms were collected. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 16, 2016 at Walter Johnson High School, 6400 Rock Spring Drive, Bethesda, Maryland, in the cafeteria. At that meeting Roundtable members will share plusses and minuses for secondary school approaches and will determine if additional approaches are needed. Elementary school approaches will be brainstormed.