

STEEP Community Feedback Survey Comments
April 8-15, 2016

Most important to me is the emotional issue for the kids. When there are more kids in a class there are more opportunities for children to develop more friendships I saw first hand when there were only 12 girls in MH 1 year. So frustrating for the girls. I think more bullying goes on too

I'm concerned about class size and maintaining small community feel, a major attribute of why Warren is a sought after town to live. In addition, next year I will have a KG, 1st, and 3rd grader so if they all don't attend the same school it would make logistics tricky.

Keep all Warren school open!!

I think the entire district should be re-districted so that the numbers will be balanced out and students will go to the schools closest to their home. This should have been done when woodland was redistricted but it wasn't concerned. This model should at least be given the same research and consideration as the other more drastic models. The small savings per household is not enough to justify closing a school when you can not say how you will repay to reopen it down the line.

Since ALT and MH are so close - Close one, consolidate the 4 into 3 and leave all else the same.

I believe if closing one elementary school results in significant cost savings for the district, then this is probably the best option. But I don't believe in breaking up the schools, as described in options 3 and 4 above. Too much for the kids to constantly be changing schools every few years, in my opinion.

I have no concerns about closing a school if BOE determines it is most fiscally responsible move due to declining enrollment. All schools have great teachers, many parents overestimate impact of transition on majority of children (students will thrive in any configuration as long as we have great educators and administrators and parents stop telling their children and community how terrible any change is), many parents overestimate impact of 5 extra minutes on bus (we are lucky to live in a district that provides busing for all students and we don't have municipal infrastructure (sidewalks) to allow for walking), community members' worries about property values seem ridiculous. BOE's focus should be to provide best education (including best teachers, optimal class size, good facilities even if that means change and NOT including closest school location to house, NOT including most comfort for parents, NOT including most consistency with past practice) in the most fiscally responsible way!

I believe that immediate action needs to be taken to solve the MH 1st grade issue. I also am in favour of immediate (in time for start of 2016-17 redistricting) to bolster MH and ALT rolls. It seems crazy to me that homes on Spencer, Quill Pen, Red Hill area, Starburst, Gentry etc are sent to Central when they can get to Mount Horeb walking in around 5 mins.... 2mins by car. A critical look at staff reduction is needed even without closing a school, expansion of pre-k should be researched to deal with over capacity of facilities where possible.

Please note model 2 does not reference any pre K

There is no space in recess and lunchroom area to add children from another school. This will cause a dangerous over crowded environment. A suburb with high taxes such as Warren should never consider closing a school and making the others overcrowded. Small class size is a big reason why families move to an expensive town like this. Siblings need to be in the same school from grades k-5. Many families have multiple children and need them leaving and going together as long as possible. What do other towns do when there is low enrollment certain years? I hope that they leave the schools configuration

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alone, focus on nice small class size and save money elsewhere.

Splitting the schools by grade will cause major issues for families with multiple children. It is ideal to have all children at the same school for a 6 year window to allow for the most involvement by parents. Events, parties and holidays would be missed more often by parents if children are separated into different schools by grade. This is upsetting to our children. Our support and presence is very important at all ages. Additionally the logistical complications would equal less parental involvement by the key parents who do a large percentage of the volunteering. More places = less time to help overall. Schools rely on volunteers. It could also lead to less involvement in after school activities since pickup would be very difficult to coordinate. Less activities is also not ideal for overall social and physical development. Families need to be kept together for as long as possible. There really needs to be a local census taken to estimate how many children are expected to enroll over the next 5 years.

The Board has not provided any fact/data based evidence to support why any model but our current configuration would be worth changing to. And the financial savings are clearly not enough to justify. Show us the data! And if data does not exist of a district of like demographics/geography, then our children should not be the guinea pigs. The Board should be presenting what options exist for optimizing our current structure. The Board needs to keep in mind that we need to look at the impact of any changes on the whole child. And when the enormous impact of transition in year one on top of longer bus times, lack of siblings in school, lack of role models/children to model for, lack of bathrooms for our youngest kids and lack of parental involvement are being considered unimportant (or justified for unproven educational benefit) it raises serious questions as to whether that whole child focus has been forgotten. Also serious analysis should be done in terms of the projected impact on future enrollment if changes were to be made (would it discourage people from moving to the area in flux years?) and what that means for property values. My family is an example - we moved here with 2nd grade/preK children two years ago. We would not have even looked in Warren had the town been transitioning school model or even closing a school. And it is worth noting that we would also not have even considered Warren if an unsegregated model of any kind existed as one large transition was enough for our children/family to handle in a short period of time.

It is unclear why this is still being examined. The initiative was kicked off as a result of a bad survey. The enrollment is not as dire as suggested. The financial analysis does not present a compelling case for closing a school. Our community loves our neighborhood schools. While some may be OK with a school closure, virtually no one is ok with the idea wants the school closure to be their own school. Which should say something to the BOE- we want to keep our neighborhood schools. Redistrict to balance out the classes if need be, but don't close a school.

Has anyone researched why there is a decline? Some people I have spoken to place it on the decline of employment in the area. Specifically jobs being sent overseas and companies leaving NJ. If a school reorganization occurs will we be paying more for services? Will taxes increase to cover municipalation staff?

Best option would be to keep 4 schools and redistrict to have equal distribution amongst the schools

As per the Wednesday meeting at WMS, since closing a school does not materialize into savings per taxpaying household and re-opening a school will incur an unbudgeted \$2+MM, I do not see how closing a school is a viable option. Why would \$9+MM savings from closing a school not result in a \$300 reduction in each tax-paying household? Efforts need to be focused on redistricting to address class sizes as well as ensuring consistency of academic programs.

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My older son goes to 5th grade and my younger son will start Kindergarten in Sep 2016 at ALT. I dont want to be driving to 2 different schools to drop them to school as the bus rides are long, so drop them every morning.

This survey is absolutely terrible. The Board has NOT provided anywhere near the information/data to the community to fill out this survey. I had to check a box on each model without enough information. I selected "No Preference" because the BOE has not done an adequate job presenting the options. At least the typos and grammar mistakes have been removed.

After attending the meeting Wednesday, the BOE should be embarrassed -- they came off at best incompetent and at worst potentially grossly negligent.

There are quite a few basic questions that need to be answered that were brought up last night.

* Are the financial projections correct?

- No one has contacted the bus company to understand if there are cost savings or increases if a school is closed.
- No one seems to know how much it really costs to reopen a school. Why didn't the BOE look at the cost to reopen Woodland years ago?
- No one looked at the effect on property values if a school is closed. Someone noted numerous studies that exist.
- I have zero confidence that the financial model is correct. The savings could just as easily be \$3000 per family or \$0 per family.
- It's almost as if the BOE had a preconceived conclusion that a school should not be closed and formulated results to back into that answer.

* Someone mentioned last night that the new Superintendent should be part of these conversations. I have to agree -- why isn't he involved?

* The demographic studies were discussed a lot last night. Why hasn't anyone contacted them to find out how they missed so badly? If the data is bad, the BOE is spinning its wheels on an issue that may not be an issue. Plus, has the BOE discussed the status of the low income housing that the Town Committee is addressing? Those additional units may add 100s of children.

* Why hasn't the BOE hired a consultant to help them with this process? It does not appear that any of the BOE members have the necessary background to complete this assessment on their own (I don't really expect them to have that background). A consultant could have provided the necessary information/data required to make an informed decision.

* If the financials are correct (and that is a big if), the discussion should then be about what is the best way to educate our children.

- The different models have not been properly vetted and the BOE/Superintendent have not provided a true view of which model is the best from an educational perspective.
- No one investigated whether there is information on a district that recently went through a similar change. It would be good to know if they liked the change and how the students did on standardized testing before and after the change.

* When will the Board set up sessions where the community can ask questions? The session on Wednesday was advertised as a Q&A, but the BOE members left the room. The two women running the session did a fine job of keeping the peace, but they did not have ANY answers. We didn't need to pay someone to write down questions on an easel. Also, the survey they tried to do with the multi-colored

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paper was ridiculous.

At the end of the day, I appreciate that the BOE members are volunteers and I commend them for giving their time to the community. However, if you volunteer for an important position, you have to take it seriously. If you don't have the background to answer the basic questions, you need to hire someone who does.

The models of splitting up age groups is something that is not practical at all. This would inconvenience families with more than one child and increase drop offs/pickups and increase the dropoff pickup window, causing increased hardship to working parents. Having four kids myself, in different schools, I know how hard it is to get the kids to their busses while still getting the younger ones ready. These grade/break models for schools are not preferred, no matter how you try to package them. I don't think the committee realizes how hard it is when a bus stop is not directly outside someone's door... It's very difficult to get three or four kids ready when you have to keep putting them all in the car to get to differently timed bus schedules. With these splits you could be giving families 3-4 different bus schedules. Yes, we see this model with MS and HS students, but these are younger children here, not older kids, who cannot be left at home or left to walk to bus stops alone. The bus stop may be a 1/4 of a mile down the street in some cases or at least out of the parents view. In cases of larger families or families with at least two children at two different schools, you will find many more parents driving because they have to pile all the kids in the car anyway.

This increased traffic then becomes a safety issue at the schools as traffic at dropoff becomes greatly increased. We are seeing this already with the change over from bussing to non-bussing at Our Lady of the Mount. There are too many kids running around in the parking lots. Nobody wants a tragedy like Kent place experienced back in 2006 – where the kids were running from the car to the building and a young girl was driven over by an SUV. There will be more chaos on the dropoff-pick up line and more parking attendants/better drop off systems will be needed.

ALSO bus times will increase if you do this method. Students already fall asleep on the long busrides home currently. If you do a breakdown of school by grades the bus routes/rides will be much longer. Again, many more parents will want to pick up, again creating an unsafe parking lot situation. Having many levels of ages within a school encourages nurturing and leadership amongst the older children – it will be a shame to lose the mentoring programs which are already established at some schools.

Predictions in decline are not fitting the original plan, we are finding that we have smaller classes than 5 years ago, but not small classes... There's still a good amount of students in each class to warrant keeping the schools open. We are not incurring any additional cost keeping the schools on, we are at status quo financially, whether we have a decline or not. We know that the cost to close and reopen a school is staggering in itself and we are losing some incredible resources in our current staff members if we close a school. We are not losing taxpayers in the community when kids age out because all homeowners still pay taxes whether the kids are in school or not. And, as neighborhoods begin to turn over, smaller families moving out of the bigger homes and growing ones moving in, or if lower income housing increases per state regulations, how will you get back all the talented staff you let go in order to keep our school rankings up?

Predictions for Mt. Horeb to have only 1 K class this year turned out to be three classes. These were smaller classes, but teachable ones.

The Center for Public Education's statistics, overwhelmingly indicate that a low student-to-teacher ratio can increase student achievement, enhance a child's test scores and provide lasting academic benefits. The current population at the schools is giving us an opportunity to develop our students to a higher potential, increasing our ranking, increasing our home values.

Those that have been in the schools with larger classes (24 kids+) can tell you that this was not conducive to learning.

If we close a school, and lose good staff moving forward, we will be hard pressed to replace to the same caliber in the future. When Woodland reopened there was a weeding out of staff who could not cut the mustard, but were not removed until a year or two into the teaching when their abilities showed lacking - the children were subjected to these staff members nonetheless. Mass hirings don't allow for you to

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screen candidates well enough.

If you can't guarantee staff a secure work environment, you will not be able to draw-in better teachers or as I said may make hasty choices.

I'm afraid we are going to lose many more good teachers who believe their positions could be threatened. And is this to give us an average tax break of only \$300/year? This comes back to the quality of schools we want to maintain – I think with all we pay in taxes \$300 is a drop in the bucket for most families.

I'm glad you are looking at all options, but you need to be sure to consider all aspects of all options and the way effect they will have on our community moving forward. I will only have one child that the change will still be in the K-5 system next year, but I'm looking at younger families who will have to deal with the decisions we make down the road... Will we be able to offer them the same quality education that we currently have? If not, then take my \$300 and put it to good use for the schools to remain small.

I support any initiative that would retain the excellent curriculum and smaller class sizes. I am very interested in more than one class per grade in a school, be it re-districting or closing one school. I would support a model that had more children in a grade level. I do not support my children potentially moving multiple times, that is truly a deal breaker and would lead me to seek private school options. Thank you for your hard work!!

Why wasn't rezoning an option like it was 3 years ago

Woodland is an amazing school and I would not support closing it. Small classes are extremely important and the district is known for exceptional education. Closing a school could be detrimental to the students' education.

Please make sure your models all reflect that there is a pre-k on all models!!
Consider expanding the pre K program, after researching viability.

I do not support closing of any schools!

Current configuration with moving the BOE into an elementary and town wide redistricting. Lease out the BOR office.

Closing an elementary school means the amount of children in a classroom will increase significantly making it more difficult for children to learn at the level and comfort of a smaller classroom. This is not an option I support.

Under no circumstance would I want any class size bigger than 18. We live in a town that can and should accommodate that. Smaller class size equals increases in learning and academic achievement.

As a parent with two young children (3 years and 1 year) slated to go to Mt. Horeb, I am concerned with the concept of only having one section per grade. As a former teacher, I think it is important for the children's social development to have the availability to change classmates throughout their tenure at school. I also believe multiple sections per grade level is important from a planning/collaboration perspective for teachers. With children so close in age I would like them to be in school together to increase my ability to volunteer and participate in their school experience. I definitely prefer the K-5 model, either with 3 or 4 schools. But if 4 schools remain, I hope that redistricting will occur in order to even out the schools and ensure multiple grade sections in every building.

I do not think that saving \$300 per household is worth making changes which could potentially harm our children, put small children on longer bus rides, get rid of some of our best new teachers, and potentially

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decrease the value of our homes. The STEEP project has already been proven wrong in terms of number of children registered for kindergarten in 2016...how can we make a decision based on this data? We have excellent schools in Warren, and people move here for our schools, why would we consider changing things when they have been working so well? I think that redistricting the elementary schools would be a better option if necessary.

Closing schools hurts property values.

With Glaxo SmithKline moving a large office to Warren - won't there be an increase in families with kids moving to Warren that will offset the low enrollment numbers?

What happens to the teachers and staff of the school that possibly closes? If we do have a change, what will happen in the future when we do have more children coming to Warren? Start everything all over again? I say leave it as is. If the overall choice is to close a school, it should be Woodland.

The cost savings of closing a school now is very small, but the cost of reopening the school again would be much more. It doesn't make sense to close a school now. Additionally, the enrollment numbers have gone up since the survey was done and there is still building going on in Warren. What about redistricting some of the schools to make enrollment more equal?

Please leave our schools as they are. Changing the models to be switching schools thru grade schools serves no value. Also, a savings for tax pest that is so small merits no school to be closed. Thank you

Large tax bills in this town are at least 75% due to the school district budget and municipal taxes in Warren have tripled since the early 1990's. While some people may say that \$320/household is not worth closing a school, it is incumbent upon the board to make sure that all tax payers money is used wisely. Enrollment might keep declining or might just have leveled off. The enrollment might stay steady for the next 20 years. Are you going to keep all four schools open for five or more years waiting for enrollment to pick up? If the four elementary schools are not being fully utilized then one should be closed so to save the taxpayers the burden of ever increasing school taxes.

1) Model 1: with redistricting town wide
2) Model 2: close Woodland, redistrict town wide. Lease out Woodland to the WHRH for possible room for Mountainside high school students.

I would suggest that if re-districting is the solution, then the current fifth graders be grandfathered to remain in their current school. That way, they don't have to attend a new school for one year and then go to another new school (middle school) one year after that.

I had to check No Preference because the BOE has NOT provided enough information on the various options. 50 obvious questions came up at the meeting on Wednesday and most of us were shocked that they had not been investigated.

So my first piece of advice to the BOE is to hire someone with the proper background to assist with this analysis. No one on the BOE has any experience with this sort of study. If they think they do, they should have remained at the "Q&A" session on Wednesday instead of running out of the room. They left because they know they don't know the answers to many of the questions.

Second, it is crazy that the new superintendent isn't more involved. If we have asked him and he has

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declined, then we should fire him and restart the search. I'm guessing no one has engaged him which is very shortsighted.

Finally, has the BOE looked at another structure in between the different models. I would think we could go partially unduplicated with the following:

- Pre-K - 2nd in 2 schools
- 3rd - 5th in 2 schools
- Charge the Pre-k half of what the Giving Nest charges so it doesn't lose money
- Sell the BOE office
- Move BOE to one of the schools

This would solve your declining enrollment problem, keep all the schools open and generate cash to fund new and better educational programs.

There are other options. Redistrict Warren in its entirety. Last Redistrict of Woodland and Central was a "band-aid". Other options you did not present were bringing in a pre-k paid program. Elementary schools options not presented: pre-k thru 2, then elementary school grades 3-5, middle remains the same. I am a teacher and with grades preK-2 you can hire or chose more "early childhood educated" teachers/professionals for that building and population. Close the Bd offices and rent out that space. Move Your site offices to another less crowded school in district. Bussing will be significant impact plus extra cost. Closing a school decreases property value. When school reopens it will raise taxes. Warren has no "blue ribbon" school to up its value and it seems the way our curriculum is going, the children are losing more overall in experiences and quality work. "Rigor" is overused when we are not doing well on our state tests and have a lousy middle school math program that everyone complains about but no one changes. With declining enrollment consider reducing some of the staff. Each school does not need a guidance counselor all day every day. Keep two. Make them split schools. Our librarian sees 6 classes a week (k-2) and does nothing else - no collaboration no work on projects - make them part time if they are not servicing all of our children, even upper grades, regularly with authentic and valuable lessons. Middle school is completely over-staffed! Really take a look at some of these other objectives and options before you close a school or jump to a model mentioned in survey that does not benefit our children. That's the purpose of your nomination as board members. Our children and their quality of education come first! And lastly, parent involvement is absolutely necessary to run the school enrichment programs and lunch programs offered each year. With a new superintendent coming aboard and some more significant research and homework to be completed before you make a decision - you should reconsider and put this decision off another year.

There is no option other than maintaining 4 duplicated neighborhood schools. As your own studies have shown, there are minimal tax savings in closing a school. You have also yet to research additional costs such as the cost of new bus routes, which would further deplete our tax savings. There have been no studies to show how an unduplicated model provides more educational success for our kids than the current model. Unduplicated models provide inconsistency, separation of siblings, decreased parental involvement, decreased property values, loss of talented teachers and staff, even further declined enrollment through loss to private schools (as we would pull our kids from the public school system, as would others I know)...I could go on and on. Come on, WTBOE. Use plain common sense. The community does not support making any changes beyond a town-wide redistricting. Listen to the people who elected you, or plan to be replaced at election time by those who do listen.

People move to Warren for small classes, personal experiences, fantastic education. This is what we have now. Do not change it.

It seems to me the STEEP team made a sub-optimized decision regarding the maximum amount of time children should be on a bus. If the state figure is 45 minutes, why did the team decide 35 was the max time allowable? That limits the options. Most children enjoy their bus time.

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I am, frankly, disappointed at the lack of investigation regarding the alternative models. The idea that the BOE - fiduciaries and elected representatives - might vote for such upheaval when not having researched or studied redistricting, busing costs, impacts on splitting elementary school siblings, impacts on multiple elementary school transitions, decreased parental involvement or a host of other things is a flat out abdication of responsibility. End this madness now and figure out how to maximize the wonderful resources our town has.

Consider solving the Immediate problem now 2016/2017 with splitting grades...as an education model, I think it's great..

Joel Gajadharsingh, professor emeritus of education at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, is considered a leading expert on combined classes. He says students in split grades "do just as well, if not better" academically, thanks to repetition and exposure to another grade. He adds that their ability to behave and get along with others is also superior. They're more independent, confident, responsible, dependable, respectful, collaborative and — if you haven't heard enough already — even tend to develop better study habits, regardless of whether they're in the younger or older grade.

Keep it the way it is (4 elementary schools) or if you have to close 1 elementary school, close the oldest school (which presumably has the least modern features and requires the most maintenance) and redistrict to minimize bus time for students. Keep class sizes as small as possible (given financial constraints).

Keep all four 4 elementary schools and redistrict some of the streets close to mount Horeb that go to Central or Alt should be at Mt Horeb. First grade class only has one class which is very negative for social growth

Thank you for your diligence in this matter. As things stand at this point, it's apparent that it is in the best interest of the community NOT to close any school. And in the end, community is really at the core of what makes Warren the choice place to live. Please don't allow what started out as a well intended project to address 'declining enrollment' to cannibalize a community. Experts this, experts that, ... in the end the people are the voice.

Our elementary schools should remain as it is today. There is a family environment and huge parental involvement that will be broken if we change. Models #3 and #4 are not good because children will have to transition too many times. Combining specific grade levels is not the best in my opinion. Siblings share a lot of the great assemblies together and enjoy their bus ride not to mention that it's great when teachers and staff know your family. It feels like a big family after all. Why change that? please keep our schools as they are. This is a great district as it is!

In order to improve the bus time, we would suggest that the buses have designated pick up points through the neighborhoods where this is conducive (i.e., safe for children) rather than stopping at every home on the same street.

Based on the information that has been provided by the committee members, it is beyond clear that things should not change. The 1st grade class in Mt. Horeb should only be addressed.

We want to keep current status quo

This minimal financial savings seems completely unnecessary. No resident of this town hurts for \$320... The initial assumption seems inaccurate enrollment will grow as home sales bring young families.

It will cost more down the road to re-open a closed elementary school than the savings will be to close a school. Furthermore, I believe taxpayers will never see a decrease in their taxes if a school is closed...the savings will be diverted elsewhere and not directly to the taxpayers.

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If we are not saving any money I'd like to see the schools stay open. I would support the closing of one school to enhance friendship opportunities with exposure to more children in their grade.

Redistributing the students / redistricting to have more students attend their nearest school seems like the most immediate, viable and cost efficient solution. If numbers are declining as per the demographic report - a trim of staff numbers now to make the most expensive cost reduce is something that should be considered. Even with, as I understand, kindergarten numbers being up on estimate, staff numbers should be cut now. The 3% cost saving of closing a school is stomachable to keep all the facilities open. I moved to Warren for the existing school system from Lonng Hill. I think long hill has too many transitions.

Maybe consider combining grades next year to solve immediate problem .. May be another option if we're going to shake up the district anyway

I am a strong believer in a town such as Warren that the class sizes should and CAN be much smaller to accommodate today's high demand for education.

What about closing the BOE and putting into an elementary school. Lease out the BOE building. Also enlarging the pre-k program.

We have 3 graduates from Warren, ages 20, 18 and 16. They all went to WHRHS. Their education in Warren was exceptional, largely due to the small class sizes. In fact, comparing the experiences of all 3 children, the education was better when my child had smaller class sizes. That's why people move to Warren -- to get the exceptional Warren education, which comes largely from the class sizes. This does NOT come from the consistency between schools. There needs to be extremely careful research about long term outcomes before deciding what happens to a school building and its students and staff.

Thank you for asking, I've been wanting to provide constructive feedback for sometime. What would be extremely helpful, would be to summarize issues clearly and succinctly along with simple (non academia language) pros and cons. I've frequented the BOE meetings and find it extremely difficult to stay focused especially after working a 10 hour day. The meeting outlining the different options and deck was repetitive and way too long - it could have been summarized in 1 page. It took about 20 minutes just to clear a definition slide that should have been in the appendix anyway - that's 20 minutes * 60 people or 20 full time hours of time spent.

The bottom line for me (this is the summary one pager), saving \$300 -\$400 in annual real estate taxes for 5 years or so does not substantiate closing a school, especially when you consider that the market value of everyone's home will decrease and it's not like the politicians will lower taxes, they'll just spend that money elsewhere. Please do not disrupt the current model for this inconsequential amount of perceived savings and a fact-less, untested (in any material sense) desire for a un-duplicated model. Keep the time tested local model in tact and do not fall victim to a theory gone wild just because it carries a "princeton" flashy marketing name. Please stick to facts and facts only. Thank you

Please do not close any schools. The board should be focused on improving the current education, and focusing on bad teachers. I feel like this is another opportunity to get distracted on non value added items - perhaps the teachers union floats these ideas every several years just prior to a contract negotiation for distraction purposes. Focus on this and the practices of the best districts in the state. What does Milburn do and we don't? How does Milburn attract and compensate teachers compared to our model? What programs do they provide and how are they so efficiently run? We have 3 - 4 curriculum administrators who for some reason don't seem capable in implementing / standardizing practices amongst each school. Why does one school have a homework club, while another has a Java / coding club? I'd make a listing of

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all clubs and extra curricular activities for each school for comparison. How come in some schools, the science fair is led by teachers while in other schools, it's led by parents? How can we improve teacher involvement across the board?
These are all simple questions that need to be rationalized and are aligned to the Board's stated mission.
Thank you

Just leave things as is.

Unless there has been an overwhelming concern for the existing school structure, which I'm unaware of, I'm still unsure why this is even being considered. We have enough money to sustain the schools, there is no real savings to the town ultimately if a school is closed (closing costs, maintenance costs followed by reopening costs) nor to the residents that make it worth the outrage it is causing. The BOE needs to find ways to increase enrollment by working with the town planning commission and getting younger families in here rather than more seniors. I'm not sure when Warren became the pre-eminent destination for senior housing. Our town leaders need to reassess where we stand right now and Warren's future moving forward. That's where time, money and effort should be focused.

The Board of Ed should be focused on increasing programming relevant to our children's futures rather than changing a school system that is highly regarded.

As an alumnus of ALT elementary and a current employee at ALT elementary school, I am most in favor of Model 1. As a student and a staff member I am proud to say I attended and work at ALT, just as my peers are proud to announce their origin neighborhood elementary school. I was a special education student and having been in the resource room for three years of my time at Warren School District School, I understand the struggles the special education and the regular ed children go through transitioning schools. I found my transition year of 6th grade, 9th grade, and college were my most difficult years. Although this may be a personal weakness of mine, I am concerned about the negative social and academic affect the potential transitions (in model 3a and 4) will have on the students I work with.

While I do not wish to see a school close, I do think we need to consider a town wide redistricting take place to help even out the enrollment.

I'm not sure why a building needs to be closed. What will that do to our home values and how does that compare to the savings that closing a school will provide?
Can we redistrict to solve the issue of only one class of first graders at Mt. Horeb?
What about adding a Transitional Primary Program for students who have completed kindergarten but don't really have the skills to be successful in first grade?
Does everything have to be exactly the same at all the schools? What about a little individuality? The same standards can be covered in a variety of ways. Let the teachers use their creativity and knowledge base of the students with whom they work to decide how to teach the content.
This is quite a task you've undertaken.

I wholeheartedly believe in creating opportunities for parent involvement in schools but have recently noticed that there are too many parents in the buildings during school hours. I believe this to be a result of administration allowing PTO parents to come in more than they should. I have noted many distractions created by overzealous parents trying to be overly involved.

Thank you for presenting the options on a controversial topic. I applaud the BOE for raising this issue. This is a reality that we need to confront. While I don't like it, this declining enrollment issue will resurface again in the next 3-5 years. Let's face it, Warren's population is no longer growing. All that said, I believe we should defer a decision on closing a school until the facts become overwhelming. We are not there yet. Thanks

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It seems like a redistricting is a definite need.

What about a district PreK-1st. This allows all younger children to come together - new parents to meet each other and focuses on foundational educational needs. Then grades 2-5 can be managed in the other 3 (or 2) buildings allowing for more focused and critical preparation all education. By this time kids are very active in sports and parents are more experienced. Other districts have gone to this model with significant success.

A consideration if closing a school is that all of the schools/gyms/fields are used by sports in town.. Basketball soccer etc and that WHRHS students volunteer at Woodland since they can walk there across the parking lot from WHRHS

I feel that our home values would decrease more than the amount of tax savings that closing a school would provide. It is not empty nesters that are looking to buy these large homes in Warren, it is people who have children or are planning to have children and they are looking for neighborhood schools and smaller class sizes. If that isn't what they want they would stay in more urban areas.

Perhaps lines for school districts should be more flexible than they currently are. It would make sense too to have kids who live close to a school go to that school. Doesn't appear to be like that. Also siblings love that they are in school with their friends. Guidance counsellors won't be able to see the growth in students or spit warning signs if they don't have the continuity of working with the kids for more than 2 or 3 years at a time. Guidance counsellors also know the parents and how they parent and that's helpful when there are issues too. This will be lost with any model other than Duplicated.

To much homework for all kids!

Child at Watchung Hills currently. Taxes too high in this town and that is why young families choose not to move here. Regional high school also chased families away when you can have your own like New Providence, Summit, Chatham etc.

I moved here 19 1/2 years ago from a district that did the last 3 models, NO, NO, NO. I had 4 kids 1 in each school including high school & because of proximity to the bus stop I had to drive them to school putting 50 miles on my car every morning. My youngest had to change schools 3 years in a row & it almost cost her getting a good education due to the stress of the instability these changes caused. Not all kids adjust well to these changes. The end results were it did nothing to save costs & district was forced to cut programs & it did nothing to help the children except no stability that children need in K-5.

My daughter is currently in 8th grade and won't really be affected by what happens at the elementary school level and I don't have any children going into elementary school. I think they should just keep everything as it is and be glad that class sizes are so small so our kids can get a little more individual attention. The cost of closing a school can't be that much different from keeping everything the way it is.

Class size is most important

It's financially irresponsible to not close 1 school if there are not enough students. It would be nice if Warren taxes would not go up. \$9,000,000 savings is a lot of money!

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The buildings are not as important as the quality of the teachers.

Thank you for considering this thorny issue from all angles, not just monetary. I learned a lot from reading everything posted on the BOE website about the STEEP process. Never would have thought the "Princeton Model" had merit before I read about it. Still not my favorite idea - I am intrigued that one of the issues the teachers raised was about siblings being near each other. Some other models allow for more time together for siblings. At the same time, I am intrigued by the curriculum possibilities when grades are consolidated across the district - as in the model with two PreK/K-3 schools and one 4-5 school. Though, I am less worried about parental involvement opportunities than some must be, I do think this model allows families 4+ years in one place and then for those that choose to stay involved in Grades 4-5 - really how hard will it be to transition to that new school? I am curious what options are being explored for covering the costs of an unused building. Can it be leased for another use for a few years? Or does that ultimately cost more in the end, because of the work needed to convert the building back to use as a school? (And where did the re-opening cost projections come from? The technology upgrade number seems to be shot in the dark - and seems it could potentially be very low.) Thank you again for all your hard work.

There are people on fixed incomes or who have children in college and any break in taxes is much appreciated. We can not afford our public schools to be considered small Private Schools that benefit only small portion of our town.

Closing a school is a hard choice, but if there are not enough students then it is the fiscally responsible thing to do!

I think all of your plans are short sighted. The greenwood meadows section of warren will turn over in 5 years and you will be re opening a school. Perhaps one of the items to be considered is coordinating with the WHR district to see if they have needs (an alternative high school program, a facility where they can offer dual enrollment to students, etc) and lease or make an arrangement with them.

The whole town should be redistricted and 1 school should be closed.

I currently have two children in WHRHS but both attended ALT. I always felt that 6 grades in one school was too much. The older kids on the bus with the younger ones just exposes the younger ones to things that don't need to hear. The ideal option for me would be the k-3 and 4-5 option. That limits transitions while still keeping a separation between 5/6 year olds and 10/11 year olds. I hate the idea of closing a school but if it's not feasible to maintain 4 schools I understand. Ideally the perfect scenario would be 2 k-3 schools and 2 4/5 schools. Questions ...what happens to the 4th school? What do we do if enrollment goes back up? Warren is known for its small class sizes and I feel if we don't maintain them there will be issues maintaining the quality teaching we are known for. I will soon be a taxpayer with no children in public schools but even with that I don't want to see the quality of education be sacrificed.

There were 3 elementary schools 25 yrs ago and everything was fine. So, I believe to save our taxes until we need to expand again.

I have a 2 month old and 2 yr old, and am a Warren resident. This issue is important to my family.

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There's already very little common area space in the multipurpose lunchrooms, hallways will be crowded, recess will be over crowded. Leave the schools alone and cut the budget in other areas. Siblings need to stay together, many families have multiple young children who enjoy being in the school environment together as well as convenience in pick up or drop off in case on child misses the bus, emergency etc. other districts don't close schools or do the Princeton model. Princeton model is very inconvenient for families that's why most schools don't do that and it shouldn't be an option in an upscale town like warren

Decision should be made with the choice that this will be the model for at least 6 years. The children who will be kindergartners when this decision is made should be the ones that keep that model until the end of elementary school years.

It is impossible to evaluate the options without knowing the financial impact. Additionally no data is provided regarding any other impact, such as time on bus, class size,etc. This survey is purely asking wants without any information on impact. Bottom line, I want the most cost-effective option and I do not want my taxes to increase in any way. Taxes are already way too high. I have one child in the high school who went to Central School and the Middle School.

I believe that all elementary schools should remain open. Warren has no lack of money and I think it is beneficial for students to have smaller class sizes and do not believe it is in the students interest to jump from school to school during these younger years.

There's already very little common area space in the multipurpose lunchrooms, hallways will be crowded, recess will be over crowded. Leave the schools alone and cut the budget in other areas. Siblings need to stay together, many families have multiple young children who enjoy being in the school environment together as well as convenience in pick up or drop off in case on child misses the bus, emergency etc. other districts don't close schools or do the Princeton model. Princeton model is very inconvenient for families that's why most schools don't do that and it shouldn't be an option in an upscale town like warren

My children are grown but attended ALT. It is important that the intangibles are not forgotten in this process. Many people may have purchased a home due to the location and neighborhood school. This is not a decision to be made solely on cost savings.

We cannot have young children changing schools every couple of years. Although children are resilient, they need stability and consistency. Changing schools so often during grade school doesn't allow children to develop relationships with teachers, librarians, nurses, guidance counselors and administrators, which is so important in their formative years.

There is only one school on the north side of route 78., which is woodland school. So pleas don't close woodland. I don't want my kids travel that long to the other side of 78, and they will stay too long on the school bus!!! Dropping them to school will be much more difficult considering the traffics every day.

Close ALT because the students who go to ALT are also close enough to Mt. Horeb.

Do NOT close an elementary school. That is all.

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The decisions are difficult to vote on when we don't know what the potential savings are? I'd say any savings less than \$500 per household, per year no change..there has to be a financial threshold, isn't that what this is about, costs?

We should be focusing attention on ways to improve overall PARCC scores and ensuring that all students have access to the same after-school programs and that the quality of teachers is equally distributed across all schools. Saving a mere \$1500 over the course of 5 years and spending countless additional dollars on demographic surveys that appear to not even be valid is a waste of time and tax dollars. It is essential that the new superintendent be involved in these decisions, even if he does not officially begin to work until the summer.

We should have done a redistricting last year. It is criminal that the small first grade class in Mt. Horeb will have to wait until 3rd grade to see any changes.

I don't believe the cost savings outlined by the STEEP committee is that significant to warrant the closing of a school.

The superintendent must be part of the decision making process. Any number of studies and opinions of parents cannot account for the experience of a professional in the field of education.

I moved to Warren because of the great education our school system provides to our children - particularly the smaller class sizes and the ability to provide instruction at the right level for each child. While I no longer have grade school aged children I still believe strongly that closing a school would decrease the level of education for incoming students and drive young families away from moving to Warren.

Close the board office, move the board to empty space in one of the schools and rent out the board office to generate some income.
Cut back on the over abundance of administration positions.

A savings of \$1500 (\$300/year) per household is not a significant savings in relation to negative impact from the changes suggested in Model 2, 3 or 4. Also, I cannot support a decision made by the Board if they are making this decision without the input of the new superintendent.

I'm sure the board will do its diligence in making this decision better than I can.

Woodland is a great school and should not be closed. Information has indicated that enrollment for all the Kindergarten classes is projected to be up next year, so I'm not sure why elementary schools need to be closed.

I spent much time reading all your data and presentations. My only concern/cavot to my responses is that I read the Fall 2016 kindergarten enrollments is 17.5% higher than the projections used for this study. That results in about 16 student increase at the kindergarten level. While many of the classes are extremely under utilized it should give us pause to see how that would affect the class numbers for those current schools or is we closed a school. And we need to pause to understand why that number is so far off before we continue. Are the underlying data assumptions correct?

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To attract new families and keep all of our real estate up closing schools is not attractive to potential buyers / tax payers. For the taxes we pay our children should have the best education and opportunities.

Kids benefit from having older role models in school. The older kids too benefit from being role models to the younger kids. It helps them modulate their behaviors too. Have you considered any k-8 school models? Current thinking is tending towards not having all the adolescent hormones in one school but having the kids of all ages in a school. The older kids can learn from helping the younger kids to read and younger kids love older kids. It's great that specially for boys to have older boy role models.

Consider this expanding regular pre-k usig existing lesser occupied teachers. This can be pulled at a years notice. Very flexible.

Consider not bussing the nurotypical preschool kids to save costs . don't bus preschool not in PIP or GROW

Small classes very important.

I feel very strongly to keep all 4 schools open and redistrict with an OUTSIDE hired consultant. For my family the MOST important factor is keeping small class sizes with the least amount of transitions for the children. The cost savings for closing 1 school is minimal per household but the consequences for the families and the children are significantly greater. As for parental involvement, it will be very difficult for those who will have children in multiple schools (at very young ages) seeing as we are humans we can not be in more than one place at a time. Children at this age will see it as their parent choosing one sibling over another. How do I explain to my child that I can no longer be part of their school because I work a full time job and can only pick one school to contribute my extra time to. Please consider what I have said and keep ALL 4 schools open with smaller classes and redisrict with an outside hired consultant. Thank you.

If enrollment is dropping we need to consolidate resources

we need to be aware that there is not an endless amount of money and taxes cannot keep rising

I appreciate the opportunity to provide input; however this 'survey' has not been developed into a survey that will yield any meaningful results. Most questions have no definition and are open to interpretation with assumptions being made on what is "good" or "bad".

Based on the data presented by the Board of Education, the only major change that should be considered going forward is redistricting. There should not be any further consideration of eliminating the neighborhood school model the community clearly favors.

What about the option of simply redistricting?

Thank you for all of your hard work. If parents attended board meetings regularly, this wouldn't have gotten as messy as it did. Many of these topics were decided about throughout the last year without any public input. Not the board's fault that parents get involved at the 11th hour and are generally uninformed.

Concerned about small number of students at grade level in a school

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Per household savings is completely insignificant. Given the rate taxes have increased lately this saving will be eaten by the politicians inside of year. Bus company costs undetermined and controlled by monopolistic entity. Have watched my entire street turn over with young families in last 5 years. Not sure town is being forward looking with this plan. Only other model I could support would be to move 6th grade to elementary schools and the board of Ed into the middle school. Closing a school and transitioning students 3 times with longer, more costly rides into schools with larger classes doesn't even seem like it should have made the option list. Let alone selling our children's education and country's future for \$325.

Redistrict if necessary to balance the schools to address social concerns of our current configuration.

Consistency is the key.

We need a viable solution for declining enrollment. By petitioning to keep all schools running, is counterproductive. We need to analyze and communicate the impact of consolidation at all grade levels. Currently, my son's 2nd grade class is at max district size and it would be ideal to consolidate these kids. We are all just a few miles away from these schools; to create a smaller class size which would certainly yield a substantial benefit to the students and teachers which are great trade offs in their educational progression here in Warren. They all meet up at WMS, so why not have a larger group of them consolidated and becoming friends and students together earlier than 6th grade.

Would the class size be not need to be larger if model #4 or #4 is used? If so, may support that model if model #1 not an option

Highest priority is to continue to be leading in the competitive rankings with other high achieving districts.

ALT is one of the most impressive schools my wife and I have ever known. The staff have created an atmosphere of encouragement and they teach our child to strive for more when he is learning, creating and evolving into a young man. We are thoroughly pleased with the efforts and limitless kindness we've grown to expect from ALT. This school is truly one of the greatest accomplishments the town of Warren has made and deserves to keep its place in the community.

I prefer closing one school, transitioning to a k-2 school, two 3-5 schools, and a middle school.

I am totally against closing any elementary school

Warren will never really need 4 elementary schools, with some expansions, could accommodate population fluctuations. if one is to closed there should be considerations to sell unused property to raise capital to be used towards the remaining schools

Me feelings are that although savings has been mentioned by closing a school, the cost of closing and then reopening a school if need arises has not been addressed. Extensive time commuting children and busing costs were not addressed with the newer models also. I believe that the other models have not been researched well enough and if the board wants our consideration a more thorough look at cost needs to be made.

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Class sizes should be top priority! Nothing else

I am very disappointed that board members were not at the 4/6 STEEP meeting to answer questions posed by their constituents. By not facing the public, they missed valuable opportunities to give and receive information. I hope that the board will hold a special session dedicated to this issue so that each and every voting member can interact with the public regarding this crucial issue.

And, I am very concerned because there seemed to be significant "holes" in the data that would support the proposed models (#s 2 through 5). For example, how in the WORLD could the BOE not have the bus companies price out each option and determine, for example, the amount of time kids in the Woodland area would sit on a bus if they were to attend Mt. Horeb? It was almost laughable that at the end of the 4/6 meeting "they" expected us to endorse a favored model, yet we have no clue about the impact such a change would have on our kids.

In some cases, the data seems to be flawed. Kindergarten numbers are clearly off as enrollment this year has shown. And, although it is anecdotal, the president of the local soccer association gave an interesting statistic, stating that he had an unprecedented increase in pre-k enrollment this year. While all of those children are not Warren residents, how could there be such a real increase in numbers for his soccer program, while the projected numbers for school enrollment at that age level are decreasing drastically enough to consider turning the entire district upside down?

Finally, I also would have been interested to see additional "models" proposed, like:

1. keeping all schools open and redistricting the entire town to balance Mt. Horeb's obvious lack of enrollment in certain grades.
2. splitting the town in half and having two parallel, unduplicated systems with partner schools-- for example, Woodland (k-2) and Central (3-5) and ALT (k-2) and Mt. Horeb (3-5). While the many transitions would be disruptive and undesirable, perhaps the bus times could be kept at a minimum (although we haven't a clue as to what those would be anyway).

Thank you for soliciting feedback. I trust that the entire board will sit with the public to address concerns and offer answers that are based on evidence and facts. As long as the answer remains "we don't know yet," no action should be taken.

Heard the new superintendent is not involved in this decision which he should be.

leave them all open or combine 2 and 2 schools and do grds. K-2 ALT 3,4,5 Mt. Horeb and the same K,1,2 Central 3,4,5 Woodland however it would work

I believe the BOE should let the community know what are the financial implications of closing one school and consolidating others. How this would impact individual household from tax standpoint?

The questions in this survey were more on point, then any meeting I have attended. Thank you, finally. I don't feel like the characteristics of the study represented what the parents of the community had requested. We have not be presented with any information on a scenario that was successful and similar to Warren. Is there a reason for this? Studies cited by attendees (facilitators included in notes for this last meeting's discussion) show a greater academic success in test scores, consistent curriculum, parental involvement & teacher advancement was with neighborhood schools. Also, the cost savings per family, is insignificant and will only be absorbed by the township especially when considering the disruption to the

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community. It isn't worth closing a school when you have children creating memories with their siblings and neighbors, amazing teachers (that would be losing their jobs), ptos with parents that are involved, creative and well run now, spending a short amount of time on their bus, curriculum, student support and activities that are challenging and proving to be beneficial and necessary for the children to thrive during these elementary years!

The new superintendent should be involved in this decision.

Please consider the tax implications per year! We do not need 4 elementary schools in this town! The kids will adjust better than the parents!!!

Actually try to have your schools deal with kids with autism/ other disabilities and not turn them away from the district within 5 minutes. And actually train your staff to handle kids with autism. The district might actually have a good rep with people if you show you care, because we all now you don't :)

As a former student attending overcrowded elementary and middle school In NYC , I strongly valued , and willingly payed higher taxes for my children to get a better education with smaller class sizes by moving to Warren. Our taxes should quite honestly cover this issue. Please reconsider and listen to the parents of our children I need. Thank you

There is no appreciable cost savings per family, no appreciable benefit to our children and considerable risk that the population studies / projections could be flawed, resulting in the need to re-open a closed school in the next 5-10 years. There is little justification to consciously administer chaos to the education process, cost teacher jobs and reduce real estate values at this stage. Kids require educational stability and any plan other than Model #1 would be destructive to them and to the community at large.

I do not understand why we are looking at this if the savings are minimal.

no good reason to close a school

My elementary school closed in my first grade and we consolidated. I was a shy child and had no adjustment issues as I wasn't alone. As our taxes are going up the best experience for our kids is living in an "affordable" neighborhood. Smart judgement of closing 1 school while maintaining the high quality education is a good call

From what I understand from the previous board meetings, there is really not much financial savings to the township by closing a school. However, I think this would be detrimental to the children and also to the property values of the township. The high ranking school system is one of the reasons we chose to move to Warren and it is a selling point of all the realtors. I think any of the models suggested other than what is currently in place would greatly diminish the reputation of the Warren Township schools. This would lead to less families wanting to move to Warren and perpetuate the low enrollment issue. Closing any of the schools is NOT a solution!!!

Our children and families have formed a community at Woodland. We are a family with the teachers and staff

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Consistency for kids and not keep moving from school to school is important to me. It seems there has been many times kids have been rezoned (we were one of them originally at Woodland). Closing a school may save something on taxes but may raise taxes even more when re-opening. So if a school has to close, I would prefer Model #3 if it doesn't effect long term consistency when population goes up or down in Warren. Thank You!

It's important to us to have our boys (2 years apart) be in the same school for as many years as possible. They look out for one another and we feel that's important.
We also value having aa small of a class size as possible for them. Closing a school and having 3 elementary schools will likely result in larger class sizes over time.
If our taxes are unchanged, there should be sufficient budget to keep the current schools open. If one particular kindergarten has low enrollment for one year, the situation may change in the following years. That particular issue maybe dealt with individually without closing an entire school.
Let's give our kids a chance for more personalized attention of their teachers if possible with small class sizes.

It's the sort of issue that may force parents who share our values to send the kids to a private school if classes become too large or if the kids need to go to a different school every 2 years.

Thank you very much for considering our opinions in this crucial matter.

grade one at my school only has one section. must be fixed

Came from a district which split Elementary K-2 then 3-5 and it was tough on my child transitioning. My youngest should be entering ALT in September and I love the fact that she would be in the same School for K through 5.

I would prefer redistricting before closing a school.

Prefer k-6, 7-9 jr high - three elementary schools is ok. My hometown went from 4 to three elementary schools 10 yrs after building the new 4th elementary school - was no big deal. I'm tired of us trying to make our elementary school kids be jr high kids. Get rid of the chrome books in elementary school and focus on fundamentals. No combined grades.

I am hoping you are also assessing having high school students start later in the day and the grammar school students start earlier in the day as all educational reports denote that is the healthiest timing scenario for high school students to learn in.

The board needs to resolve any MH small grade issues immediately. A redistrict could deal with this very swiftly (in time for Sept 2016) and then once this is done, address the next issue once that pressure valve has been released. Redistricting seems to be the solution consensus of parents around town.

Use one of the elementary schools to provide much-needed services for those students identified as gifted. Refer to the highly successful model Bridgewater Township uses.

Do not close ALT. That would be a huge mistake if that were a consideration. School facilities are modern and up to date, instructors and administration are excellent and have excellent reputations. Think very

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carefully and get the support of the community before doing something potentially damaging to the town, it's residents and students. Thank you.

Small grades do not offer the students enough choices of friends, nor can the cost of keeping small schools open be justified. The best solution is to close one school and keep the current grade configuration. The other choices would not work in our large town due to excessively long bus rides.

can you provide additional information on kindergarten enrollment for next year per school? and is it possible to rezone in a way to keep all schools open.

It is difficult to make an informed decision without accurate numbers of children within the district. The reality is a school needs to be closed, the board needs to focus its energy on determining what building and how to rezone.

This is NOT the first time Warren has had declining enrollment. In the 1980's the school board under the direction of Dr A Tomaso first closed one school and had 2 K-3 schools, 1 4-5 and Middle 6-8. After 2 years with continuing declines in enrollment, a second school was closed and Mt Horeb and Central were both K-5 with Middle 6-8. The children's education did not suffer and neither did the children who are very adaptable. The parents are the ones most unable to accept change. The Board has an educational responsibility to the students AND a fiduciary responsibility to the tax payers. If enrollment has declined 26% over 9 years, what has taken the Board so long to look into saving some taxpayer money? How can you justify maintaining 5 schools with 26% fewer children?
Prior to these school closings, enrollment was balanced among the schools using swing streets and the education of the children was not impacted.
Have the financial studies included rental of the closed schools?