School Merger
Community Focus Group Meeting
January 28, 2020

On January 28th, 2020, multiple stakeholder groups from the Upper Dauphin Area and Millersburg Area School Districts actively participated in a Community Focus Group Meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit input from those in attendance regarding the possible district merger. Approximately 75 participants included representatives of: High School & Middle School Student Council Officers; Parent/Teacher Organization; Community Representatives; Teacher Representatives; District Support Staff; Local Government; State Government; Local Business Leaders; Local Church Leaders; and Board Members.

The participants were placed into five (5) equally represented groups. All groups, facilitated by an administrator from each district, discussed the five (5) topics identified below and were asked to prioritize their feedback on each topic. A "reporter" was identified in each group and shared their prioritized responses as follows:

Merged district calendar (Start/end dates of the school year; graduation/Prom; holidays/vacations; parent-teacher conferences; snow make-ups)

Group A:

- Likes ending in May (students); Did not like the earlier start date (student)
- Two full months off
- 3 Hour delay days
- Built in comp/flex days to help with snow day issue

Group B:

- PIAA regulations/schedules influence start times (ex. football)
- Important to look at Community Calendars when scheduling events such as Prom/Graduation (ex. Cherry Blossom Festival)
- Students feel that "snow days" at the end of the year are not productive

Group C:

- Start date
    - Mid-August too early
    - Not start with a full week - ease transition
- End date
    - If we start early, we should end early
- Holidays/Vacations
    - Late winter/early spring - Easter break should always be four days to break up the late winter/early spring

- o February/March - winter blues - should have spring break built into the calendar (Friday and Monday off) *Friday In-Service - Guarantee Monday off for teachers and students
- Prom
  - o Lose momentum from students after prom (2nd or 3rd Friday in May)
  - o Keystone testing early in May move prom later, but avoid finals

Group D:

- Start date should be consistent EVERY year based on Labor Day.
- Prom . . . Friday or Saturday? Consistent, avoid Cherry Blossom is first Saturday in May. In-Service vs. ½ day?
- Consistent graduation date/day of the week?

Group E:

- Christmas break too long for working parents
- Once a month (long weekend better for younger students)
- Short starter week to begin school year. Wednesday
- Consistency of start dates - every year
- Virtual snow days

Start and end times of the school day (UDA: Elementary: 8:25 - 3:30; Secondary: 7:25 - 2:35; MBG: Elementary: 8:10 - 2:50; Secondary: 8:05 - 3:05; factors to consider)

Group A:

- Like the older kids to be home before elementary kids because of older kids providing care to younger siblings
- Bus times and duration could affect the start times for the schools; Don't want to have kids out too early.

Group B:

- Larger district (merged) should have a later start time due to the travel time for students
- Whichever option is chosen (ex. option 3 / option 5) will dictate the starting and ending times.
- Possibly consider reversing elementary and secondary times (current times)
- Consider starting programs which provide daycare / after-school care
- Transportation of students (elem-middle-high) will dictate starting/ending times

Group C:

- Start time
  - What is too early?
    - What do the studies say?
    - 7:25 is too early
  - Single tier busing and blending K-12 students on the same buses needs to be considered (not supporting this)
  - Do older siblings watch younger siblings and childcare become an issue?
  - Maximum amount of time on a bus?
    - 45-50 minutes is too long for elementary students
- End time
- 3:05 end time in the spring means athletes are missing a lot of educational time due to early dismissals due to away games

Group D:

- Bus routes impact this decision.
- Activity bus for extracurricular participants.

Group E:

- Driven by transportation - approx. 8:00 start
- Earliest time - 7:30 start: End time 3:00
- Possible longer bus rides - rest important - later end time may be better

High priority/ "untouchable" events (Discovery @ UDA; Camp Hebron @ MBG)

Group A

- Special Olympics
- Window Painting (Millersburg)
- Elementary Halloween Parade
- Graduation parade at the elementary school
- Grandparents day
- Fundraisers
- Discovery has positive impacts on students meeting older students
- Co-op Program
- Veterans Assembly
- Jump Start Cafe (Life Skills)
- Senior Citizen Luncheon in combination with HS Musical
- Merging of Foundations
- FFA Program
- Building Trades
- Scholarships specific to a school district (How will they be affected by the merger)
- Valedictorian and Sal. for the first couple years of the merger (How will that look, and will there be grandfathering)
- Career Day and Drug Education (HS); Millersburg has Drug Education at elementary school.
- Homecoming
- College Courses at the HS level (Would more kids in the school prevent this?)
- Science Olympiad in Middle School/High School at Millersburg

Group B:

- Camp Hebron
- STEAM Nights
- Science Olympiad / Odyssey of the Mind
- FFA / Building Trades / Career Pathways
- Parades/Music Events

Group C:

- Agricultural/Vocational/Construction Trades Program (UDA)
- Window Painting (MBG)
- College in the Classroom (UDA)
- Discovery (UDA)
- Camp Hebron (MBG)

Group D:

- Discovery program @ UDA.
- Camp Hebron @ Millersburg.
- Lenkerville Halloween Parade.
- Window Painting in Millersburg.
- Grandparents Day.
- Snack Pack/Jiffy Pack Programs.
- Release Time
- High School Senior March through Elementary School
- Field Trips/Class Trips
- Building Trades & Ag @ UDA

Group E:

- CTE Programs at UDA (Industrial Arts, Welding, FFA, Co-Op, Building Trades)
- Window Painting at MBG
- Trojan March/Laps for Lenkerville
- Conservation Club
- Home Ec.
- Special Ed. Olympics
- Field Day
- Gratz Fair- continue half day
- Marching Band - brass caroling day

Student & community events to create unity (Student/community "get to know you" activities)

Group A:

- Camp Hebron activities
  - Bonfire (At Camp Hebron not on school property)
  - Start activities prior to the merger during school day
- Ice Cream Social
- Laps for Lenkerville and Trojan March (something combined)

Group B:

- Social Media/Press Releases - messaging/communication has to be positive and consistent between school districts and communities
- Community Sports Teams
- Student profiles for students from each district (STUCO, NHS, Music, Clubs) - what does each district currently offer

Group C:

- Feeder athletic programs have to start combining
  - Come in the schools to promote
- Student-led events (dodgeball, corn hole) - combine these events among both schools
- Student and staff comfort
  - Class lists before the end of the school year, so the students know their teachers prior to the start of the next year
  - End of school year have the teachers from MBG go to UDA for a day and UDA to MBG for a day
  - Unified administration and faculty presentation to students
  - Student orientation for all students (not just Freshman)

Group D:

- Open house for community PRIOR TO start of school year.
- Building walk-throughs.
- Community tailgate prior to each sport season.

Group E:

- Combined Field Day
- Mini - Thon
- Official recognition of endings/beginnings
- Combined community center
- Leverage sports co-op opportunities - pep rallies - boosters - music

"Brand" of the district (Methodology to determine district name, mascot, color scheme, names of the school facilities utilized [in accordance with policy] within the merged district. How do the Boards / Administrations garner support from the communities, region and state for the new "Brand"?)

Group A:

- Survey monkey on school district websites
- Need paper survey for those that do not have the technology
- Need to factor in the opinions of alumni and give way for them to provide input
- Incorporate contest for artwork for logo and mascot once it is narrowed down
- Use a final survey once the choices are narrowed down

Group B:

- Create a contest
- Social Media - involves students from each school

Group C:

- Student voting (exclusively)
  - Students have a chance to give their opinion
  - Student comfort
- Community surveys
  - Community involvement
- Solicit actual designs from community members/alumni
  - Students opinions should weigh heavier
  - But do not exclude community
- Board members choose name and allow community involvement on mascot and colors
- Contact other districts that have merged and find out their process

Group D:

- Seek student input into the process.
- Post student-created mascot designs at community events/website/social media.

Group E:

- Let the students have a big say in this Student Surveys - top 10 choices
- Make it truly new
- Reach out to others that have rebranded

The administrative teams thank all participants for their active, honest feedback. This information is being provided to continue our open communications with the public as the districts continue their discussions on a potential district merger.