February 23, 2016

Dear Meridian Community,

Enrollment in Meridian Schools continues to grow and that is good news! Currently we have been experiencing considerable growth at the elementary level.

As a result of this growth, the School Board and District Administration have determined that the District will need to repurpose Ten Mile Creek Elementary (TMCE) in order to create additional needed classroom space for our elementary students.

TMCE is adjacent to Irene Reither Elementary (IRE) and currently houses the Meridian Parent Partnership Program (MP3). MP3 is an important alternative educational program option that provides support to many homeschool families in our area. It has been a viable program in the Meridian School District for over 10 years.

In order to make TMCE available to use for elementary students the District needs to relocate the MP3 program.

This is not a decision the Board and Administration has taken lightly. This project has been a focus of considerable work for more than a year. Multiple options and scenarios have been explored, studied and considered.

After contracting with a local civil engineering firm to complete the most recent feasibility study, the District is pleased to announce the plan that makes the most sense for the students, the District and for the taxpayers in our community. This option maximizes existing resources within the District without asking the voters to approve another construction bond for additional facilities. The existing facilities at MMS and MHS can accommodate future growth for a period of time before options for additional classroom space would need to be considered at those campuses.

The Meridian School District will create a campus for the Meridian Parent Partnership Program on District land west of the District Office on Laurel Road. Some of this area is currently utilized for overflow parking for MHS. The MP3 campus design still allows for overflow parking. The location was selected for this project due to the proximity of available utilities on Laurel Road, the feasibility of a traffic variance from the County and the fact the land is already owned by the District. Locating the project on this land will not create additional crowding at any of our other campuses.

Portable/modular buildings will be acquired through the state purchasing contract for this new MP3 campus. (Please see the attached drawing for the proposed site plan). The District would purchase the buildings utilizing the available, limited funding currently in the District’s capital projects fund. Although this fund isn’t large enough to build a traditional “stick built” school it can adequately provide for the purchase of these the portable/modular buildings.
It is important that the District live within its financial means while still addressing the issue of growing enrollment. This option provides the Meridian Parent Partnership Program with a permanent location in the Meridian School District at **no additional cost to the local taxpayers** and also frees up the use of TMCE for our traditional elementary program. The District sees this as a win-win solution.

The timeline for completion of this project is dependent on several factors related to the permitting process and site development. We expect the new MP3 campus to be ready for occupancy at some point during or at the latest by the end of the 2016-2017 school year. Until this project is completed, the Principals at IRE and MP3 have been instructed to plan for continued shared space at TMCE in a way that creates the least impact on students.

**What Will Happen at TMCE When MP3 is Relocated?** - At the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year IRE will expand its campus to include all of the TMCE building and portables. All kindergarten and 1st grade classrooms will be relocated to the TMCE building. The Developmental (Special Education) preschool program will remain in the double portable behind the TMCE building. There will be administrative and secretarial support in offices at both IRE and TMCE. Busing of the students will not change nor will the school day schedule as IRE will remain one school that will utilize the two adjacent school buildings.

The School Board and District Administration agree that the smaller school environment in the TMCE building will be advantageous for our District’s youngest students.

More information will follow as these projects moves forward. If you have questions, please contact me at tchurchill@meridian.wednet.edu or at 360.398.7111.

Sincerely,

Tom Churchill, Superintendent