

Will you reconsider moving Bethlehem's 5th grade to Woodbury Middle School to join Woodbury 5th graders?

This plan is a compromise that would be a win/win situation for everyone involved for the following reasons:

1. Dr. Cronin, you continually say that one of the main reasons for reconfiguration is to give all 5th graders in the region an *equal education*. I wholeheartedly agree. Moving Bethlehem's 5th graders to Woodbury Middle solves the current inequity problem.
2. Moving Bethlehem's 5th graders to WMS will eliminate that extra transition between 2nd and 3rd grade that reconfiguration would create.
3. This plan would keep our youngest children closest to home in community schools. Students will be in their respective elementary schools for five years as opposed to K-2, then transition to 3-5, then transition again to 6-8 and so on.
4. This plan would solve the huge busing complications that undoubtedly will occur with reconfiguration; for instance, children won't be getting home or to bus stops at 4:30 or 4:45 when it is dark in the winter, and we won't have to worry about buses traveling very long distances to the far reaches of Woodbury from BES on early dismissal days because of inclement weather.
5. Taxpayers, listen up, moving Bethlehem's 5th graders to WMS will be THE LEAST EXPENSIVE OPTION. I would like you to know that, in the March 2004 BOE document entitled "Why Should we move the Region 14 5th Grade Classes to Woodbury Middle School?????" it states "The 1997 referendum to renovate

Woodbury Middle School was done so with the explicit understanding that a 5th grade move would occur as part of the overall facilities plan. Overall square footage at Woodbury Middle School is over 103,000 square feet with a student population of 525, versus Mitchell Elementary, which is at 63,000 square feet with a student population of 640.” At the last board meeting, we were told that Woodbury Middle School needs to stay as a middle school, so let’s follow through on this plan.

6. Dr. Cronin said again at the first grade parents’ meeting last week that reconfiguration DOES NOT solve the space problem in our district. Well, moving Bethlehem’s 5th graders to the middle school WILL solve the space problem.
7. Integrating all Region 14 5th graders into Woodbury Middle School is a model that not only works, but also works well. Go check it out in Region 15. I had the pleasure of interning at Rochambeau Middle School in Southbury for an entire year while I was getting my first master’s degree back in the early ‘90s and I experienced firsthand how well it worked. Many other school systems use a K-4 configuration in CT including Newtown, Monroe, Redding, Madison, Easton, Weston, and Avon.
8. The *reconfiguration plan* DOES NOT change the number of students at Mitchell next year. Moving Bethlehem’s 5th graders to the middle school would allow for the possibility of redistricting if needed in the future to alleviate a high student population at MES. There will be “room to grow” in the elementary schools that the reconfiguration plan does not allow. Additional space at BES would give some flexibility in the future to start a pre-school program, or to possibly

accommodate more full-day kindergarten classes. Or maybe the extra space could be used to set up special education or other special programs that currently are struggling to find space.

9. It just makes more sense to move 64 5th graders from BES to WMS, instead of moving 457 children from kindergarten through 5th grade to two different schools. Even with reconfiguration, all students would have to move to WMS in 6th grade anyway.
10. You'll have more "yes" votes come referendum time this year. I can only speak for the DiLorenzo household. We happen to live in Bethlehem and you received two "yes" votes from us for the June 2006 vote. You can bet if reconfiguration goes through, you can mark our "yes" votes from 2006 as "no" votes in 2007.

SO, will you move Bethlehem's 5th grade to Woodbury Middle School?

Possible Rebuttal comments:

- ◇ You can't make a plan to move 64 children work, but you can make a plan to move 457 children work? This plan is "educationally sound," "fiscally responsible," and easier to carry out than anything that would be done under the k-2, 3-5 plan.
- ◇ If you need more classroom space at WMS, then pull the money from BES classrooms in this next budget referendum and allocate that money for WMS and of course, make the renovations that need to be done at Mitchell.
- ◇ I've talked to several parents, (especially in Bethlehem), who say they would absolutely be in favor of K-4 and 5-8. Remember that when Bethlehem parents didn't

want Bethlehem 5th graders going to WMS, the option at the time was NOT reconfiguration. Dr. Cronin has even told Erica Barber in a meeting that he didn't see anything wrong with a K-4, 5-8 configuration.

- ◇ FROM DEC. 23 VOICES ARTICLE: A guiding principle in the superintendent's thought process was research gathered from both towns showing that parents wanted the fifth grade to remain at the elementary schools. The original intent, said Dr. Cronin, was to move the Bethlehem fifth grade to Woodbury Middle School, but Bethlehem parents had concerns with that option. "We had to make a decision on how to get the kids in a similar program," Dr. Cronin said. When you heard the great concern from Bethlehem parents, reconfiguration was NOT the alternative. I'm a Bethlehem parent and I wholeheartedly support moving the Bethlehem 5th graders to WMS and I've talked to many other Bethlehem parents who totally agree.
- ◇ Kaestle Boos facilities assessment and space needs study of Sept. 29, 2005 the square footage of BES is 49,010 sq. ft.; WMS is 105,000 sq. ft. and MES is 70,000 sq. ft.
- ◇ Option B was to move Bethlehem 5th graders to WMS