South Middle School Steering Committee
Meeting #5 – Table Discussions
April 22, 2017

Table Discussions:

Q1: Brainstorming Activity: How can we provide opportunities for middle school students south of Brush Creek that achieve the committee’s four overarching principles: Academic Excellence, Social/Emotional Health, Equity and Diversity?

Group 1

- Create 6th grade center
- Revise middle schedules to cost share enrichment course offering across charter and district
- It is possible to have a smaller middle school (400)
- Have enrichment during the day not afterschool
- Make middle school 6-8 and remove middle school from the signatures
- Don’t re-open Lincoln Middle
- Combine sports team to provide more athletic offerings (district and charter)
- Start small and grow
- Separate middle school
- Restart - have to start diverse to get diversity

Group 2

- Pen Pals across metro
  - Opportunity to create relationships across schools
  - Prior to middle school
- Create a middle school with an innovative model
  - i.e., one that supports what middle schoolers go through as an age group
  - Specific themed model like project-based, entrepreneurial, etc. Something NOT currently already in the district
- Keeping an energy of exploration in the middle years
- If we don’t open a new school:
  - Strong leadership is important
  - Have AC Prep K-6th then have 7th and 8th become broader—more exploratory
  - Then have specialized programs float between schools by semester
  - On-site dental clinic that serves both youth and families. Wrap-around services
  - Services and training for staff
  - Kick-A** programming will draw parents from around the city
    - Also positive relationships and continuation of peer-support
  - Prior to school transition/relationship building time
Group 3

- Middle School west of Troost
- Use Southwest for two things:
  - Middle School AND
  - High School OR
  - IEP Center
- 7th Grade Center at Bryant?
  - Q: How big is this building
    - 425 seats?
    - No air / old
- NOTE: More data needed charters to understand where to start them at middle (6th? 7th? 8th?)
- Brainstorm between district and charters to see if collaboration can happen as to when they end lower El.
- Some charters end at 4th grade, others at 5th. A better plan should be in place so there are less decision points
- Whatever we do, it must be innovative to attract families

After brainstorming, the committee members ranked the following ideas (each committee member picked their top 3):

1. Revise school size standards/smaller middle schools (less than 450-800) – 13 votes
2. Remove middle school grades from signature high schools (Lincoln, Paseo) and K-8 schools (FLA, AC Prep) – 5 votes
3. Make MS 6-8th grade - 7 votes
4. Re-open Lincoln Middle School building – 1 vote
5. No testing/no signature middle schools – 2 votes
6. Don’t reopen Lincoln Middle – 2 votes
7. Could the district be the single authorizer for any new or expanding charters? – 1 vote
8. Change Middle School locations (one north and one south) – 0 votes
9. Make Central Middle kick-a** – 5 votes
10. Attempt to find a MS that is west of Troost – 6 votes
11. Can AC Prep be PK-6, and then 7-8 be more exploratory to attract more families – 0 votes
12. Use Southwest for MS and build to HS later or another complimentary use (support center, training, etc) – 4 votes
13. 7th grade center at Bryant – 1 vote
14. Create a 6th grade center – 0 votes
15. Separate MS buildings – 3 votes

The committee members then discussed idea #1, 2, 3, 9, and 10 and identified a) what do you like about the idea; b) What concerns do you have? What are the potential pitfalls?; c) Could the idea be modified to be improved? How?
#1: Revise school size standards/smaller middle schools (less than 450-800) – 13 votes

What do you like about the idea?
- Small school communities provide opportunities for students to be known/feel known
- Easier to intentionally diversify
- Geographic diversity
- Relationships and support system are better—closer community
- Behavior is better
- For social/emotional learning/personalized
- More neighborhood feel (sense of community)

What concerns do you have? What are the potential pitfalls?
- Money (financial feasibility)
- Less resources and high-quality staff (Human Resources)
- Lack of resources
- Expense (don’t have enough kids)
- Neg impact
- Min enrichment opportunities (inequitable and ↓ academic excellence)
- Does it prepare for HS

Could the idea be modified to be improved? How?
- Less resources: then you can partner with other schools
- Leveraging resources already in the community → District-wide
- Cost share w/ charters for enrichment and sports

#2: Remove middle school grades from signature high schools (Lincoln, Paseo) and K-8 schools (FLA, AC Prep) – 5 votes

What do you like about the idea?
- Pulling them out will help us to have a more full school instead of several ½ empty
- ↑ diversity
- Opportunity for exploration
- ↑ size of school and resources
- Could help with ESL and AE if properly resources
- Provides more students for new school
- 6-8th creates a safer environment that allows youth to grow at a separate pace from high school

What concerns do you have? What are the potential pitfalls?
- No feeder for FLA and AC Prep so doesn’t make sense, but yes for Lincoln, Paseo, yes.
- Needs strong, consistent leader
- Communication to parents and community
- Negative impact on the signature schools
• Parental/family impact
• Could lose students focused on those programs
• Take away options

Could the idea be modified to be improved? How?
• Remove testing requirements (to get into middle) which encourages parents to stay longer
• Need to grandfather in transitions (Could do it over years and not immediately)
• Have data and support to come with the change
• Just make 7-8
• Have to create an innovative alternative at those middle schools
• Share resources between middle schools

#3 Make MS 6-8th grade - 7 votes

What do you like about the idea?
• We’ve changed our mind

What concerns do you have? What are the potential pitfalls?
• Equity: Too many elementary schools are depending on K-6th population (Montessori needs 6th grade to solidify all previous lessons)
• 6th graders need a chance to be leaders
• Many schools (charters) end at different levels
• Should be 7-8, contingent on signature schools releasing their middle schoolers
• SEL of 6th

Could the idea be modified to be improved? How?
• Modify to 7th and 8th OR 7th, 8th and 9th → to keep 9th graders from dropping out

#9: Make Central Middle kick-a** – 5 votes

What do you like about the idea?
• Start with what you have, make it great and then replicate
• Great location
• New leadership coming

What concerns do you have? What are the potential pitfalls?
• All schools must be kick-a** equally
• Doesn’t solve perception issues that exist
• All schools should be kick-a**
• How to change the culture
Could the idea be modified to be improved? How?
• Good things happening at Central MS—marketing—make it known—strategic plan for marketing
• Determine what you want to see there. What’s the end game? How do we get there?

#10: Attempt to find a MS that is west of Troost – 6 votes

What do you like about the idea?
• You can’t have true diversity without having a school west of Troost
• White people will come
• Makes sure that KCPS has a strong footprint on the west side

What concerns do you have? What are the potential pitfalls?
• All schools should be excellent choices/high quality education
• Look at research
• Equality and equity and diversity in the student and staff populations

Could the idea be modified to be improved? How?
• Feeder patterns: boundaries would have to be thoughtful in terms of diversity
• How can you make sure the new innovative school pushes positive change in other schools north and east