

FAQ on Relocation Options

When can the community, parents, and/or students communicate with the board about the four options?

Anyone can email or call board members with their thoughts, questions, or concerns. This information is on the Bedford County Schools webpage. The board is also conducting town hall meetings to get feedback on the superintendent search and to hear from the community about these options. Information for those interested is below:

- February 29, 2024: Liberty High School Library from 4:30-8:00 pm
- March 5, 2024: Jefferson Forest High School Library from 4:30- 8:00 pm
- March 19, 2024: Staunton River High School Library from 4:30-8:00 pm

There will also be a public hearing on the options at the March 14, 2024 school board meeting. To speak during the hearing you must sign up with Diana Johnson, clerk of the board. Her email address is diana.johnson@bedford.k12.va.us.

Parents, students, teachers, staff, and other community members are encouraged to attend the Town Hall sessions and/or School Board meetings to provide feedback on the four proposed options. All of the School Board meetings will also be livestreamed and recorded through the BCPS YouTube Channel.

When will the school board hold more discussion about the options and the development of next year's budget?

The School Board will also be holding a Special Called Budget Work Session on Thursday, March 21, 2024 to discuss budget preparations for the 2024-2025 school year and to decide whether or not to move forward with any of the options. The meeting will begin at 6:00 pm and will be held in the auditorium at the Susie G. Gibson Science and Technology Center (SGSTC), located at 600 Edmund Street in Bedford. The School Board will then hold another Special Called Budget Work Session on Monday, March 25, 2024, also beginning at 6:00 pm at the SGSTC auditorium, to receive the Superintendent's Proposed Budget for the 2024-2025 school year.

Does the board have to choose one of the four options?

No, the school board could choose to not make any changes to schools or school configurations. The school board could also utilize and/or combine parts of any of the options. The Board is also open to hearing suggestions from the community for options that may have not been considered. If you have suggestions for a different option, please share them at the Town Hall meetings, or email/call your representative.

Has the school board considered redistricting the school zones in the past?

Yes. The school board requested and reviewed last year, at their Jan. 12, 2023 board meeting, a redistricting plan for the Forest zone schools. The presentation can be found on [Board Docs](#) (Agenda item 4.02). There was also a public hearing about the redistricting options at the January 19, 2023 board meeting, at which time there was consensus among the board members not to move forward with redistricting.

If Bedford Primary would be serving only preschool students (under option 4), would all of the other preschools throughout the county be moved there?

No. Bedford Primary has the most preschool programs in the county, and they have a waiting list to add more, so the school division could expand the opportunities for families who live in the Liberty zone. The school's with current PreK programs in the other zones (Goodview, Moneta, Huddleston, New London Academy, Thomas Jefferson, Montvale, and Otter River) would all continue to have those programs under options 2-4.

If the grade levels are all reconfigured, would the 5th and 8th graders be interacting with older students throughout the day?

The 5th graders would be located in a separate space in the middle school buildings and would be supervised by their teachers at all times, just like they are currently in an elementary setting, meaning teachers would continue to escort their students to the bathroom, lunch, and resource classes. The 8th graders would also be separated, for the most part, during the day in the high school buildings from all the other students. However, many 8th graders already travel to the high schools for some high school credit course, so there could be some interaction between 8th graders and older students depending on their course schedule.

Would the 5th graders be riding on the school buses with all the middle and high school students?

Yes, the 5th graders would be added to the secondary bus routes; however, just like we seat the kindergarten students at the front of the bus for the elementary routes, the 5th graders would be seated at the front of the school bus for the secondary routes.

Would 8th graders still be able to participate in middle school sports?

Yes, 8th graders would still participate in middle school sports with the 6th and 7th grade students. They would also continue to be eligible to try out for junior varsity

teams. The 5th graders, on the other hand, would not be eligible for middle school sports.

Would the 8th graders be counted as high school students by the Virginia High School League (VHSL) for determining the regional districts?

No. The VHSL only counts the number of 9th-12th grade students when determining the classification for each high school, so LHS would remain class 2, SRHS would remain Class 3, and JFHS would remain class 4.

How does the school division determine that a school is “full”?

Each building has a capacity number that was determined by engineers in two studies done on our buildings in the last 15 years. When a school reaches 95% or more of its capacity it is closed to zone transfers to allow room for any students moving into the area. With the addition of new townhomes, apartments, and single family dwellings currently happening in the Forest area, the board has to ensure our schools have room for new students moving into the area.

How were the cost savings calculated for Stewartsville if the students were relocated?

The \$15,000,000 renovation cost projection was taken from a study completed by Downey & Scott, LLC in May 2019. This renovation includes a new HVAC as part of the estimated renovation cost. Detailed breakdown of the renovation project has not been done. The \$15,000,000 is based on square footage x estimated renovation costs provided by the state. There is a list of needs but renovation and ADA compliance requirements cannot be determined until a scope of the project is decided.

Several facility studies (2002, 2008, 2016 and 2019) were used to compile the [School Boards Approved CIP plan](#) using information from several facility studies (2002, 2008, 2016 and 2019). Page 63 of this plan provides detailed information on plans for Stewartsville’s upkeep and renovation. Renovation amounts are estimated based on state Department of Education (DOE) estimates by square footage.

In regards to the yearly operational cost savings at Stewartsville that we presented last week, we estimated \$800,000 for the Operating Fund. This includes savings on personnel that would not be duplicated at another school, utilities, and school material funds.

Is the funding for each school equitably distributed?

The [FY 23 Annual School Financials Report](#) located on our website under the finance tab in departments. This chart shows the school level per pupil expenditures, average membership, and school level included expenditures for every school in the division.

What will happen to the Stewartville Elementary School Building? If the students are relocated the school board has three options: 1) keep the building in our inventory and maintain it; 2) revert the building to the board of supervisors; or 3) the school board would sell the facility.

How will this affect the transportation times/routes for the affected students? Each option could affect transportation differently. Routes and times are not determined until the summer. If 5th graders go to the middle school buildings, they would have a later pick-up and drop-off time based on school hours.

How are the necessary renovations prioritized for the division? The facilities committee reviews and makes recommendations to the full school board and they set the priority projects.

How will the K-1 students at Bedford Elementary fit? The school's capacity is 620. The estimated enrollment is 581.

Are there empty classrooms at Bedford Elementary right now? Schools will use every open staff they have available, which means that many individuals that are not classroom teachers may have an entire room for their work. In other schools without that space, many staff can share rooms when they work with small groups or individual students. Bedford Elementary would have enough space if needed.

Are there efficiencies with numbers per class? This cannot be finalized until we complete student enrollment and the assignment of staff. However, larger schools traditionally have efficiencies in staffing; while small schools cost more per student to run.

Questions Added March 7, 2024

Will the 5th graders stay isolated in a class with their peers from their respective schools or will the merge they typically experience in 6th grade begin a year earlier?

Yes, much like they do things separately from 4th grade. They will be in an area teamed with other students in fifth grade. They will still be treated like 5th graders preparing to become more independent. As the opportunities present themselves, students may have some pairing up with 6 graders for advanced learning and class options.

Will they have recess and how will that work since the middle school does not have playground equipment? Students would have recess each day, just like they would in the elementary building. This does not mean they need to have playground equipment, but can have organized games and free time. Many of the older students do not use playground equipment even in the elementary schools because they are too old for it.

Will their current/familiar resource teachers come to the middle school or do they merge into the middle school resource offerings? (art, music, pe, etc)? They would still get PE, art, music, and library as they would at the elementary school. Final staffing will not be looked at unless necessary.

How will the books in the library be sorted to address age appropriateness? We have a system for parent acknowledgment when a book is taken out of the library, but if we move forward, staff would review all material in the library for appropriateness.

Will there be orientation/preparatory field trips to visit the middle school/a graduation ceremony from their elementary school for the 4th graders? We would plan on a recognition ceremony for 4 and 5 grade if necessary and we would plan a visit to the middle school building.