

Frequently Asked Questions about the Proposed New Middle School in Clifton Heights

- 1. Why do we need a new middle school? Don't we need a new high school more?**
 - a. Our middle schools are overcrowded with classes over 30 students and classrooms housed in basements and other inappropriate locations. Currently, 108 middle school classes are running with over 30 students. The District has attempted to remedy these enrollment concerns by changing the middle school schedule on two different occasions. Upper Darby High School has also recently changed its schedule for the 2019-2020 school year. While Upper Darby High School has a large number of students, the classes are not over capacity.

- 2. Why is the Clifton Heights athletic field being considered?**
 - a. Upper Darby School District owns the Clifton Heights fields and the Borough of Clifton Heights has rented them for \$1 per year since 1977. If another location is used, the School District would have to purchase that property which would further raise the cost of the new school. The geographic location of Clifton Heights is also ideal, bringing a middle school to the southwestern end of the district. Middle school students from Clifton Heights will be able to walk to school. The District has considered other options and locations.

- 3. What is going to happen to the Clifton Heights athletic fields? Will Clifton PAL and other community groups still be able to use the fields?**
 - a. New fields will be built including a multipurpose football size field, four baseball/softball diamonds, and two short-sized soccer fields. Community input would be taken during the design phase for the field space. These fields will be available for community use since the needs of the school will typically be during school hours and just after school rather than during the times that community events are held.
 - b. At this time, Upper Darby School District student athletes already compete on the Clifton Heights athletic fields during the school year. The District does not want to prevent Clifton PAL from continuing their programs. If there are any issues in this area, the District would welcome an opportunity to find a solution until the new fields are completed.

4. How much is this going to raise my property taxes?

- a. At this time, the Upper Darby School District is underfunded by the Commonwealth by \$16,000,000 year. The District does not want to overburden taxpayers with increased taxes. The need to improve district facilities and ease increases in enrollment will require a bond issuance. It is our plan to spread out the facilities improvements over the span of several years and attempt to mitigate substantial increases in taxes. The District also believes, however, that investing and improving our facilities will improve home values and better support the students who attend our schools.

5. What has the district done to ensure that school district children meet the residency requirements of the School District?

- a. We follow state requirements for establishing residency. During the 2017-2018 school year, 189 students were found to not meet residency requirements. At this point during the 2018-2019 school year, we have found 115 students who do not meet residency requirements. The District takes student residency very seriously. Recently, changes with the Fostering Connections Best Interest Determination process as well as requirements under McKinney-Vento Act.

Here are links for residency information:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Documents/Codes%20and%20Regulations/Basic%20Education%20Circulars/Purdons%20Statutes/Enrollment%20of%20Students.pdf>

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/edhhsfostercarenonregulatorguide.pdf>

<https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Homeless%20Education/Pages/default.aspx>

6. How are you going to deal with all of the traffic problems this is going to create? Will new traffic lights be added? How else will traffic problems be addressed?

- a. A traffic study is included in the proposal by the architect. We will make changes as required by the traffic study. It will become a school zone and certain requirements must be met.

7. What additional policing will be necessary because of the new school?

- a. At this time, the District would provide school security for the building as we do for all of our schools. The Upper Darby School District currently has a Memo of Understanding (MOU) with the Clifton Police Department, but the District will not be requesting Clifton Heights to increase their police department.

8. What typically happens to an area when a new school is built?

- a. The District sees this as an opportunity to improve existing fields on this location and provide a new gymnasium. If the District implements this plan, enrollment concerns will be addressed at all middle schools. The need for the new middle school will have a positive impact on Drexel Hill Middle School and Beverly Hills Middle School. In this area, the new school has the potential to increase home values and enhance the outstanding community pride that already exists.

9. Do Clifton Heights residents get a vote on this?

- a. Clifton Heights residents can ask questions during the committee meeting on February 26th. Clifton Heights residents can also make public comment during the Board Action meetings held each month. A resident must sign in prior to making public comment by 7:30 p.m. for regular board meetings. The 9 members of the elected Board of School Directors vote. However, if the plan for a new middle school is approved during the March board meeting, the Board would be asking for input from the community on the design of the school.

10. How does this affect the enrollment at Beverly Hills Middle School and Drexel Hill Middle School? What are the benefits to the entire district?

- a. As demonstrated in the publically available presentations, the new middle school will better balance student enrollment for DHMS, BHMS, and the new middle school. Currently, DHMS and BHMS have some classes sizes in excess of 30 students. A new middle school provides relief to both DHMS and BHMS of over 400 students with BHMS closer to 500 students. A new middle school of over 900 students provides a significant benefit to both BHMS and DHMS with respect to enrollment and overcrowded classrooms.

11. Why now? When will the new school be complete?

- a. The pressing need for a new elementary school and a new middle school is supported by current and future enrollment data. We have several schools that do not allow for additional classroom spaces. Most notably, Highland Park Elementary School, Beverly Hills Middle School, and Drexel Hill Middle School. If the Board of School Directors agrees to move the plan forward to a vote during the March public Board meeting, the new middle school could be open by August of 2022. The Board will not be voting on the new middle school until the March Board meeting.

13. What will the operational costs be for the new school?

- a. At this time, the District would offset the operational costs by eliminating a school we currently lease. In phase two of this plan, the District anticipates closing two schools currently leased and use that money to offset the operational costs of the two new schools (elementary and middle school). We do anticipate a need to increase staffing, but we are not able to provide an exact figure on this until the Board agrees on the size of the school. The District would then consider the staffing needs of the students attending the school. We know that we will be able to shift staff and administration to the new school, so some of the operational costs are costs we are currently paying to support DHMS, BHMS, Charles Kelley, and Senkow Elementary School. This plan will not eliminate staff.

14. If the school is built it will be the end of the Clifton Heights Boys Club and PAL organizations.

- a. The District does not want to hurt or see an end to the Clifton Heights Boys Club and PAL organizations. The District would like to discuss and work through any and all concerns related to both organizations. In fact, the District sees this as an opportunity for the PAL organizations to have access to a gymnasium in their own community. The overall goal in improving the facilities and athletic complexes is to support such organizations as the Clifton Heights Boys Club and PAL organizations.

15. The District is taking away the History and Fabric of Clifton by building on the field - A thought - maybe near the new playground we can have an area that talks about the history of the field.

- a. This is a wonderful idea, and the District would certainly welcome other ideas such as this. The District also has a policy that allows for the naming of certain

facilities. The District does not want to take away from the very important, rich history of the Clifton Heights Community.

16. What will the new school proposal enrollment and attendance be?

- a. The elementary schools students who would potentially attend a new middle school in Clifton Heights would be Garrettford Elementary School, Westbrook Park Elementary School, and Primos Elementary School. The District is attempting to ease enrollment concerns for the entire school district. It is estimated that 8 buses would be required to provide transportation to students. The new middle school would support 950 students, DHMS would support 1057, and BHMS would support 1114 (estimates based on current data).

17. Will the District be taking away fields from the community?

- a. The District is not taking away fields from the community. Instead, the District is attempting to provide a new multipurpose field, new and improved baseball diamonds, and access to a new gymnasium. The District has taken the request to keep the open field space and access to the athletic fields into consideration as this plan has been developed. The District will continue to stress an open line of communication and a willingness to work with the community toward a resolution on specific concerns. The District is focused on improving the fields and having them open for use prior to the completion of the school. The District's goal is to have the fields ready and completed in order to support the local athletic programs. In the interim, the District is open to and willing to find solutions until the complex is completed.