



Manchester Public Schools

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TO: Manchester Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Richard W. Kisiel
Interim Superintendent of Schools

DATE: December 12, 2011

RE: Position Statement on Comprehensive Curriculum and School
Facilities Planning

The purpose of this position statement is to convey to the community the importance of long term comprehensive education and school facilities planning with broad based public participation. Residents who pay for the long term decisions made about school programs and school facilities need to be educated about the curriculum requirements of education and about school facility planning, design, construction, and renovation.

Manchester Board of Education faces difficult challenges to ensure that every child has access to a quality and comprehensive education. These challenges include meeting national and state standards for student achievement, reducing the student achievement gap, school choice competition, pressure for progressive curriculum and academic improvement and reform, and constraints on school budgets. In addition, school facilities that meet current and future curriculum and instructional requirements are a significant part of the Board's responsibility to provide children with an appropriate education. While confronted by these challenges, the Board of Education has a responsibility to ensure that students who graduate from our schools twenty to thirty years from now have the skills and knowledge to succeed as citizens, workers, and leaders in a competitive global economy.

To help our students face rigorous higher education coursework, career challenges, and a global competitive workforce, our schools must align the curriculum and instruction with real work environments by fusing core subject areas (language arts, mathematics, science, world languages, history, civics, and the arts) with emerging areas that are not typically emphasized in schools such as global awareness, economics, environmental literacy, and health and wellness.

As much as students need to learn this academic content, they must also know how to keep on learning, and make effective and innovative use of what they know through their lives. These important skills include critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and collaboration.

In order to meet these educational challenges related to curriculum and instruction, I would recommend that the Board of Education engage the community in a comprehensive review of the education provided in its schools. The purpose of the study would be to determine the programs and curriculum that graduates from the Manchester Public Schools will need to become successful and contributing citizens and continuous learners in the years ahead. This work should be followed by identifying the teaching and learning conditions needed to implement the curriculum such as class size, instructional space requirements, and instructional/communication technology (ICT).

Once agreement is reached on school program and curriculum requirements and conditions needed to implement the curriculum are identified, I would recommend that the Board engage broad community involvement in a long-range school facilities planning project beyond the scope and sequence of the current Capital Improvement Plan. School facilities planning must not only meet the education and curriculum requirements of its schools, but a comprehensive plan must ensure the most efficient and cost effective use of the taxpayers' dollars. A need exists in the community to increase public awareness of school facilities not only to meet education requirements, but to correct building code violations for public safety and accessibility, and improve energy efficiency. School facilities planning must also include a study of enrollment projections, school design capacities, capital improvement prioritization, possible school closures, student demographics and specialized learning requirements, and building utilization ratios.

I am recommending broad-community involvement in curriculum and school facility planning because it can increase long-term community support for its schools, which yields positive benefits for the community and for students. This type of planning also recognizes that there is an increasing population that does not have a direct relationship with the public schools and that these citizens have needs for education and other services that can be provided within public school buildings.

Finally, if members of the community are involved in the process, curriculum will better meet the needs of students and adults in the community, and school facilities are likely to be better designed, better built, better maintained, widely used, and supported by more members of the community.