



## Educational Visioning

Belmont Public Schools  
Belmont, MA



May 2017  
Frank Locker Educational Planning



## Ch 1 Contents + Acknowledgements



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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### Community Visioning Team

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## Executive Summary

### INTRODUCTION

This Educational Vision reflects the work of a Visioning Team; approximately 60 teachers, administrators, students, parents, school committee members, municipal representatives, and business representatives. Created in two days of intense facilitated workshops with the Community Team, and preceded by a workshop day of the Educator Team, it is intended to guide the long-term development of both education and facilities for the future secondary schools of Belmont Public Schools (BPS), but it also includes concepts relevant to all grade levels.

### EDUCATIONAL VISION

#### Guiding Principles

The *Guiding Principles* presented here were created to express the values, beliefs, and concepts developed by the educator and community Visioning Teams which examined educational trends, best practices, and issues affecting the delivery of 21<sup>st</sup> century education. These *Guiding Principles* present the essence of that inquiry. They are not policy but they address the overarching themes identified by participants. They may serve as a foundation for the future schools. As such, they are intended to form the basis of future educational delivery and facilities planning. Staff professional development is crucial to the successful implementation of the educational concepts outlined here.

#### OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES

- This future-oriented Educational Vision incorporates a number of innovative best and next educational practices already in operation in classrooms in BPS' secondary schools. Extend those practices
- Create a common understanding of this Educational Vision among administrators, faculty, parents, and students to continue shifting the educational model from one that is fairly traditional to one that is more transformed
- Prepare students for success in the 21st century, an emerging world of global competition, uncertain employment





## Ch 2 Executive Summary

prospects, infinite access to information, and rapid change in technology

- Teach 21st century skills at the same time as traditional content
- Build relationships with students, families, and communities through school structure and programs
- Aspire beyond the Common Core and beyond the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) guidelines to do what is best for student learning, and to instill a life-long sense of wonder and purpose. Create independent, life-long learners
- Establish a program of staff Professional Development to support the educational deliveries outlined here

The full Guiding Principles are expressed in full in Ch 3, Educational Vision.

### Learning Modalities

The Community Visioning Team members identified these as the most effective ways for students to learn:

- Project-Based Learning
- Social/Emotional Learning
- Thematic Learning
- Small Group Work/Student Collaboration

All Learning Modalities preferences are expressed in full in Appendix Ch 5.2.

### Key Words for Education

Educator and Community Workshop participants each identified one-word or two-word phrases that best represented their individual thoughts about the future Educational Deliveries. Their most commonly cited words are:

- Collaborative
- Authentic inquiry, inquiry-based, inquiry provocative
- Project based learning
- Integrated/interdisciplinary
- Evolving adaptable
- Engagement

See Appendix Ch 3 for articulation of their words by grade groupings.

### School Structure

#### OVERALL ORGANIZATION

The Community Visioning Team identified developmental ages of students and projected the most appropriate grade groupings to best serve them, academically and socially/emotionally.

These responses indicate:

- There is strong preference for having a break somewhere in the elementary years, as separate buildings or zones within buildings
- There is no preferred strategy for the year of start of middle school
- 70% of the Table Teams separated the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade from the 10<sup>th</sup> grade

See Educational Vision Ch 3 and Appendices Ch 5.2 and 5.3 for details.

#### INTERNAL ORGANIZATION

Desired internal structures for future schools are:

##### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Teachers “teaming,” sharing students but separately teaching curriculum specialties
- Grade level classroom groupings
- Synchronous teacher teaming, sharing students in real time
- Ideally teachers would be paired, working in adjacent, linked classrooms, sometimes swapping specialties and at other times teaching simultaneously

##### MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Synchronous teacher teaming, sharing students in real time
- Grade Level Small Learning Communities (SLCs), all teachers teaming (Coordinating curriculum but not same-time-same-place teaching)
- Vertical/Multi-grade **SLCs**



## Ch 2 Executive Summary

### HIGH SCHOOL

- Interdisciplinary Small Learning Communities (SLCs)
- Freshman House

These most favored organizational structures call for the nature of school and role of teachers to be significantly changed. All preferred organizations would have teachers team teaching in various ways.

These are outlined in detail in Ch 3, Educational Vision.

## FACILITY CONCEPTS

### Key Words for Facilities

Visioning Team participants were asked to identify one word that best represented their individual thoughts about future facilities. Their most commonly cited key words by educators are, in order of frequency, are:

#### Elementary School

- Flexible, flexible (space, chairs, teachers, etc)

#### Middle School

- Flexible, elastic/flexible, flexible spaces

#### High School

- Flexible, flexibility, flexible spaces, large flexible learning spaces, flexible grouping
- Bright open spaces
- Inspiring

Community Workshop key words are:

- Flexible
- Fluid/open
- Inspiring
- Social

For the full listing, see Appendix Ch 5.1 and 5.3.

### Places for Learning

The Visioning Team reviewed 13 exemplar schools from the USA, the United Kingdom, and Australia. Working in Table Teams, they

ranked the exemplars for appropriateness for Belmont's future schools.

Essential characteristics of desired core learning spaces are:

- Learning spaces arranged as Small Learning Communities
- Classrooms are components of "suites of spaces," supported by other spaces immediately adjacent
- Circulation to be used for learning
- Classrooms are to be flexible, interconnected, and supported by auxiliary spaces including Collaboration/Breakout/Commons Spaces
- Interdisciplinary possibilities
- Open, shared presentation areas
- Variety of furnishings, offering students and teachers more choices in supporting learning
- Possibility of student groups working in multiple places under the guidance of the teacher
- Teacher collaboration supported by the facilities, through double sized Classrooms, connections between Classrooms and strategic placement of related functions
- Teacher Planning Centers to support teacher collaboration and sense of community
- Innovative relationships to cafeterias: as the Breakout/Collaborative space centering Classrooms, or immediately adjacent, able to be used for Breakout, activities, movement, etc

For a full description of the most appropriate and least appropriate exemplars, with illustrations, see Ch 4 Facility Concepts.

## Connections + Separations

Community Visioning Team participants identified preferred shared or separate functions for a co-located high school/middle school.

### SEPARATE MIDDLE SCHOOL + HIGH SCHOOL FUNCTIONS

- Core Classrooms
- Special Education spaces
- Media Center/Learning Commons
- Food Court/cafeteria



## Ch 2 Executive Summary

### SAME TIME USE

- English as a second language
- Teacher Planning Centers
- Food Service Kitchen
- Custodial

### SEPARATE TIME USE

- IT Labs (if any)
- Family/Consumer Science (if any)

- Special Education inclusion and substantially separate spaces

### COMMUNITY USE ZONE

- Cafeteria/Commons/Food Courts:
- Gymnasiums
- Auditorium

Additional planning concepts are outlined in Ch 4, Facility Concept.

The full record is in Appendix Ch 5.3.

The overall diagram is shown here:

## Overall School Organization Diagram

Community Workshop participants developed a concept diagram for a co-located high school/middle school. The concept featured the following essential characteristics:

### OVERALL

- Create separate entries for the high school and the middle school
- Ease access and express the importance of community use of the building through a separate entry to a public zone
- Create program space connections and maintain separations as guided by the Visioning Team
- Separate the middle school from the high school as distinct zones

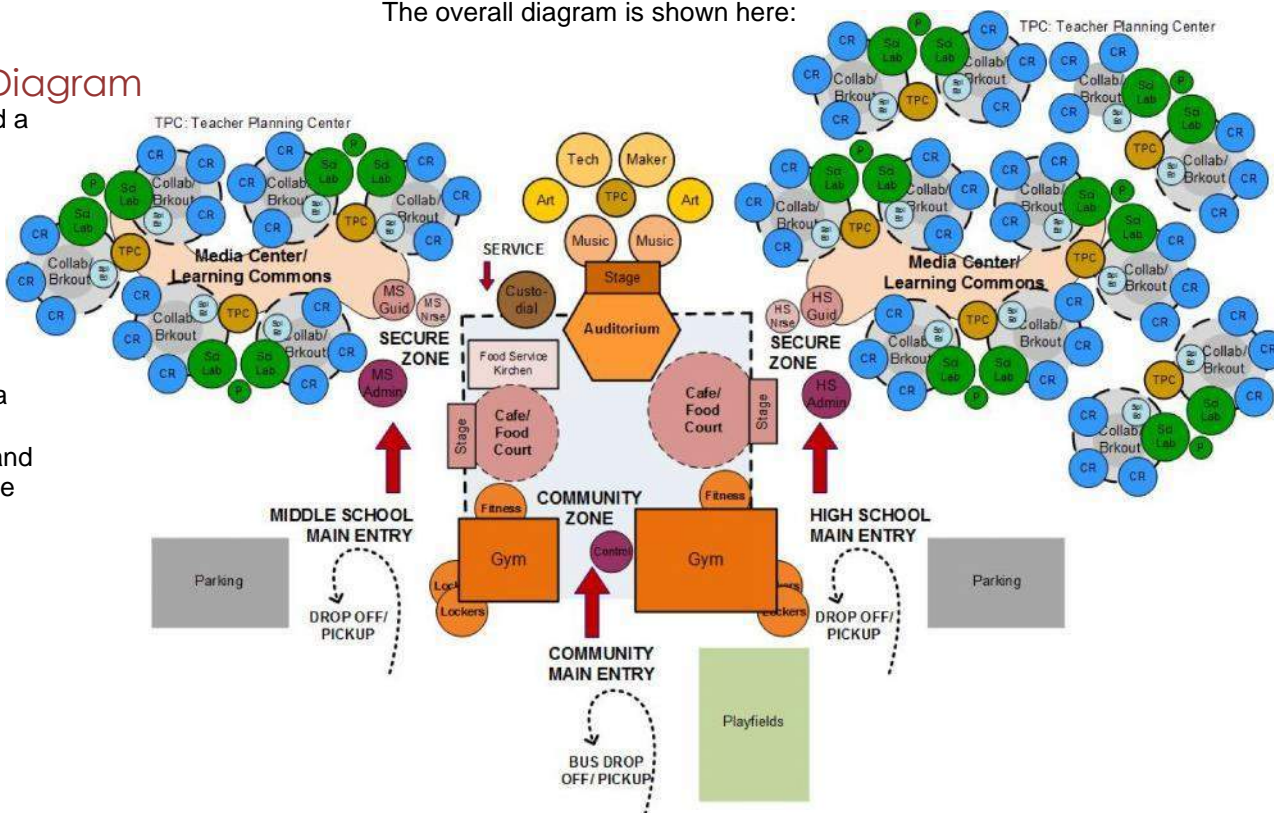
### SECURE ZONES

#### Accessible from Both Schools

- Music
- Art
- Maker Space

#### Separate in each School

- Small Learning Communities
- School Administration Office
- School Guidance Office
- School Nurse Suite



**BELMONT CO-LOCATED HS/MS CONCEPT**

Relationship concept  
Not all spaces shown