

**MSAD #51**  
**Cumberland & North Yarmouth**  
<http://www.msad51.org>

May 20, 2013

Dear Community Members,

On June 11th, community members in Cumberland and North Yarmouth will have the opportunity to vote on two referendum questions, regarding the closure of the North Yarmouth Memorial School and the expansion of Greely Middle School. At least one of the two towns needs to vote in favor of closing NYMS in order for the school to close. Should that vote take place, a majority of District voters must vote in favor of investing in GMS in order to expand. In the interest that all stakeholders have accurate information, we would like to review history to explain how we arrived at this point.

In 2009, the MSAD #51 Board of Directors commissioned a Sustainability Task Force to analyze how the District's physical structures impact student achievement and economic sustainability. Following months of review of relevant data, and interviews and discussions with community stakeholders, the Task Force developed core-guiding principles for the District. These recommendations included reducing the number of student transitions, maximizing the use of the District's best facilities, repurposing District assets as necessary and pursuing consolidation opportunities when appropriate.

In June 2010, an architectural and engineering study of the North Yarmouth Memorial School provided a thorough review of the school's structural fitness. The review concluded that due to aging systems and poor construction, the building was "at the end of its useful life. The District also submitted an application to the State of Maine to request subsidized improvements to the North Yarmouth Memorial School, but the school was placed 65th of the 71 applications received, thereby resulting in a low priority status for State funding.

In the fall of 2011, the MSAD #51 Board of Directors established an NYMS task force charged with reviewing data and recommending a course of action regarding the future of the school. The nine-member group was comprised of six residents from North Yarmouth and three from Cumberland and included an NYMS administrator, a NYMS faculty member, current North Yarmouth and Cumberland parents and two MSAD# 51 Board members. Over the course of several months, the NYMS Task Force explored the operations and characteristics of NYMS and identified its strengths, shortcomings and operational and maintenance costs. Using the data evaluated, the NYMS Task Force considered and thoroughly explored nine distinct future options. Following this careful review, the NYMS Task Force recommended closing the current NYMS facility and relocating the student population to Greely Middle School. To accommodate the two additional grades, the group recommended construction of a 4,000 square foot addition to the cafeteria and library, and a 4,000 square foot addition of instructional space to house four new classrooms.

Following a public hearing in early December 2012, the Board voted to close North Yarmouth Memorial School on December 17th. At that point, Mabel I. Wilson Principal Karen Bubar assumed leadership of the planning process for the movement of 4th and 5th graders to Greely Middle School. She began work with NYMS Principal Carol MacArthur, GMS Principal Kim Brandt, Curriculum Director Sally Loughlin, and Superintendent Bob Hasson to develop an outline for the transition. This work began with recognition that the process is preliminary until the referendum for closure in June. In April, the Board of Directors voted on and approved the \$2 million Greely Middle School Construction project which will create four additional classrooms, expand the cafeteria and internally renovate to create two classrooms from existing space in the 6th-8th and proposed 4th-5<sup>th</sup> grade wings.

Until the communities vote to support the referendum, administrators are limited in the concrete steps they can take to move forward in the planning process. That being said, Kim Brandt and Carol MacArthur have provided multiple tours of Greely Middle School to provide interested community members an opportunity to see the facility. Our principals have also shared the District's guiding principles for incorporating NYMS students to maximize learning opportunities. Staff from NYMS have toured the facility, providing an opportunity to develop questions for consideration during future planning. In the weeks ahead, staff from NYMS and GMS will participate in a survey to inform the planning process, and Allied Arts teachers, grades 4-8 Special Education teachers and Student Services (guidance, social work, nurses) will meet to give input for the same purpose. And the Transition Advisory group, consisting of community members, teachers and administrators, is forming to review input from stakeholders, make recommendations for future programming and guide transition planning.

We are encouraged by the deliberate nature with which the district is approaching the potential move, while recognizing that until the public vote on June 11th, we can't begin the full-fledged work of transition. We urge you to visit the MSAD #51 home page, where a [GMS-NYMS Transition website](#) has been specifically designed to answer questions and to provide background and current information.

We appreciate your engagement in this process. We recognize that organizational change is a challenging process, but are excited by the many new educational opportunities afforded by combining our 4th through 8th graders. Please contact us with any concerns or questions, and we look forward to being in touch in the weeks ahead.

Sincerely,

Jeff Porter  
MSAD #51 Co-Chair

Bill Richards  
MSAD #51 Co-Chair