



Dear EASD Stakeholder,

In order provide accurate information to the community and dispel rumors, the Elizabethtown Area School District is sharing the following information.

On Tuesday, January 28th during our regularly scheduled school board meeting, the school directors continued their conversation on the District's four-phase building program that originated in 2007. With the renovations to the lower level of the middle school on target to go out to bid in February, the conversation shifted to Phase 3, which is deciding how to proceed with Rheems and Mill Road Elementary Schools.

**Rheems:** Preliminarily, the District is on schedule to consider approximately \$14 million in renovations to Rheems Elementary School. If approved, the renovations would begin during the summer of 2021.

**Mill Road:** The future of Mill Road Elementary School has been discussed in the past and in particular when reviewing the reconfiguration of grade levels K-8, and the accelerated renovation of the lower level of EAMS. With these changes additional discussion and analysis is slated to evaluate the need for classes to be held at Mill Road. ***A final decision has NOT been made at this time.***

While reviewing the above in conjunction with Phase #3 renovation plans, a suggestion was offered to potentially consolidate our primary schools. This concept was presented to the Administration just 5 days prior to the Board meeting. The administration looked at the possibilities with a broad perspective in conjunction with the construction planning and decided to seek consensus from the Board to further explore this option.

The school board granted this request to investigate the option with the understanding that there is a current draft renovation and construction schedule for Rheems.

Key highlights from the January 28th discussions were as follows:

- Phase 3 is being done through the lens of our vision and direction for helping our students become Life Ready Learners K-12.
- With sixth grade moving to the middle school and third grade to the Bear Creek School, the District would have numerous open classrooms in our reconfigured primary elementary schools (K-2). As such, the administration discussed the exploration of the possible consolidation of our future K-2 structure into two primary buildings and not our existing four-building structure.
- This option appears to have the potential in: providing more flexibility in delivery our quality educational programs and services; managing our operations and expenses; applying our guiding principles for renovations and construction; adhering to our 5 year financial plan continuing to be operationally efficient and effective; resulting in fiscal responsibility.
- Through this option we may be able to repurpose \$14 million in renovations that are currently allocated for Rheems to upcoming and needed renovations to the secondary complex. This could ultimately reduce the overall debt service for the District, allowing us to focus and invest our dollars into our programs and services helping our students become LIFE READY.

The administration will use the month of February to explore the potential of operating 2 primary schools. Findings with this proposed option will be presented in March during our regularly scheduled public school board meeting(s).

You may be wondering why we could consider consolidating to two primary elementary schools? What would the benefits be? Through this option the potential opportunities could be as follows:

- Ability to offer full day kindergarten based upon student need at each primary building.
- Opportunity to provide a full complement of student support services and related arts at each primary building.
- Equalization of class sizes across the District while adhering to our current class size targets of 23 at the primary level, 25 at the intermediate level and 28 at the secondary level.
- Adherence to our guiding principles for high functioning learning environments to include flexible grouping, collaborative spaces, horizontal and vertical teaming of students, faculty and staff.
- Ability to have better staffing efficiencies at each of our school buildings.

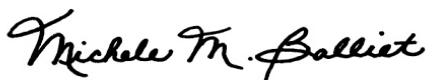
The Board and Administration realize the concept is difficult and challenging. Conversations will occur at many levels: with school directors, district and school administration, faculty, support staff, as well as parents, alumni, and students. We are cognizant of the complexity of this possible transition not only with respect to our Educational programming, building construction, but also it's impact upon our community, our parents and our students. Additionally, we will balance this with our fiduciary responsibility of our tax money and educational funding resources.

We take great pride in our facilities and the services that are offered in each. We understand that our schools have an indelible history with so many of our alumni and communities. However, we've long held the belief that it's the people that make education impactful and special. The current option being explored focuses on the people and the programs, not the buildings themselves.

Exploring this option is the responsible thing to do. Make no mistake, a final decision has not been made! We are simply exploring an option that may benefit the school district, our community and ultimately our taxpayers.

Feel free to contact Mr. Troy Portser to share any questions you may have. Mr. Portser can be reached by email at [troy\\_portser@etownschools.org](mailto:troy_portser@etownschools.org) or by phone at (717) 367-1521, ext. 10024. We are collecting this feedback to help inform our process.

Sincerely,



Michele M. Balliet, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools