



CARLISLE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Exploring the Future of K-8 Facilities

October 2023

During months of careful study, a committee comprised of nearly 100 district faculty and staff members, parents, and community members studied and discussed the challenges and opportunities of our District facilities.

What is driving the need for change?



Growing Enrollment

Cumberland County is the fastest-growing county in Pennsylvania.

New housing developments are bringing more students to our schools, with growth concentrated in the northern end of the District.

A need to balance our elementary class sizes



As enrollment is shifting, some schools and classes are becoming larger or smaller than others. We want to ensure that we can provide balanced and reasonably consistent class sizes to maximize student/teacher instruction and space.

A need to more efficiently and effectively support our growing number of students who need special services



We need to ensure we have the space in our schools to provide the small-group programming and therapeutic and educational services that best support our students.



A need to maximize the placement of our staff in our schools so that every student has the same access to excellent programs

We want our elementary and middle-level students to experience the same excellent programming regardless of which school building they attend. We want our students and community to truly feel a part of “One Carlisle.”

A need to find solutions to respond to our aging school buildings



The resources saved in costly maintenance and repairs can be spent more effectively on new spaces that offer more opportunities.

Currently, our schools are configured like this:

Seven elementary schools,
grades K – 5

Two middle schools,
grades 6 – 8

One high school,
grades 9 - 12

Our committee considered 9 different models that included a number of different ways to reconfigure grade levels, incorporate a new school building, and use our spaces in different ways.

Ultimately, two models emerged as the clear leaders.

Each of the models involves building a new school and closing two elementary schools, LeTort and Mt. Holly Springs.

The models reconfigure our grades in this way:

- Kindergarten through third grades kept together in our lower elementary schools to focus our academic efforts on building a stronger support for our youngest students
- Grades 4 – 6 move together into two mid-sized upper-elementary schools
- Grades 7 – 8 remain together in either one new intermediate school or within our existing middle schools

For consistency, we are referring to the two leading models as “Model 6” and “Model 9” since that is the way they were analyzed in our committee. Neither of the considered models impact our high school.

Strengths of Both Models

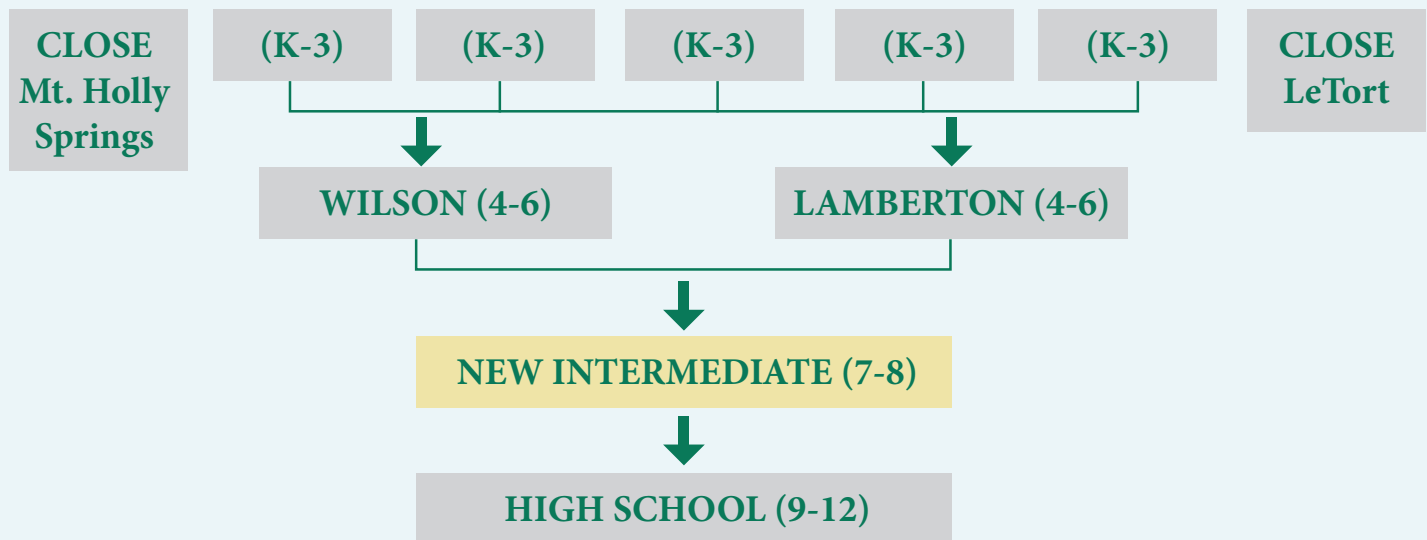
- Provide a long-term solution to enrollment growth
- Provide a financially-sustainable solution to our challenges
- Help to align our programs, respond to student needs, and increase efficiency
- Provide more balanced class sizes
- Allow for CASD students to come together at an earlier age
(with half of their graduating class by grade 4)
- Increase efficiency by spreading the K-8 programming across fewer buildings
- Close two elementary buildings; introducing the opportunity to rethink the use of the property or sell the property

Challenges of Both Models

- Redistricting (moving attendance boundaries) cannot be avoided (including the status quo model)
- Additional staffing will likely be necessary (including the status quo model)
- Separating K-5 into two levels (K-3 and 4-6) may require additional resources/services to meet the unique needs of those levels

MODEL 6

Build a new school for grades 7 and 8 (approx. 1,000 students) on CASD property adjacent to the high school complex. Modify the existing middle schools so that they are designed to accommodate the educational programming needed for students in grades 4 through 6.



STRENGTHS

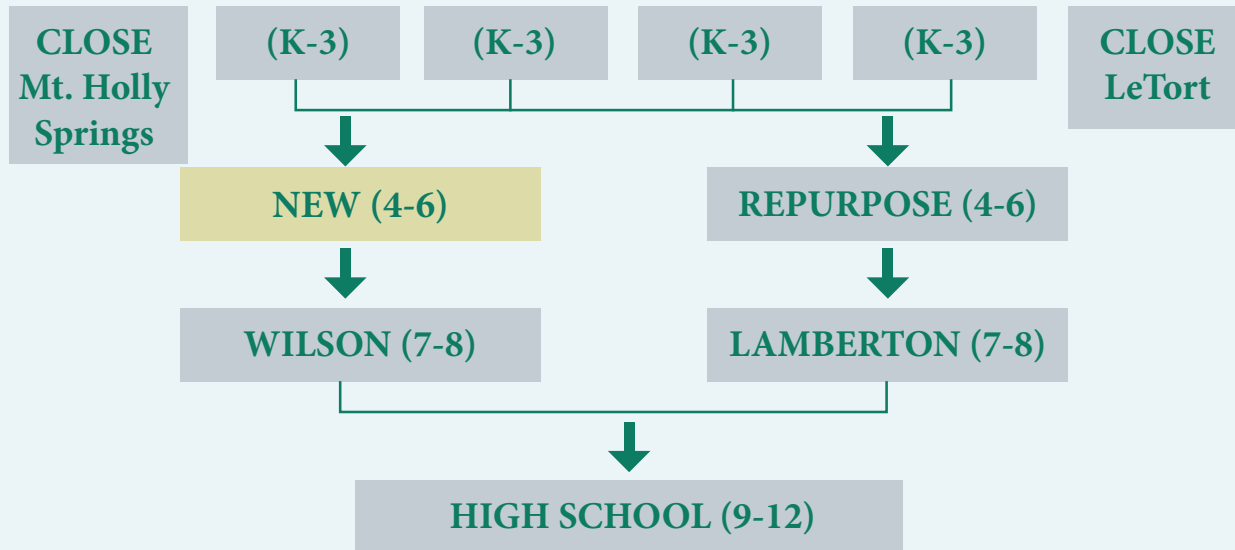
- Brings all 7th and 8th grade students together earlier on a single campus
- Allows for construction to occur while not disrupting existing schools
- Maintains elementary sites in highly populated areas of the district
- Provides all students in grades 4 - 6 with a consistent experience
- Improves efficiency of the K-3 buildings by reducing the elementary to five buildings

CHALLENGES

- Five K-3 buildings is more efficient than seven; but still requires splitting some staff across multiple buildings
- Need to redesign certain middle school rooms (*tech ed., family consumer science*). However, this also introduces new opportunities for students.

MODEL 9

Build a new school for grades 4-6 (*approximately 700 students*) at the Old Bellaire site. Add space for 350 students to one of our existing elementary schools, so that it can become an upper elementary for grades 4 – 6. Wilson and Lamberton (*currently middle schools*) can be used to accommodate grades 7 and 8.



STRENGTHS

- Responds to middle school growth by eliminating grade 6
- Introduces future programming into additional space created at middle school buildings
- Improves efficiency of the K - 3 buildings by reducing the elementary to four buildings

CHALLENGES

- Contingent on conservative enrollment
- Would still require additional space at the elementary schools in the northern side of our district
- Limited room for expansion at Crestview and Hamilton
- Potential underutilization of space in Lamberton and Wilson as a grade level is removed from each building
- Students would experience different 4 - 6 facilities (*one new building and one renovated building*)
- Renovation to one elementary school would be required (*and would be completed safely*) while school is in session, causing some disruption
- Would likely be more expensive

How will the projects be financed?

The District has an excellent credit rating and, as a result, its borrowing capacity is strong. The District is committed to a financing plan that minimizes impact to taxpayers.

Next Steps and Timing

The Administrative team and Facilities Committee will present these models to the School Board in October 2023.

We will host a series of community meetings about the facilities proposal. Everyone is welcome to attend:
October 17 – 6 p.m. at Wilson Middle School
October 24 – 5 p.m. at Lamberton Middle School

The Board would then need to vote on a plan and path forward.

No immediate changes would occur. If the construction of a new school were to be approved, the District would move through a design phase with community input. The earliest any changes to grade alignment would occur would be the 2025 - 2026 school year.

The District will continue to communicate as we move through this process.

Please visit www.carliseschools.org/exploringK8 for updates.