

Scotland County Board of Education

Public Input Meetings

Frequently Asked Questions

How would the closing of the schools benefit our children?

Students are at the forefront of every decision that is made by the Board of Education and district administration and staff. No scenario would even be considered if it did not benefit our students. Some of the ways that consolidation/redistricting could benefit students would be:

- **There would be more money available. The monies saved would be put directly back into the schools and classrooms.**
- **With consolidation of schools, more books, literature sets and electronic devices will be available in the schools.**
- **There would be an opportunity to approach 1:1 (one technology device per student) access.**
- **All schools would have access to a gym for physical education activities.**
- **New schools would, of course, mean newer and nicer facilities.**

When was the capacity study done and who conducted it?

The Scotland County Schools' Board of Education requested that district administration conduct a capacity study. This was done in the fall and was presented to the Board at their regular, monthly meeting in December.

How was the decision made to possibly close or combine some schools?

At this point, these scenarios are just possibilities. District administration, under direction of the Board, looked at the schools that were under capacity, their proximity to one another, and the decision to consolidate schools were made based off of that information. Again, these scenarios are not 'set in stone'. Other options or opportunities may arise as the process continues.

How or who will decide which school students will attend?

A redistricting plan will be done based off of which (if any) scenarios are selected. The redistricting study will determine the proximity of students to schools and what school students will attend.

If any of the scenarios take place, when will it happen?

It will all depend on which (if any) scenario/s the Board decides to move forward with. Obviously, new schools could not be built before the start of the 2015-16 school year and it would be nearly impossible to complete some of the additions and retrofitting if you were to change Sycamore Lane to a elementary school before school begins in August. Since no decision has been made on about what the 'next steps' are (which, if any, of the scenarios will take place), a timeline has not been established.

What is being done to make sure that the School Report Card grades go up?

Even prior to the first day of school, administration and teachers have been reviewing student data. We are proud of our many celebrations and are keenly aware of our challenges. Plans and programs have already been implemented to help students improve and strengthen those areas where they are achieving. However, if the 80:20 ratio remains where student test data counts for the majority of the school's grade and if the state changes the grading scale from a 15-point scale to a 10-point scale, even schools that have shown tremendous growth have the possibility of their grade remaining the same or even going down. It is important to remember that the School Report Card grades are only a 'snapshot' and one way in which our schools, staff, and students are measured.

Where is Mr. I. Ellis Johnson's picture?

It is in the media center at IEJ.

Will all staff members be assured a job?

Scotland County Schools annually hires an average of 46 teachers. If some schools would close and consolidate, through attrition (a gradual reduction in workforce without firing of personnel, as when workers resign or retire and are not replaced), it would be our hope that those positions would be filled and there would not be a need to hire those new teachers nor reduce the remaining staff.

Would there be additional 'specials' teachers needed if schools were combined?

There would be full time 'specials' teachers at each of the schools where as now, many of those teachers alternate between schools.

What happens to the the principals of the schools that close?

That is a personnel decision that would be made by Central Office administration.

Why would you build new schools when you are reporting that some are under capacity?

New schools would only be built if existing schools combined. For example, there is not enough room for the North Laurinburg students and staff to move into the existing IEJ facility. A new school would need to be built to accommodate the consolidation.

Who pays for the new schools to be built?

The money saved by closing and consolidating schools would be invested into building the new schools. Additionally, if new schools are built, they will be 'net zero', eco-friendly schools. This means that they will be producing as much energy as they use, thus a huge utility cost savings.

What is the money saved by closing or combining schools going to be used for?

It will be put directly back into our schools. With the continued decreased state and local budgets, the money saved would also loosen some of the constraints on our budget that annually become tighter and tighter.

Who will decide on the names of the new schools?

At this point, no discussion about school names has happened. If we get to that point, there would be opportunities for public input before a decision is made.

What will happen to the school buildings once they close?

The goal is not to have empty buildings in our communities. We would work with city and county governments to investigate the possibility of some of the buildings being used as community buildings. There is also the possibility that other entities in the community may want to purchase some of the buildings.

Will the community/staff/parents get to be involved in the process of designing the new schools?

There are some restrictions and codes that we must adhere to when building a school facility, but when possible, public input will be sought.

Why is moving 5th graders back to middle school being considered as an option?

This county has a history of 5th graders attending middle school. This is just another possibility--an option. It is just another scenario that the Board wanted to look at to see how it would affect building capacity. As of now, none of our middle schools are operating above 65% capacity.

If 5th graders are moved to middle school, how will social interaction and bus interaction be monitored?

During the school day, 5th graders would be on a separate schedule. Also schools are arranged in 'pods' with each grade having their own section of the

school. In so far as monitoring bus transportation, we already have cameras on all of our buses. Additionally, we have discussed the possibility of putting a monitor on buses if 5th graders move to middle school.

Will bus routes be longer for middle school students if we only have two middle schools?

They should not be. We are currently working to make our bus routes more efficient and will be implementing next fall corner stops as opposed to house by house stops. This will increase our efficiency and we do not expect routes to increase.

How would the current 4th grade students and staff be prepared should they move to middle school a year early?

Many of our schools now operate similar to our middle schools--in pods--so the transition would not be as difficult for the students as it might be for the parents. There would be ongoing professional development for our staff and students to make the transition a smooth one. And from a student's perspective, the opportunity to go to the middle school a year earlier is an exciting one!

Are we--students, staff, community--going to have the majority of our needs met if all of these changes happen?

Absolutely, but that should be happening already. Every day, students and staff's needs should be met and exceeded whether any of these scenarios take place or not.

What will the student:teacher ratio be in the classrooms? Will there be larger class sizes?

Current student:teacher ratio-

Grade K--Average class size is 1:21 for SCS; State Max is 1:24

Grades 1-3--Average class size is 1:21 for SCS; State Max is 1:24

Grades 4-5--Average class size is 1:22 for SCS; No restrictions on average class size

If any of these scenarios take place, Scotland County Schools will be able keep the ratios the same.

Will the gym at IEJ be torn down or will the community and school still be able to use it?

Ideally the gym and perhaps the library could remain and could be used by the community.

Is the money saved equal or greater than the money spent if we build new schools?

If we moved forward with all of the scenarios and only built one school, we would have the funding to build one new school as well as have a funding balance to complete some other smaller capital projects. However, if we build two new schools, we would essentially have to borrow money.

Will EC students only be placed at IEJ/North Laurinburg?

District administration would be looking in to that situation. All self contained EC classrooms would not necessarily be at IEJ/North Laurinburg.

Why not just have one elementary school in the City of Laurinburg?

It would simply be too large. If you included the students at South Scotland (the school may be in the county, but many of their students live in the city), you would have over 1,800 students in one elementary school.

If Sycamore is changed to an elementary school and the two middle schools are located out in the county, how long would a bus ride be for a middle school student living in town?

One of the initiatives we will be implementing next year, whether any of these scenarios occur or not, will be

Will district lines change if Washington Park and Covington Street are combined?

No. It will be the same students attending the new school. Bus routes might change however.

What is the teacher:student ratio in middle school?

The average for our district is 1:26.

Will there be a change in time of start and close of school since students will be traveling farther?

If a decision to consolidate and redistrict is made, the bus routes will be looked at to determine if current start and end times of school would need to be adjusted.

How many EC teachers would be at a combined school?

It depends on how many qualify for the EC program that go to that school.

How will it be any more cost efficient (busing costs, remodeling costs) to build new schools?

Renovations to convert a middle school to an elementary school will be minimal. In so far as the cost for transportation, we are going to have more corner stops as opposed to house by house stops. We would be running bus routes more efficiently. We actually don't expect an increase and even anticipate a decrease in transportation costs. Even if we don't consolidate, we will make this efficient route change next school year. Also, the new schools that would be build would be 'green' schools. They would be net-zero to operate meaning they would be built in such a way that they produce (solar panels, geo-thermal energy) as much or more energy than they use. The money saved in utilities alone if some of our schools closed and consolidated would be approximately \$500,000-\$600,000 a year.

Some kids don't well with changes, why move to another school next year and then make the change to a new school?

Students would only be moving one time. No students would be moved until the new schools are built.

How are Pre-K classes funded?

Pre-K is funded with federal dollars.

Would the AIG magnet at Spring Hill be eliminated?

It would not be. What we are doing now, and would continue, is putting staff, procedures, and resources in place so that the AIG programs at the other middle schools 'mirror' the Spring Hill magnet model.

What factors would you base the reassignment of Sycamore Lane's students should Sycamore become an elementary school?

The reassignment would be based off of where you live. DPI will come and reassess our district lines and bus routes. The goal would be to minimize driving distance for everyone.

Can parents enroll their children at another school if they don't want their child at a particular school?

The process now, and the one that would remain, is if a parent would like their child at another, we would first check the capacity to see if space is available. If it is, we make every attempt to honor that request. Keep in mind though that if a student goes to a school other than the one in their district, it's the parent's responsibility to provide transportation.

How was it decided to close Washington Park when there are other schools in the county that are just as old?

The location and age of the schools were a determining factor when creating the scenarios. IEJ/North are older schools and in close proximity to each other as well as Covington Street/Washington Park. Additionally,

transportation time for a consolidated school was a factor. The Board also is considering Washington Park for consolidation because of the number of mobile units at the school and the safety issue that it presents.

If you can build extra classrooms onto Sycamore (if 5th graders were moved to middle school) why not just add classrooms onto Washington Park?

It would be far more cost efficient to build new, energy efficient school as opposed to building classrooms on a 60 year old school.

If Sycamore Lane was changed to an elementary school, how will it be decided which students will go to Carver and which will go to Spring Hill?

The lines for the Sycamore Lane district would be redrawn to make the determination which students would attend the two middle schools. The Spring Hill and Carver lines would remain the same.

How will the possibility of only having two middle schools impact middle school sports? Have the transportation costs for parents to attend events at school been considered?

Having only two middle schools would possibly allow for some additional sports to be added. The possibility for shuttle services for parents to events at school have been considered a possibility.

In one scenario, there is consideration given to adding classrooms onto Sycamore. Why would you need to do this if the building is under capacity?

Classrooms would be built to eliminate mobile units. Sycamore Lane is slightly smaller than Carver and Spring Hill.

Why is the possibility of not have a middle school in the city limits of Laurinburg being considered? Wouldn't bus transportation be longer?
Scotland County is one of the smallest counties in the state. We would make transportation and scheduling work to accommodate students coming from all areas of the county. In some cases, the bus ride will be shorter.

What is the projected student population in the next 10-20 years?
This is difficult to determine. We all are aware that businesses and families leaving. The projections are for us to have 72 less students next year.

Are there safety concerns if you combine Sycamore's students into Carver and Spring Hill's population?
Eventually, most of our students will end up together at the high school and there has been no real problems when those students are combined together. However, administration will continue to meet with law enforcement to be made aware of issues in the community to ensure that they don't spill over into our schools.

Are there members of the school board that have been teachers?
Pat Gates is a life-long educator. Charles Brown is a former Wagram Elementary teacher. Summer Stanley is currently a professor at UNC-P, but spent 8 years as a social worker at Laurel Hill Elementary.

Why mobile units at Sycamore if building if operating under capacity?
It is at the principal's discretion as to how the classrooms in the buildings are used. Not all are necessarily classrooms—could be used for guidance, nurse, art, band, etc.

Why can't citizens vote for decision?
Parents would vote for what's best and most convenient for their child. The Board is looking at the 'big picture' and are making decisions as to what's best for the whole Scotland County Schools district.

Why aren't there more textbooks in classrooms?

School has changed. Students are using textbooks in classrooms like they did 10 years ago. Technology allows for the most recent information to be accessed and textbooks are now in a digital format. That's why it's important to have 1:1 technology access in the schools.

Why not keep the small community school concept?

Annually, we receive less money from the local, state, and federal governments. Not financially feasible to have a school in every community or neighborhood.

If the change goes into effect, will the name be Laurel Hill/Pate-Gardner?

Since the decision hasn't been made, the discussion hasn't been had.

How many students that are supposed to go to Pate-Gardner go to another school in our district (request a transfer)?

Approximately 40 students that live in the Pate-Gardner district, requested and were approved a transfer this year.

Will start—end time of school change?

Possibly. If any of these scenarios take place and once a decision has been made and the district lines are drawn, depending on the length of the bus routes, start/end times could change.

Are you worried about teachers leaving Scotland County because their school closed?

We worry about teachers leaving every day. Particularly to other states because other states pay their teachers more than the state of North Carolina does. But we are also concerned that some may leave. Change is hard.

Where will the new schools be located?

IEJ is the only site that we've talked about. That is only because that is where the SCS system currently owns any land.

Would the students that have been allowed to attend schools that are not in their district be allowed to be 'grandfathered in' and stay at the school that they presently attend?

Yes. They would be allowed to stay at their present school.

When does the Board anticipate making a decision?

After all of the public input meetings have been completed (March 30 is the last one), the Board will convene and possibly make a decision at that point. By the end of April, the Board hopes to make a decision.

If new buildings are being built, will they be built large enough for Pre-K through 5th grade?

Any new elementary buildings that would possibly be built would be built to have Pre-K through 5th grade. Should Sycamore Lane be converted to an elementary school, additions would be made to accommodate a pre-k as well.

Will seniority come into play when deciding which school teachers and staff would be assigned to?

Seniority would not be a deciding factor. Factors that would be considered are the staffing and certification needs at a school as well as teachers and staff would be given the opportunity to select their top choices of assignment. Every effort would be made to accommodate those requests.

Has there been consideration given to re-district schools based on racial and socioeconomic factors in order to create more equity in our schools?

Yes, it has been looked at. However, it must be considered that if you make schools more racially and socially and economically balanced, it often times can create additional issues (for example longer bus routes). The Board is looking at all scenarios keeping everything in mind.

