

5th Grade Task Force

May 21, 2019

Participants

- Tricia Puglisi, Facilitator
- John Willis, Memorial
- Jennifer Robert, Essex
- Ashley Sartell, Essex
- Erica Spencer, Manchester Parent
- Theresa Whitman, Essex Parent
- Kim Field, Essex
- Jennifer Cochand, Memorial
- Joseph McDonough, Memorial
- Rachel Fitzgibbon, Essex - School Committee
- Ken Warnock, Manchester - School Committee
- Allison Collins, Central Office
- Joanne Maino, MERMS

Mission

- Our mission is to assess whether the annual Fifth Grade Overnight Trip, currently Merrowvista, is the best option to meet our current programmatic and curricular goals.

Guiding Question

- Is the 5th Grade Overnight Trip the best tool to meet our goals?

January 8th Meeting

- Learn the history of the trip and identify its objectives

Objectives

- Bring Students from Manchester and Essex together
- Personal Growth – Moving beyond oneself; Social emotional growth; Whole child
- Celebration of the end of elementary school
- Maintenance of tradition

January 29th Meeting

- Goal – To identify the Positives & Challenges of the trip as it relates to the following:
 - Student Accessibility
 - Cost to families and district
 - Impact to grades levels not attending
 - Unintended Outcomes
 - How it meets/does not meet State Curricular Standards

Example of Feedback Provided

- <https://padlet.com/puglisip/5qbn9krsdiac>

March 11th Meeting

- Look at positives and challenges identified at January 29th meeting to form judgment statements related to each identified area.

How the trip meets stated objectives

- Although some students may grow personally by staying overnight, this can be a significant source of anxiety for many students
- The daytime activities are effective at creating a shared experience and challenging students to grow
- We don't know if this creates a lasting effect in unifying the two schools

Accessibility

- Provides opportunities for inclusion of students with disabilities, however, complex students typically do not attend or, if they do, require extensive support and months of planning
- Continuous 80 hour duration of program is challenging in terms of budget, staffing and impact on students in home school (K-4)

Cost

- One challenge is cost for specific students that require more support/staff to participate in the trip
- Although fundraising is different in each school, it does offer the opportunity to unite parents/students with their own community in a fundraising goal for those that choose to participate

Outcomes

- A positive aspect is student may show personal growth in ways not always able to be demonstrated in the school setting
- Two challenges of the trip are staffing at the elementary schools and causing stress/anxiety for families

Final Benefits and Challenges

- Benefits
 - Personal growth
 - Inclusion of all students during the day
 - Students overcome anxiety
- Challenges
 - Safety/Liability of Staff
 - Cost of Extra Staffing
 - Impact to K-4 Program – staffing at school
 - Family anxiety

April 23rd Meeting

- Discussed possible conclusions, three possible conclusions are shown: (I presented three options and try to come to conclusion)
 - We determined that due to the benefits of Merrowvista this is the right program (this would require a statement on how challenges would be overcome)
 - We've determined that due to the challenges we should phase out Merrowvista and replace with a different day program (determine how to maintain positives) – most like for current grade 3 class
 - We've identified the challenges and benefits and would like guidance from the School Committee upon how to proceed

Final Outcome

Guiding Question

Is the 5th Grade Overnight Trip the best tool to meet our goals?

- The positions of the members of the group prevented the team from reaching consensus
- Looking for feedback from Committee
 - Policy on overnight trips
 - Liability to the District & Employees
 - Can we assure that it is a safe and good trip for every student?

Next Steps for Investigation

- Sustainability of Staffing
- Complete Cost Picture
- Understanding of Liability
- Comparison with other Districts
- Consideration of alternatives