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Michael Hogg, Councilor, District 5

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BILL No.

2020-132

A Resolution to request that the Amesbury School Committee reconsider its elementary and middle school grade spans, configuration, and transitions.

Summary: The resolution calls on the Amesbury School Committee to reconsider its grade configuration to promote the educational mission and reduce the number of transitions between grades which may otherwise be detrimental to student performance.

Whereas, educational research has been shown that grade configurations at critical transition periods impacts student performance (see The Effect of Elementary School Size, Grade Span and Transition on Student Achievement and Graduation, Conley, 2016); and,

Whereas, The Hamilton Project Discussion Paper 2011-08 issued September 2011 noted that raising student performance may be better achieved through reforms to the management or organization of schools including "... Shifting from a system with separate elementary and middle schools to one with schools that serve students in kindergarten through grade eight;" and,

Whereas, the most popular grade configuration in private and public sector are schools with multiple grades and fewer grade transitions (Hamilton Project, Chapter 3, page 14); and,

Whereas, research also indicates that students who move often and into middle school grades undergo "a difficult transition at precisely the time when they need increased social and academic needs" and further research has shown a decrease in learning trajectories relative to peers who stayed in larger class cohorts in elementary grades (Rockoff and West 2011 as noted in The Hamilton Project, Chapter 3); and,

Whereas, where grade fragmentation is a reality, "steps should be taken to lessen the adverse effects on students of school-to-school transitions" such that a "school system with multiple grade spans should have in place ... transition activities among its" schools and teaching staff including such resources, staff, and budgeting to effect such transitions (

Evidence Regarding Effects of Grade-Span Configurations on Academic Achievement ..." by Coladarci and Hancock); and,

Whereas, research has suggested that achievement in middle grades (commonly 6-8) is higher when students attended schools with a wide grade span configuration such as K-5 (see School Configuration Considerations: Report Prepared for Champaign School District, by La Rue); and,

Whereas, it has been suggested by research that students show a loss of achievement during the year of their transition and that changing schools frequently has been related to lower student performance (ibid, page 4); and

Whereas, research further indicates significantly stronger student engagement in smaller schools as compared with larger schools (ibid, page 9); and

Whereas, research developed for the City of Portsmouth NH indicates that "the most equitable and cost efficient means of delivering high student achievement is through smaller schools with broader grade spans,"

Then therefore,

Be it resolved by the City Council assembled, and by the authority of the same as follows:

That the City Council supports a policy of longer grade spans and fewer grade transitions in elementary grades, and calls on the Amesbury School Committee to revisit and review a prior decision on grade configuration, review available research, and consider parent input supporting a grade configuration and/or grade span of K-4 or K-5 for the Amesbury Public Schools.

Reference:

- https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/092011_organize_jacob_rockoff_paper.pdf
- <https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2364&context=doctoral>
- <https://www.ericdigests.org/2003-2/rural.html>
- [https://www.boarddocs.com/il/champil/Board.nsf/files/8UZHXM4AA0C9/\\$file/CUSD%20School%20Configuration%20Report.pdf](https://www.boarddocs.com/il/champil/Board.nsf/files/8UZHXM4AA0C9/$file/CUSD%20School%20Configuration%20Report.pdf)
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