

# **Capitol Hill Middle School Model**

A Proposal To: DCPS and DC Council

March 2010

**CAPITOL HILL PUBLIC  
SCHOOL PARENT  
ORGANIZATION (CHPSPO)**



# CONTENTS

- CONTENTS..... 2
  
- 1. SUMMARY..... 3
  
- 2. INTRODUCTION..... 3
  
- 3. NEEDS/PROBLEMS ..... 3
  
- 4. GOALS/OBJECTIVES..... 4
  
- 5. PROPOSED MIDDLE SCHOOL MODEL ..... 5
  
- 6. CROSS-CUTTING EFFORTS TO BENEFIT ALL MIDDLE SCHOOLS: ..... 8
  
- 7. OUTSTANDING CONSIDERATIONS ..... 9
  
- 8. NEXT STEPS ..... 9
  
- APPENDIX..... 9

## 1. Summary

The Capitol Hill Public School Parents Organization (CHPSPO) seeks to promote cooperation among the parent organizations of the public schools on Capitol Hill in order to improve the education received by all children attending our schools.

In collaboration with DC City Council and DCPS, CHPSPO proposes a comprehensive Capitol Hill Middle School Plan designed to provide DCPS families with viable middle school options and a clear path to Eastern Senior High School. We are confident we can have strong elementary and middle schools on Capitol Hill that can feed into a newly renovated, equally strong, Eastern Senior High School, which lives up to its marquee of being the “Pride of Capitol Hill.”

## 2. Introduction

CHPSPO was founded in January 2005. Accomplishments to date include:

- School Libraries Project – Initiative done in conjunction with the Capitol Hill Community Foundation and the Washington Architectural Foundation to renovate 8 elementary and middle school libraries on Capitol Hill.
- Advocated for 3-year old programs
- Promote parental involvement; Capitol Hill Cluster School is recognized by the national PTA as a Parent Involvement School of Excellence
- Started Capitol Hill Schoolyard Greening Initiative

### **Middle School Initiative**

- Began Middle School Initiative in January 2009; recognition that many families on Capitol Hill are confident of their elementary school options, but less certain about middle school
- Elected parent representatives from the elementary and middle schools on Capitol Hill, worked with their individual parent organizations to identify middle school options, and brought those options to CHPSPO
- **Goal is to** create middle school options that make it desirable and feasible for students on Capitol Hill to attend high quality public middle schools on the Hill.

## 3. Needs/Problems

Parents of children who attend Capitol Hill schools are generally satisfied with the elementary school options. Many express confidence in their elementary school and in the quality of the teachers and administrators. Parents are less certain about the options around middle schools. A CHPSPO survey in Spring 2009 captured general attitudes of 125+ parents from various

Capitol Hill Schools (see attached). From the survey and many conversations with parents involved in this effort, we have learned:

- Parents' priorities (strong academics, safe environment and teachers w/ reputation for excellence) do not align with what they feel are least important, qualities offered by their in boundary middle schools (walking distance, their child will know other children)
- Most parents plan to send their children to out of boundary DCPS middle school (24%) or don't know (23%).
- Parents are willing to take a chance on elementary public schools (given the program offered is valuable and promises a unique opportunity). They are not willing to take the same chance in middle school.
- This need is coming to a head given the growing population of school age children in Capitol Hill DCPSs and the offering/opening of three year old programs in most elementary schools
- DCPS has not proposed any solutions to address the middle school concerns
- In many cases, there is confusion around feeder patterns and boundaries (right to schools) that result from attending out of boundary elementary schools
- There is real risk that if middle school concerns are not addressed and parents do not feel comfort around options, they will take their children out of DCPS

#### 4. Goals/Objectives

The following are characteristics of a comprehensive Capitol Hill Middle School Plan this group seeks to maintain and provide:

- A continuation of special subject matter focus and teaching methods that are successfully implemented in elementary schools, e.g., museum magnet, Montessori, Spanish immersion, arts integration, world cultures, responsive classroom
- Expanded school choices for parents and students within the traditional public school system; we want families to feel they have a choice among multiple good public elementary and middle schools
- Stable leadership is extremely important to ensuring success in the middle schools. The current Capitol Hill elementary and middle schools principals are strong leaders who are taking our schools in the right direction and are supported by this team.

## 5. Proposed Middle School Model

The CHPSPSO team proposes a 3 tiered middle school model that includes one **large, one mid-sized** and a **few small middle school** options.

### 5.1. Eliot-Hine (grows to be a “large” DCPS middle school)

Eliot and Hine communities have made great strides in the merger of these two schools over the past two years. Strong programs currently exist at Eliot-Hine. Some additions are warranted based on new elementary school programs feeding into Eliot-Hine, anticipated programs to be offered at Eastern Senior High School, and the ability to learn from best practices from other middle schools. It is anticipated Eliot-Hine can grow in size to fill its capacity of an 850 student body school

- Continue the enhanced science, technology, engineering and mathematics emphasis already at Eliot-Hine
- Continue the efforts to add a strong mathematics sequence that includes Algebra 1 that would allow students to be ready for Geometry by 9th grade. Add a summer math program to prepare students for the math sequence
- Explore possible opportunity, in collaboration with the DCPS Bilingual Education Office, to continue appropriate high-level Spanish content/immersion classes for students transitioning from Tyler’s Spanish Immersion program. Also, add Spanish instruction for all students. Extend the Spanish to additional language offerings.
- Begin a middle school International Baccalaureate (IB) program for all students at Eliot-Hine that would be modeled on the Deal Middle School IB program, and that would vertically align with anticipated IB program at Eastern Senior High School. An IB program for all is a unifying and effective way to implement science, math and foreign language coursework, as well as the English language, arts and humanities, as it offers a standard model to follow, and ongoing professional development for administrators and teachers
- Vertically integrate city-wide Special Education programs from Tyler and other schools currently feeding to Eliot-Hine
- Continue to support and improve differentiated instruction across the subjects that seeks to meet the needs of the lowest performing and highest performing students
- Continue to support the strong physical education and sports programs already at Eliot-Hine which take advantage of the school’s facilities

- Invest in continued improvements to the Eliot-Hine library, making it comparable to Stuart Hobson in terms of number of books in its collection, with a design and environment that makes it an inviting gathering place for students
- Phase-out co-located programs at Eliot-Hine to accommodate expected increased student population, and allow school to grow to its 850 student capacity

5.2. **Stuart Hobson Middle School (continues as a medium-sized middle school that is part of the Capitol Hill Cluster School's pre-K through 8 program)**

Stuart Hobson is considered one of the strongest middle schools in DCPS, and graduates from Stuart Hobson go to the top high schools in the city. Stuart Hobson currently is a 5th - 8th grade middle school filled to capacity with a student body of 400. Stuart Hobson can be strengthened, and the following is recommended:

- Formalize the school's Museum Magnet program (a formal partnership with the Smithsonian ended about ten years ago), strengthen professional development for teachers in museum-based studies
- Continue to incorporate Arts Integration in the curriculum
- Renovate building (currently scheduled for 2011). In addition to the classroom renovations, renovate the gymnasium (currently two small adjacent gyms into one multi-purpose gymnasium), and build a 2nd story on top of renovated gymnasium that would allow expanded programming, e.g., "Filmore" art and music opportunities
- Continue to support small class sizes
- Move 5th grade classes to Watkins to parallel elementary/middle school grades at schools across the city, and to provide space at Stuart Hobson for additional programming

### 5.3. Create Additional Pre-K through 8th Schools (creates small-sized middle schools)

Considerable interest exists in building upon some existing strong elementary schools by extending their programs through 8th grade

#### 5.3.1. **Brent**

- Expand through grades 6,7 and 8 to create a vertically integrated PK-8 curriculum.
- Expand Brent's successful museum magnet program with the Smithsonian through the 8th grade
- Begin a middle school International Baccalaureate (IB) program for all students at Brent that would be modeled on the Deal Middle School IB program, and that would vertically align with anticipated IB program at Eastern Senior High School. An IB program for all is a unifying and effective way to implement science, math and foreign language coursework, as well as the English language, arts and humanities, as it offers a standard model to follow, and ongoing professional development for administrators and teachers
- Initial expansion of grades may be handled through partnership with the Smithsonian, but it is anticipated that additional space will be needed for full expansion to 8th grade
- Support collaboration across the Hill to provide opportunities for middle school students at small-sized middle schools to participate in extra-curricular activities including drama, music, journalism, sports, etc.

#### 5.3.2. **Miner**

- Reggio-Emilia PS-8<sup>th</sup> grade
- Museums program

#### 5.3.3. **Montessori** at Cluster (expand to better meet the demand that far exceeds supply)

The high demand for Montessori education in DC is evidenced by the OOB lottery. For SY10-11 there are 300+ applications in for 26 openings in the Capitol Hill Cluster School Watkins-based Montessori program. There is also strong interest in seeing Montessori expanded to 8th grade (86% of Watkins Montessori parents surveyed in 2009 are interested in Montessori middle school). DCPS needs to support the expansion of this highly successful program.

- Support expansion of the Capitol Hill Cluster School Montessori program allowing more students in the lower grades
- Extend the Montessori program through 8th grade
- Based on demand for Montessori education, the Watkins-based Montessori program is anticipated to grow from the current 150 students to 500 students. Expansion will require a new location (TBD) be found for the Cluster School's Montessori program, and will require the ability to configure the space to meet Montessori teaching needs

## 6. Cross-cutting Efforts to Benefit All Middle Schools:

### 6.1. Instrumental Music Opportunities

The recent agreement to allow the DC Youth Orchestra Program at Eastern High School creates many new opportunities on Capitol Hill. It is recommended that the DCYOP be co-located at Eliot-Hine given the close proximity of the two schools. A partnership between the DC Youth Orchestra should be in place to support instrumental instruction, marching bands and orchestras across Capitol Hill

### 6.2. Schoolyard Greening

The school grounds at both Stuart Hobson and Eliot-Hine leave much to be desired. Principals, teachers and parents should continue to support improvements to the school grounds that provide outdoor education opportunities for students, and connect students with the natural environment.

### 6.3. Feeder Patterns

Some current feeder patterns do not make sense, and should be changed, e.g.,

- Brent should feed to Eastern Senior High School
- Ludlow-Taylor feeding to Eliot-Hine (Ludlow-Taylor is 2 blocks from Stuart Hobson, and in recent past has fed to Stuart-Hobson;, but now feeds to Eliot-Hine);
- Stuart Hobson now feeds to Dunbar, and should feed to Eastern Senior High School (parents make middle school decisions based on high school feeder patterns).

### 6.4. Cross Marketing

Capitol Hill schools would benefit from a unified marketing effort to help the community (and families outside of Capitol Hill interested in the unique programs) understand the options. In addition to continuing to partner with events such as the annual MOTH information night, a website to cross market schools/programs, provide

feeder information and show a cohesive school model would benefit the schools and families confused by their neighborhood options.

## 7. Outstanding Considerations

- Facilities changes at Stuart-Hobson (remodeling gym and 2nd floor over gym) and moving 5th graders to Watkins?
- Expansion of Montessori program through 8th grade, and recommendations on location? Ability to create Montessori-appropriate space?
- Ability at Eliot-Hine to include high-level Spanish language classes?
- Location for additional grades at Brent?
- Ability for DCPS to support international baccalaureate at both Eliot-Hine and Brent?
- Sharing of arts space at expanded Stuart-Hobson?
- Sharing of athletics facilities?
- Ability for DCPS to improve technology and libraries?
- All feed to Eastern or continue some specialty programs through high school?
- Ability to develop safe transportation alternatives if school is not walkable?
- Create Capitol Hill preference in out-of-boundary process or provide feeder patterns and leave out-of-boundary/feeder patterns as established?

## 8. Next Steps

- Commitment from DCPS on actions to meet above model and timeline
- Assignment of task leaders by DCPS and DC Council

## Appendix

MS Survey Results

# CAPITOL HILL PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENT ORGANIZATION

E m.godec@att.net

FB <http://www.facebook.com/#!/group.php?gid=212172730927&ref=ts>