

December 2008 – Middle School Planning.

Having been out of the traditional junior high school business for a dozen or more years, several committees are in the process of re-inventing how Lapeer Community Schools will provide a sixth to eighth grade middle school program starting in September 2010.

The District, its Board of Education, administration and staff, see this as an exciting opportunity to not just simply provide a traditional middle school education, but a chance to make it one of the best programs possible.

The District's website and the "**Rolland-Warner Middle School – Turning Points 2010,**" tab will be the place to look for continuing updates on the progress and status of middle school planning. It has been a busy year and a half since voters approved the bond that allowed the building of two middle schools.

In pledging to keep this an open process, the District will make available on the website highlights of subcommittee meeting minutes and other important information for students, parents, staff and the community.

Teams of staff and parents toured top-notch middle school programs, listed as "**Schools to Watch,**" in late October and early November. The teams toured schools in Belding (Belding), Saginaw (White Pine) and Dexter (Mill Creek).

In visiting the schools, team members looked for specific programs that could be replicated and brought to Lapeer when the new schools open and to spark ideas tailored specifically for Lapeer students.

A middle school planning team also attends a Middle School Seminar in Ann Arbor, monthly, which provides not just instructional guidance, but also offered networking opportunities with other districts.

Members of various planning committees have read, studied and discussed the books, "**Turning Points 2000,**" and "**This We Believe**".

All these preliminary steps are important in crafting the best possible middle school program.

During the summer of 2008, planning groups met to review architectural plans for the new Zemmer school with an eye on ensuring equity between the two facilities. While the two buildings will have a different look and floor plans, great effort has gone into making sure the square footage, classrooms, cafeterias, gymnasiums are equal in their opportunity and size even if they look differently.

Some of that work is detailed, including minute examinations of things like science storage space which in one school are not as close together as the other, but equal in total size. The planning members have worked on details like the shape of cafeteria tables (round versus rectangular) and the style of students' desks.

Recently, following work by elementary students who will eventually attend the two schools, decisions were made on the new mascots and colors for both. Colors for the new school at the Woodside site will be Maroon and Gold and the new mascot is the Wolves. Colors for the new school at the Zemmer site will be Black and Gold and the mascot will be the Bulldogs.

With much of the preliminary study nearly complete, the committees are moving towards more concrete timelines and program proposals, but not without the help of the staff, parents, students and community of the District.

Shortly surveys will be sent out to the community, staff, parents and students with an eye on sharpening the focus of the new middle school program. The proposed time for the surveys is January 2009.

Additionally, a community forum to discuss and share the new middle school vision is planned for early 2009.

Some other key dates are also approaching in early 2009. Sometime in January 2009, a community meeting will be held to form a committee of volunteers made up of parents, teachers and community members to determine the best geographic division of students and the eventual recommendation to the Board of Education, which will make the final decision.

Longer range are plans for staff professional development in June and August 2009 and the beginning of the organization building for the new middle schools which will only be one year away.

Through the school year of 2009-2010, a course catalog will be completed, a student forum is planned and additional staff training.

As best and expediently as it can, the District will publicly release information on the ongoing committee and construction work as well as important academic, sports and extracurricular plans for the new schools.

One of the ways all staff, parents and students can help is to raise questions or concerns with members of the committees as we move through the planning. Names of the members of the committee are available at the District's website at **Rolland-Warner Middle School – Turning Points 2010**.