

## **POINTS FORGOTTEN OR ADDRESSED TOO NARROWLY IN THE DELIBERATION OVER THE FUTURE OF AMHERST'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

**BUILDINGS AND OPTIONS.** There are *several* options for replacing or improving *both* the Wildwood *and* Fort River buildings, thus enabling both schools to continue.

**COSTS.** We don't have any real picture of the costs of different building options yet – which means we don't have sufficient information to make a sound decision about building options. Also, research shows larger schools are not as economical as often assumed.

**SCHOOL SIZE AND GRADE SIZE.** Grade reconfiguration means large grade sizes; and large grade sizes make schools feel big and more alienating for students, teachers, and parents.

**GRADE SPAN.** Consolidating all students from one grade into one school allows developmental specialization. However, the benefits are outweighed by the costs. Transitions are harmful for students, while longer grade spans are beneficial, especially for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

**NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS.** Grade reconfiguration means an end to Amherst's neighborhood schools, and this is bad for students, families, neighborhoods, the environment and health, and Amherst.

**DISTRICTS AND REDISTRICTING.** Districts and redistricting come with real challenges. However, these can be dealt with. Amherst is in an unusual, wonderful position to be able to have small, diverse, universally excellent neighborhood schools.

**SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS.** Not all specialized programs have to be concentrated to be good; and not all schools have to have the same specialized programs to be equitable.

**EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INTEGRATION.** Equity should not be reduced to having identical resources at everyone's school. Equitable outcomes, and deep sociocultural awareness and respect, are more important – and research shows they are better in diverse small schools.

**TEACHER COLLABORATION & EXPERIENCE.** Dissemination of best practices and district initiatives will be better if all teachers in a grade are at one school. However, deep partner-collaboration, teachers' sense of agency and ownership, and inter-grade articulation will all be better in small K-6 schools.

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE.** In a new double-sized school with grade configuration, students will have a new state-of-the-art building, equipment, resources and programming. But they will lose things they have now: a deep sense of ownership, agency and belonging; and a close and long-term identity with their school, in which they can grow deep roots and slowly mature with self-confidence.

A longer version of this document, with further details and citations, will soon be available at:  
<https://saveamherstssmallschools.wordpress.com/>

Please write the Amherst School Committee at [schoolcommittee@arps.org](mailto:schoolcommittee@arps.org) and tell them,  
"Please protect our three small, neighborhood, K-6 schools."

The School Committee votes on January 19!