



# PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS: THIS IS A CALL FOR INFORMED PARTICIPATION

**JOIN US FEB. 8 • FEB. 15 • FEB. 29**

Dear Beaverton Schools Parents, Guardians, Students, Staff and Stakeholders:

Buzz is a funny thing. It can manifest in many different forms from countless sources. There's good buzz, and there's not-so-good buzz. There's buzz that carries welcome news, and there's buzz that delivers the announcement of difficult decisions. And there's the worst type of all: Uninformed buzz.

Just so you know up front, this message is about the exploration of making some changes at Beaverton Schools. Not *actually making the changes*, but the *exploration* - the introduction of an idea, the consideration of its implementation and its impact on our ability to do our very best for your kids. In other words, the process. And it's also about the buzz around an idea, and how that buzz can complicate that process.

The other thing we want to emphasize is that we make every decision - *every single one* - with this top-of-the-line, A1 priority: Is it good for kids? If the answer isn't yes, we punt and move on to the next idea.

At Beaverton Schools (and for the sake of all kids, we would hope it's true at every school), we are in a constant state of self-examination - of student success, of the barriers that prevent it, of our learning environment, of making sure our staff is put in the best possible chance to succeed. This introspection - the ongoing assessment of what we do and the way we do it - is a vital part of our growth as a district.

In those efforts, we explore new ways to conduct business all the time. Sometimes, those ideas bear fruit; our very successful LINKS program is a great recent example. Sometimes, those good ideas simply can't be carried out because of time, money, logistics or personnel.

And sometimes, we consider an idea that's nuanced and complicated, something with a ton of moving parts, with the potential to create positive change for our students, but also uncertainty and the potential growing pains that can accompany doing things differently. And that's how we arrive at today's opportunity.

We are exploring the idea of implementing what we're calling the Junior High Model for grades six through eight. This involves realignment along academic, staffing and classroom lines. The most visible potential change - and the one that has occupied the bulk of the buzz in the community lately - concerns bringing the sixth grade into the BJSHS building. But it's important that you know it's about so much more than that. The board of education, school administration and staff are keenly aware of the gut reaction this discussion may evoke. In fact, many of us shared that initial feeling of "How could this possibly work?" And there are no guarantees that it will. But as our internal discussions have continued, as we've gathered data from other districts who have moved to the Junior High model, and as we've examined the full implications of such a move, we've learned enough to convince us that we can't eliminate it as an appropriate step.

That doesn't mean it's guaranteed to happen - not at all. This discussion has moved from the concept stage with district leadership to the discussion stage with teachers. We've held no fewer than four all-staff discussions, including breakout sessions, surveys and Q&As. As we hoped, those talks generated significant feedback from the folks on the front lines of making it work. We've heard honest questions and concerns,

great ideas for making it work better, and, in full transparency, some skepticism about it working, period.

And that's okay. That's the kind of dialogue a district *should* have with stakeholders when considering big moves. And that's why the next phase of this endeavor - hearing from the community - is essential.

We've scheduled three community forums for parents, guardians and community members to share questions, concerns and ideas. We'll meet in the BJSHS Media Center on:

- Thursday, February 8 at 5:30 p.m.
- Thursday, February 15 at 6 p.m.
- Thursday, February 29 at 5:30 p.m.

We want our community to understand the whys and wherefores behind this exploration - to learn not just about how it can give students more academic options and learning opportunities, and how it could help with the nationwide challenge of behaviors and discipline, but how it may aid the district financially and right-size our campus. Just as importantly, we want to learn from you - to find out what you think and how we can best make Beaverton the best school in mid-Michigan. And at the end of it all, we want to transform all that buzz out there into transparent, informed action that benefits all students.

It all comes back to that important question that lives at the heart of everything we do: Is it good for kids? Please plan to join us so we can figure that out together, and thanks for your time and consideration.