

The background of the cover is a photograph of a brick school building under a blue sky with light clouds. A tall black flagpole stands to the right of the building, flying the American flag. The building has several windows and a modern architectural style with a mix of brick and lighter-colored panels.

MONSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Consolidation Proposal 2018

Cheryl A. Clarke
Superintendent

Monson Public Schools

The Challenge

Declining student enrollment is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon across the State. Schools and districts are challenged with not only keeping the programs and initiatives that are currently in place, but creating new opportunities for our students, often within severe budget constraints. Optimizing resources, maintaining enrollment and attracting students from other districts are our primary goals.

The Process

It was critically important that once the challenge was defined, it was communicated to all stakeholders, soliciting their feedback and ideas, so that as the proposal was developed, their input could inform the plan. Approximately a year ago, a parent focus group was assembled, comprised of eight parents who represented all schools, and had knowledge of areas such as special education, athletics, facilities, and academics. This group was a strong voice in the community, working outside of group meetings to share the challenges and successes as the work moved forward. One of their main tasks was to create a survey that was sent to anyone in Monson who was interested in sharing their voice. The survey was posted on Facebook, and had 2,193 “views.” It was direct emailed to 1,115 families and subscribers of the *Loop*. Of those, 347 completed and returned the survey.

Concurrently, the Superintendent held individual focus group meetings with all units in the district - teachers, counselors, support staff, administrators, instructional aides, administrative assistants, cafeteria staff and bus drivers - as well as central office staff. An identical protocol was followed during each of these sessions to ensure consistency of the process. These groups worked in break-out sessions to identify what they saw as obstacles and what could be beneficial about a change in building configurations. Many had either graduated from Monson High School or had children who went through the school system, and therefore had first-hand experience of the current configuration as well as

the middle/high school model. Ongoing meetings were also held with the administrative team and the Town Administrator. Throughout this time, the Superintendent served as secretary at these meetings, recording what people had to say, and then sharing this information with the other groups.

The Superintendent visited each school and spoke to the faculty three times during the 2017-2018 school year, providing them with updates, sharing ideas and again, hearing their concerns.

There have been three opportunities for face-to-face interactions with the community. First, in April of 2018, Mrs. Clarke held a Community Information Evening. This event was extremely successful, with approximately 200 members of the community in attendance, including some members of the School Committee. The survey results were shared at that time, as well as information regarding enrollment and the condition of each of the school buildings. Index cards were distributed for attendees to write down questions or concerns and subsequently collected and addressed.

Two events were held in November of 2018: an informational event for preschool families and a “Coffee and Conversation” with a future focus. Between these two evenings, another 40 families attended and learned about the proposal.

The administrative team was an integral part of developing the proposal. For example, Mr. Metzger and Mr. Bardwell visited schools with the middle/high school structure to learn how to smoothly transition to this model if the proposal was approved. Building principals redesigned the grade structure of their buildings, outlining those changes on school maps. Multiple meetings were held to plan staffing and programming.

Mr. Smith worked with Mrs. Clarke and the principals to adapt the budget model to incorporate shared staff among all three buildings. He identified structural changes and obtained prices for these changes. He met with representatives from two different playground companies to explore the best option for a Granite Valley playground.

The School Committee received updates throughout the 2017-2018 school year. During regular meetings, Mrs. Clarke reported on the success of each event and shared some of the general themes that were emerging. One of her evaluation goals was to create a plan to manage and accommodate resource use and

capacity. As a part of that goal, a substantial amount of evidence was provided to the Committee, including the PowerPoint presented at the community information event, the survey results, updated building maps, meeting agendas and notes, a list of possible structural changes and the proposed plan as of June 2018.

All of this work was to ensure that all members of the school community and the Town could hear about the challenges ahead and share their thoughts prior to the development of the final plan. The proposal that follows is a result of hundreds of hours of meetings, multiple informational sessions and exhaustive research.

Historical Enrollment

As illustrated in the chart below, the enrollment of the Monson Public Schools has experienced a significant decline since the 2010-2011 school year.

Year	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2010-2011	63	74	112	104	97	104	113	117	129	105	87	82	88	108	1,383
2011-2012	55	72	76	106	104	95	107	119	115	125	87	84	86	83	1,314
2012-2013	56	69	69	67	107	101	92	102	113	120	102	93	80	84	1,255
2013-2014	33	69	65	71	64	106	103	92	99	113	90	97	86	72	1,160
2014-2015	41	64	68	62	71	60	103	102	93	98	70	85	93	81	1,091
2015-2016	40	80	62	69	60	68	58	100	96	92	73	71	83	89	1,041
2016-2017	41	72	76	63	65	62	67	56	98	92	73	73	68	83	979
2017-2018	60	63	70	72	64	70	67	67	51	99	60	60	70	68	941
2018-2019	57	70	61	68	72	71	70	61	68	50	71	66	58	66	909

There are two major reasons for the decline in enrollment: decreased birth rates in the Town and students choosing to attend charter schools (25 students), private schools (18 students) or public schools in other towns (141 students). The three schools where the greatest number of Monson students attend are as follows: Pathfinder: 69; Old Sturbridge Village Charter School: 25; and Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District: 19. Additionally, 32 students are receiving their education at home. It should be noted that 53 students school choice into our district.

Projected Enrollment

Moving forward, our enrollment is projected to stabilize, staying between approximately 850 and 900 students.

Year	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
2018-2019	57	70	61	68	72	71	70	61	68	50	71	66	58	66	909
2019-2020	61	77	69	61	67	72	69	69	63	63	35	67	65	57	895
2020-2021	61	82	74	68	59	69	73	67	66	62	43	34	65	65	888
2021-2022	62	71	79	73	68	60	70	71	62	65	43	42	33	64	863
2022-2023	62	70	68	78	71	69	61	69	71	61	45	42	41	33	841
2023-2024	63	72	67	68	76	73	68	60	66	71	42	44	41	41	852
2024-2025	63	74	69	67	66	78	74	69	57	65	56	41	42	41	862
2025-2026	64	74	71	68	65	67	79	72	66	56	45	45	40	42	854
2026-2027	64	72	71	70	66	66	68	77	69	65	39	44	43	40	854
2027-2028	65	72	69	70	68	67	67	67	74	68	48	38	42	43	858

Projected Enrollment - Current Building Configuration

Year	PreK-4	5-8	9-12
2019-2020	407	264	224
2020-2021	413	268	207
2021-2022	413	268	182
2022-2023	418	262	161
2023-2024	419	265	168
2024-2025	417	265	180
2025-2026	409	273	172
2026-2027	409	279	166
2027-2028	411	276	171

Although enrollment at both Quarry Hill and Granite Valley appears to remain stable over the next several years, Monson High's student population is projected to decrease. With fewer than 170 students, it may prove impossible to maintain the current programming and course offerings there. Some classes currently have fewer than 10 students. Unless those teachers are given additional teaching responsibilities, their positions will likely be eliminated.

Projected Enrollment - Proposed Building Consolidation

Year	PreK and K	1-6	7-12
2019-2020	138	407	350
2020-2021	143	410	335
2021-2022	133	421	309
2022-2023	132	416	293
2023-2024	135	412	305
2024-2025	137	423	302
2025-2026	138	422	294
2026-2027	136	418	300
2027-2028	137	408	313

As evidenced by the above chart, should the district move to the new building configuration model, Monson High's enrollment will be adequate to support the positions and programs currently in place.

Budgetary Impact

Aside from the necessity to both keep existing programs and expand initiatives in the future, this proposal has a positive impact on the budget, allowing for substantial savings. This savings can occur because of changes in two areas: staffing and a new facilities and maintenance structure.

Staffing

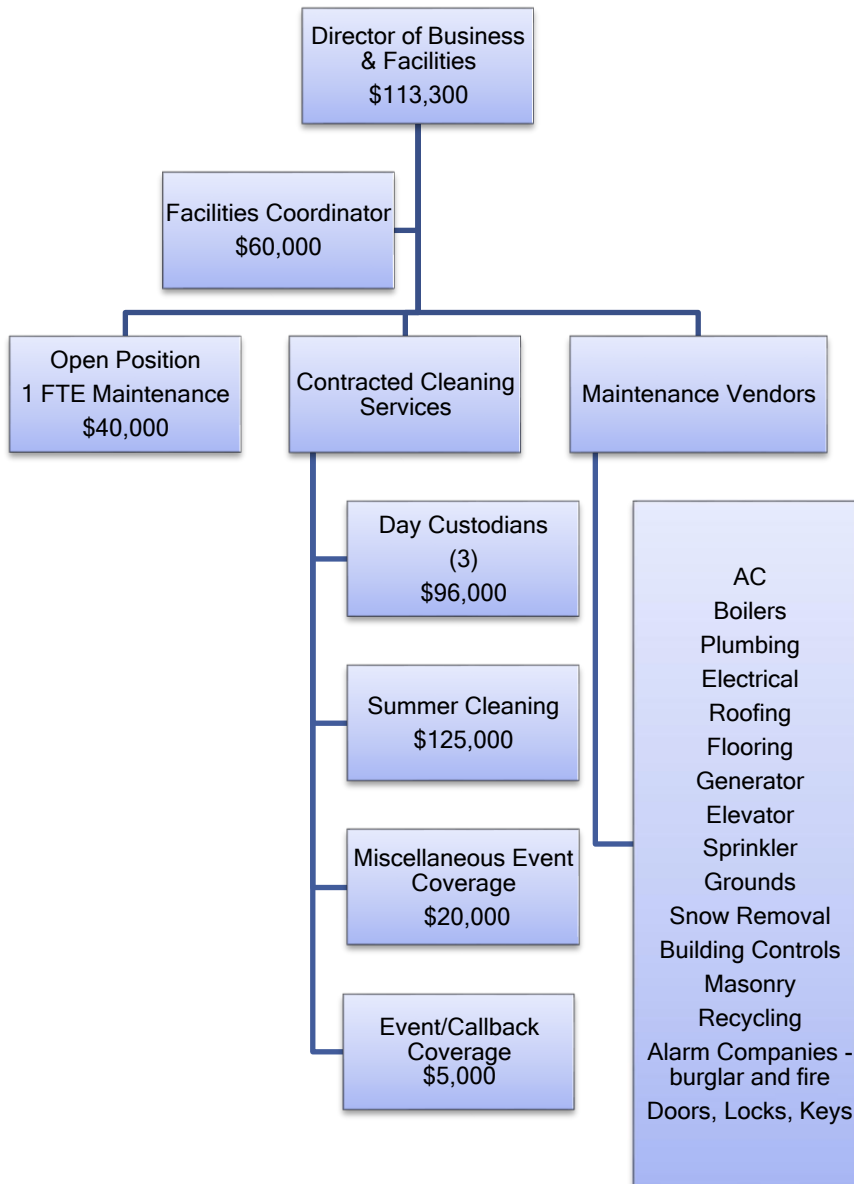
This proposal does not include the elimination of any full-time teaching or counseling positions; in fact, it allows for the addition of one preschool teaching position. As evidenced below, savings will result in the cutting of the majority of “front office” administration and staff at Quarry Hill, as well as savings incurred through retirements and subsequent hiring of staff at a lower step on the salary pay scale.

POSITION	COST	IMPACT
Principal	90,000	Currently have Interim
Half-time Dean of Students	35,000	
One administrative assistant	35,000	One retirement
Director of Curriculum Clerk	15,000	
Librarian paraprofessional	20,000	Retirement
Two Building Aides	20,000	
Half-time Art teacher	50,000	Retirement
TOTAL	265,000	

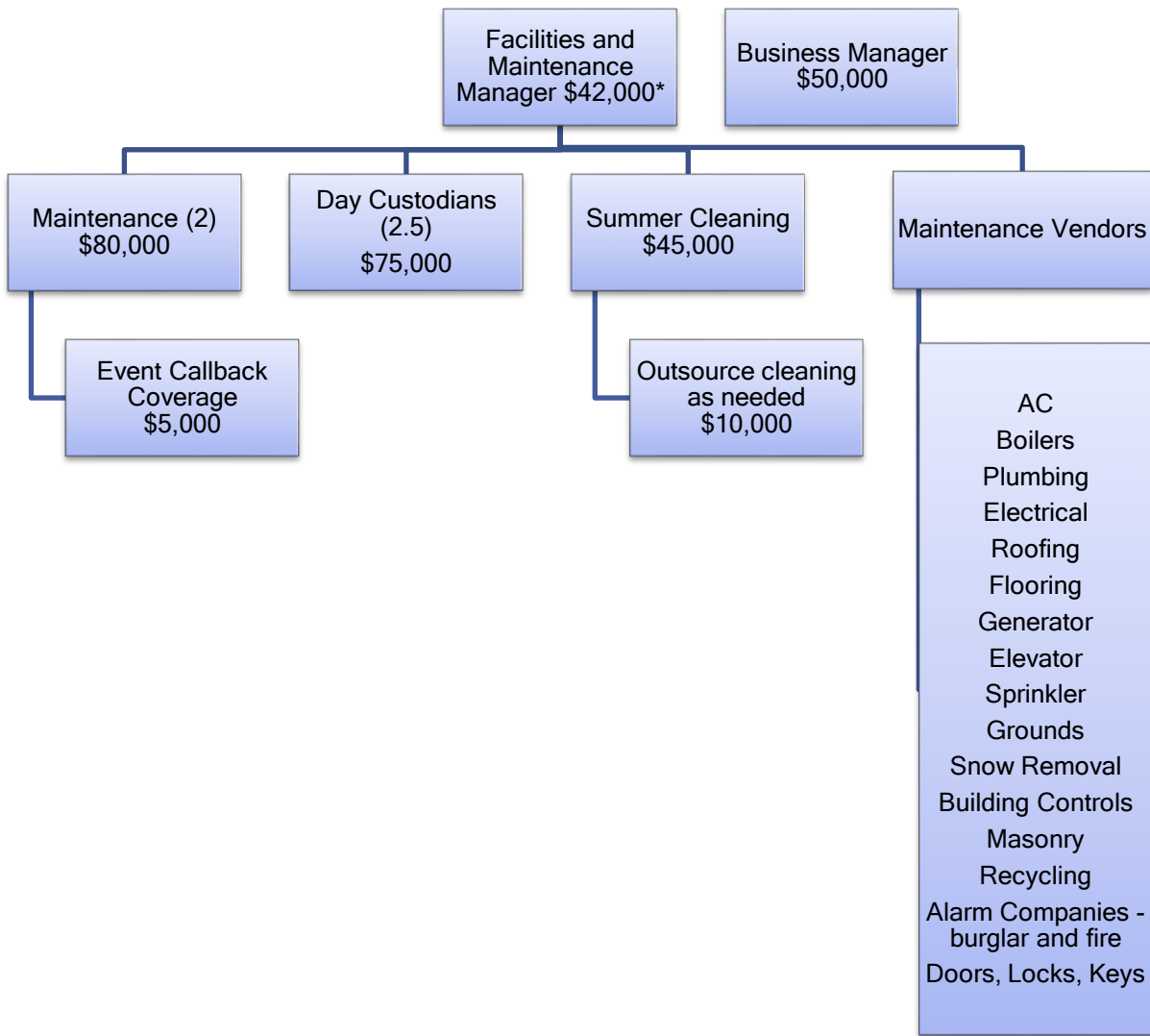
Additional salary offsets will amount to approximately \$15,000 for the following: salary allowance for the Assistant Principal positions (formerly Dean of Students) and a small “buffer” to fund the additional preschool teacher should enrollment not be sufficient to cover that salary.

New Facilities and Maintenance Structure

The Director of Business and Facilities has indicated that he will retire at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. He has proposed a new structure to meet the maintenance and custodial needs of the district, and ensure that procedures are followed with regard to the bidding process, legal compliance and employee management, for example. We feel that if the consolidation proposal is accepted, this is the optimal time to reconfigure this department. The current organizational chart is below:



The new chart splits the duties of the Business Manager and the Facilities Manager into two positions. Further, the Facilities and Maintenance Manager would be a shared position with the Town. This person would oversee and manage all Town buildings. The district would move away from outsourcing the majority of its custodial work, and instead hire district employees to fulfill these duties. Outside vendors, such as those that service the plumbing, electrical, sprinkler systems, etc., would remain.



*MPS share of \$70,000 position

Mr. Smith has created job descriptions for each of the positions in the new organizational structure. They are as follows:

Facilities and Maintenance Manager

Member of professional maintenance/facility organization

Budget all maintenance and facilities expenses

Coordinate with all Town departments (Fire, Highway, Water, etc.)

Manage staff and assign work as needed

Develop bids and RFPs

Manage the security and alarm panels

Oversee generator contracts and maintenance

Develop and manage state and federal regulated plans:

- Asbestos

- Pest management

- Water

Identify, plan and manage capital projects

Communicate maintenance issues to the Superintendent

Coordinate summer repairs for school opening inspection

Work directly with vendor employees to ensure work completion

Maintenance Coordinators

Diagnose and/or repair for the Facilities and Maintenance Manager:

- Plumbing, pipe repair, faucet replacement

- Electrical; install ballasts as needed

- HVAC; operate the BMS, repair Univents

- Locks, doors, hinges

- Roof inspection and leak repairs

Coordinate summer repairs for school opening inspection

Respond to building repair requests

Work directly on inspections:

- Fire extinguishers

- Emergency lighting

- Sprinklers

- Elevators

Change filters and document

Replace ceiling tiles

Hang signs

Remove snow as needed

Coordinate office moves

On-call as needed

Day Custodians

Respond to administrator needs as directed

Empty all trash bins at the end of the day; recycling once a week

Clean sidewalks of snow if needed

Clean windows

Prep building for daily opening

As outlined below, this new configuration will likely save the district approximately \$200,000 on an annual basis.

Current 2019 – Maintenance & Facilities	
Labor/Pride	\$479,300
Maintenance Vendors	308,100
Total	\$787,400

Proposed 2020 with Consolidation – Maintenance & Facilities	
Labor/Pride	\$307,000
Maintenance Vendors	280,423
Total	\$587,423

For the first year only, additional facilities costs will include:

- Moving expenses - \$8,000
- Additional summer technology staffing - \$3,000
- Door locks with panic bars (2) for library - \$1,200
- Playground - GV - \$50,000

Total Potential Savings:

Net Savings - Staffing	\$250,000
Net Savings - Facilities	<u>137,800</u>
Total	\$387,800

The Buildings

The following section will outline the grades and programs that will be located in each building.

QUARRY HILL

Quarry Hill will house an Early Childhood Center (preschool and kindergarten), Central Business Offices and shared community spaces as follows:

Monson Public Schools	Town of Monson
POD ONE – Preschool, Kindergarten – “Early Childhood Center” and Central Business Offices	POD TWO – Community space (Seniors?)
Atrium, Library, Music room, one classroom, Cafeteria/Kitchen, Front Offices	POD THREE – Community space
Gym – for Specials classes – as needed	POOL POD – Community space
	Gym – Community space when not in use by preschool and kindergarten

Pod one will remain largely as it is currently configured with four kindergarten classrooms, four preschool classrooms (this factors in an additional full-day program), the School Committee room, and Central Business Offices. In order to allow for the additional preschool, as well as a specialized autism classroom, some offices will be relocated to the Quarry Hill front office. They are: Director of Student Services, Secretary to Director of Student Services, an Administrative Assistant, the Business Manager, Accounts Payable/Business, Dean of Students and Transportation Liaison (assuming that our transportation services are outsourced).

The Early Childhood Center will be managed by the Director of Student Services, who already oversees the preschool programming. A nurse, half-time Dean of Students, half-time behavioral or counseling support person, occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech therapist and a board certified behavior analyst will be a part of the Early Childhood Center as well. Spaces have also been allotted for a teacher lounge and teacher workroom.

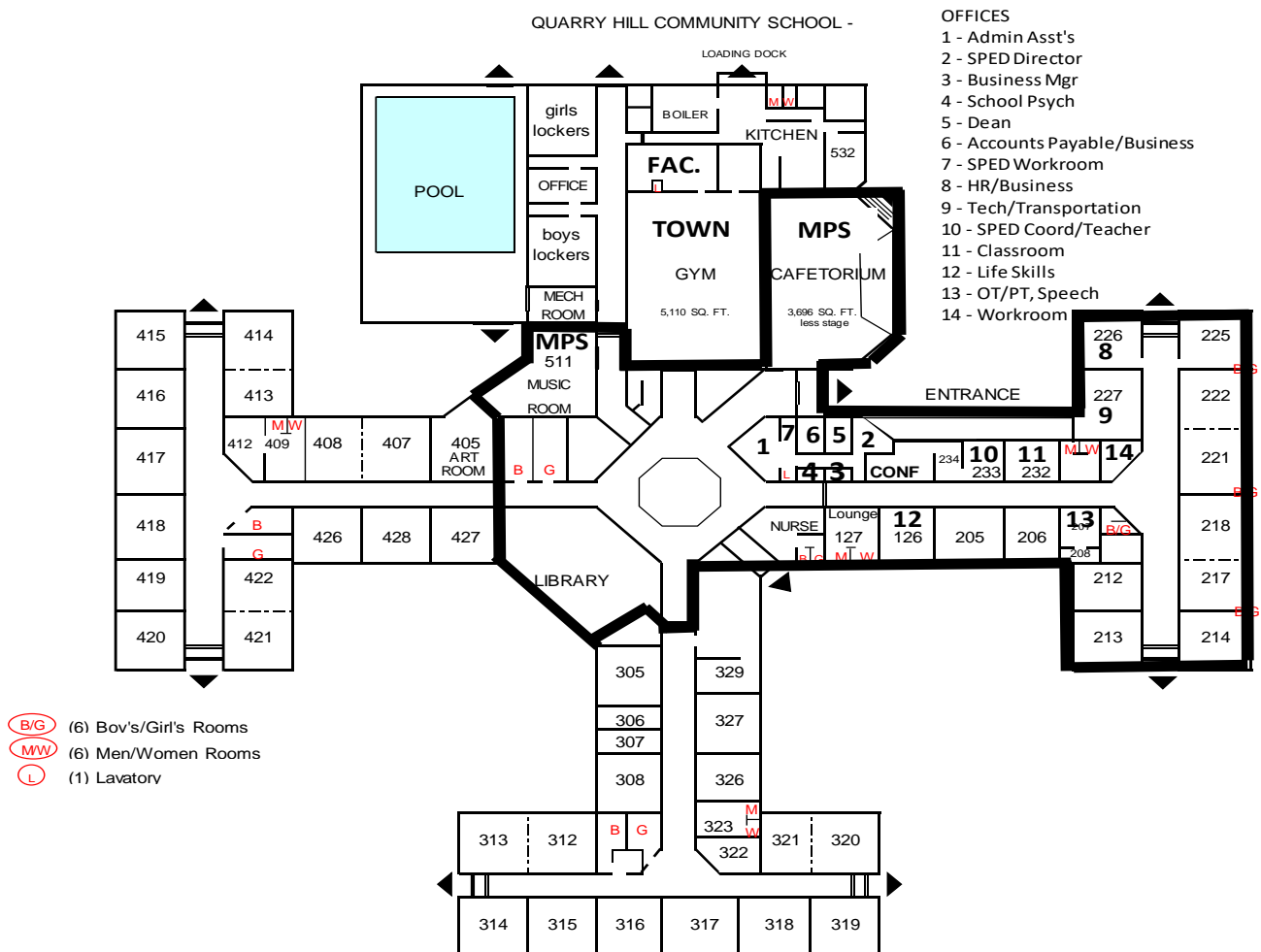
Full-day preschool and kindergarten students will have Art, Music, Physical Education and Library specials. A “Tools of the Mind” explorer space will be created in the library. All students will eat together during one lunch period. The Town’s Parks & Recreation Department currently manages and oversees

the pool. This arrangement will continue. The Town Administrator has indicated that he would like to explore shared community space in at least one of the other pods. The public would enter and exit from the outside doors at the end of each pod, eliminating the need to enter through the main door. That entrance would be reserved for Monson Public Schools staff, students and their families only. There are doors that can be locked at the ends of the pod that feed into the atrium, ensuring no public access during the school day.

The atrium, library, music room, one additional classroom, the cafeteria/kitchen and gym (as needed) would also be occupied by MPS. Per the Fire Chief, it will be necessary to install locks and panic bars on two doors in the library that connect to what may become public spaces.

It is recommended that a Community Use Agreement be developed between the MPS and the Town so that the parameters of the building use are clear.

The map shows in bold outline the Monson Public Schools section of the building.



QUARRY HILL'S ROOF

During the 2017-2018 school year, John Chipko, a representative from Kaestle Boos Associates, conducted an inspection of Quarry Hill. As a part of that inspection, it was determined that a new roof was needed, at a cost of approximately 2 million dollars. The underlying structure of the roof is sound; however, the outside layer will need remediation and eventual replacement. After some discussion with Mr. Chipko (who is no longer with the company), he recommended that for the near future, \$10,000 be built into the budget for repair and maintenance of the roof. Should this proposal move forward, the roof replacement will be a topic of discussion between the Town and the MPS.

GRANITE VALLEY

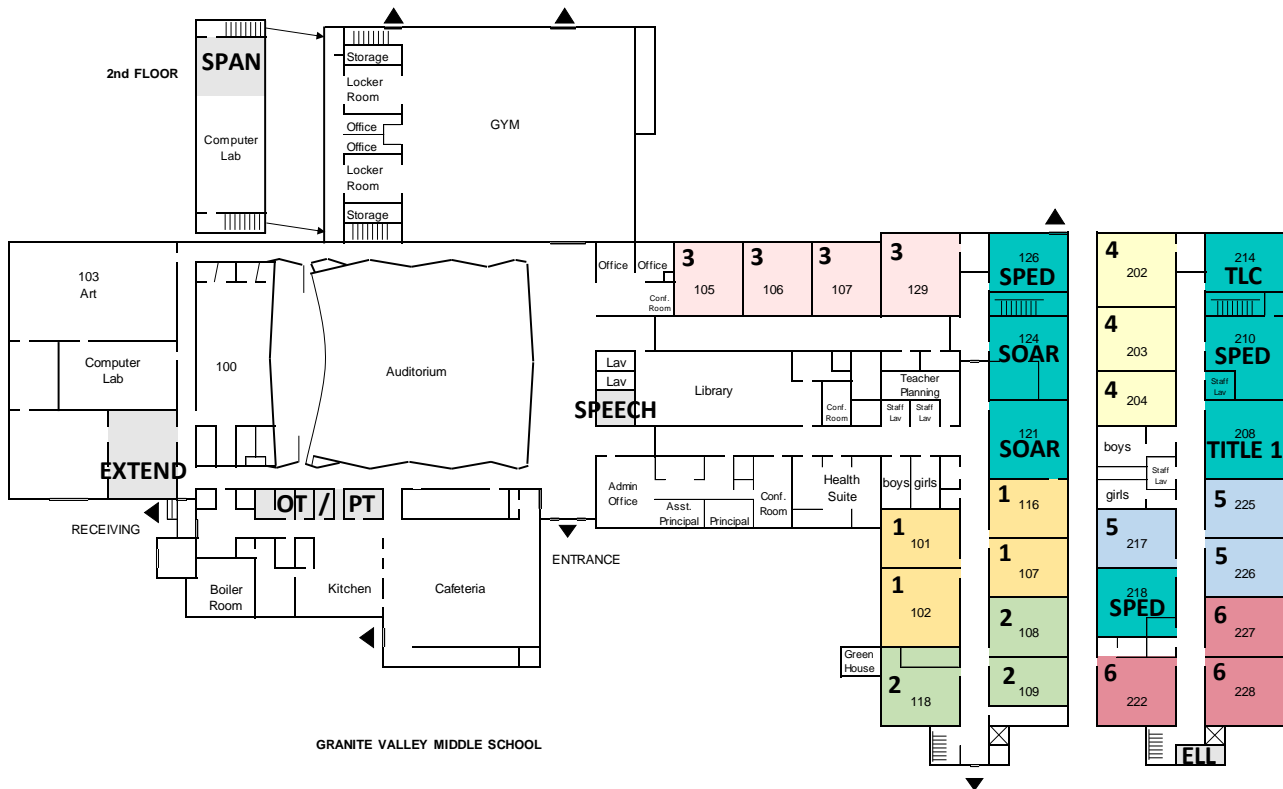
Granite Valley will house grades one through six, as well as any specialized programs that may be necessary to meet the needs of our students.

There is adequate classroom space for all grades, as well as space for OT/PT, speech, English Language Learners, specials classes (Art, Music, Health, Spanish, Technology), counseling, library, Title I and the Extend (before and after-school child care) program. Our SOAR program will continue to occupy two classrooms, and our TLC program will remain in one classroom. Three special education pull-out classrooms have been earmarked.

No modifications to any bathrooms or other facilities will be required.

The major expense will be the purchase and installation of a playground that is suitable for the younger students.

The map below illustrates in color where the grades will be located. Grades one, two and three will occupy the lower level and grades four, five and six will occupy the second floor.



GRANITE VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL

MONSON HIGH

Monson High School will house grades seven through twelve, as well as any specialized programs that may be necessary to meet the needs of our students.

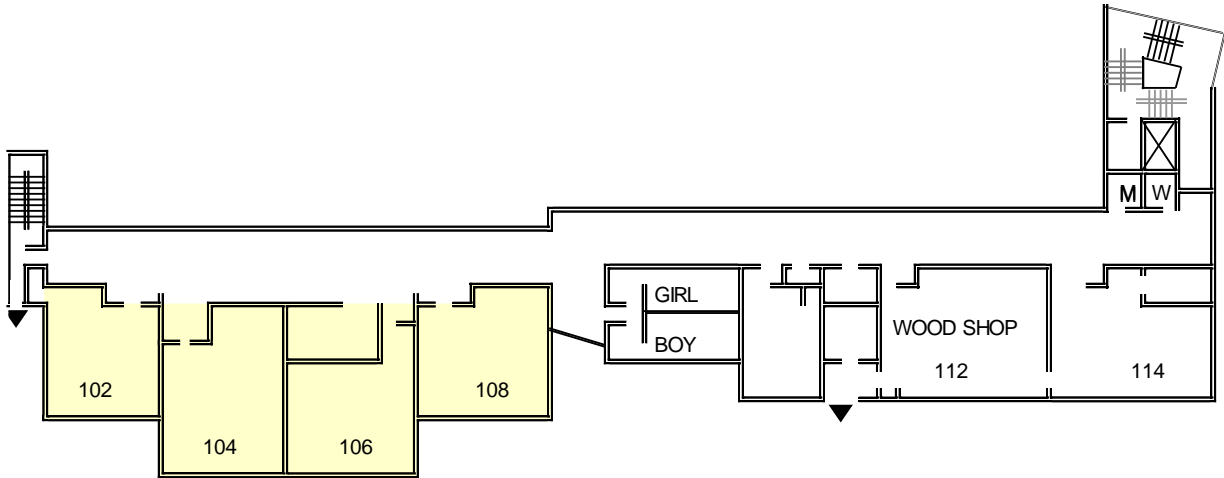
The lower level of the high school is currently empty except for one classroom, and there are several classrooms on the other two levels that are unoccupied as well. Therefore, moving two additional grades into the building will pose no problems with regard to space. Our Pride program will continue to occupy two classrooms, and the VIP vocational program will remain in one classroom. Adequate special education pull-out classrooms have been earmarked.

Building modifications will not be necessary, and the only additional expense will be moving costs.

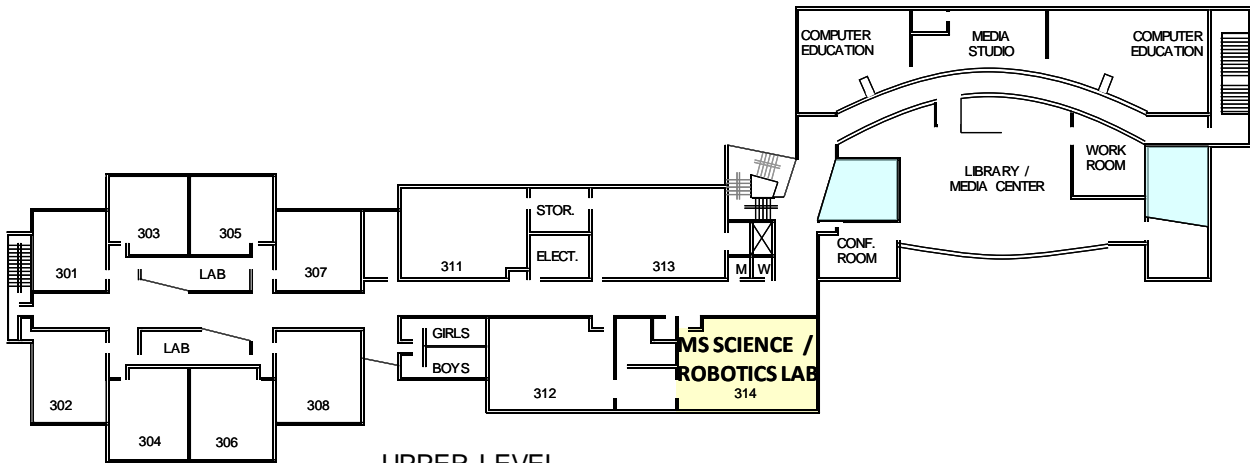
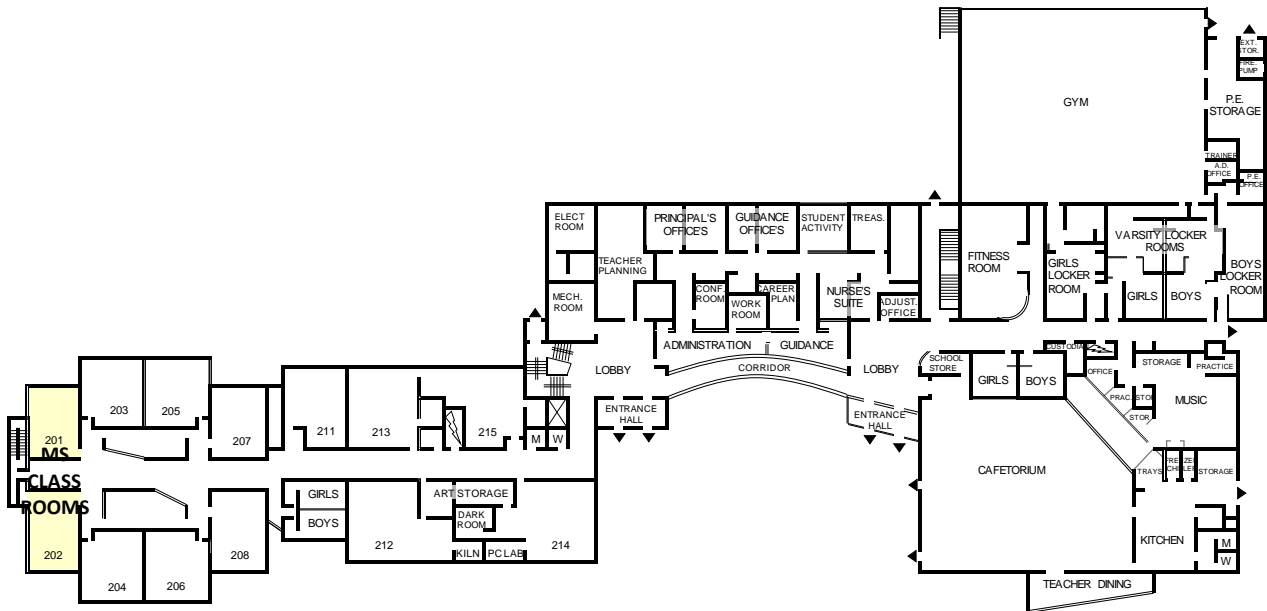
The seventh and eighth grade will occupy six classrooms; four on the lower level and two at the end of the hallway on the main level. The former woodshop and adjacent classroom is available for a Project Lead the Way work space. On the upper level, there will be a middle school robotics/science classroom.

There will be little to no interaction between grades 7/8 and 9-12 during the school day. Passing times will be staggered and lunches will be separate. The middle school grades and the high school grades will hold their own assemblies and activities.

The maps that follow indicate in yellow grade seven and grade eight spaces.



LOWER LEVEL



UPPER LEVEL

Other Departments

TRANSPORTATION

Should the transportation of our students remain in-house, there will be a two-tier drop-off: one for grades 7-12 and the other for grades K-6. No change in schedule is necessary.

Moving grades five and six to the elementary routes may result in higher rider counts for those routes and perhaps lower counts for the middle/high school routes that tend to be lower already. Any increase in elementary rider counts could prevent some routes from taking any late bus riders in grades 7-12.

FOOD SERVICES

Quarry Hill: The Food Services office and equipment will remain. Breakfast will continue to be served. As mentioned previously, there will be one lunch with one staff member along with a floating staff member as necessary.

Granite Valley: Breakfast will continue to be served. There will be three lunches with three lines (an increase from the current two lines) and five staff members.

Monson High: There will be three lunches with two lines and four staff members. Ms. Gustafson is exploring the idea of enhanced offerings at the high school (e.g., a salad bar) to increase student participation.

All cafeteria staff will be retained, with some relocated to other schools.

TECHNOLOGY

The 1:1 initiative will remain, with all students in grades 3-12 assigned a Chromebook.

Quarry Hill smartboards will be relocated where needed to ensure that all teachers have adequate technology in their classrooms.

Laptop carts will be redeployed as follows: Quarry Hill - 2; Granite Valley - 2; Monson High - 1.

ATHLETICS

Grades 7 and 8 will no longer require a waiver to play varsity sports. We are hopeful this will increase participation and sustainability of our athletic teams.

LIBRARIES

Age-appropriate libraries will be created at each school. Grades 1-4 materials will be moved to Granite Valley; grades 7 and 8 resources will be relocated to Monson High. Preschool and kindergarten materials will remain at Quarry Hill.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

The MADE after-school enrichment program will continue in two locations: Granite Valley and Monson High. Kindergarten students will be transported to Granite Valley so that they may participate. Historically, the middle school enrollment has been lower than at the elementary level. Our hope is that we can offer more creative programming that will appeal to grades seven and up and thus increase enrollment.

The Extend before and after-school child care program will continue to be housed at Granite Valley and will continue to be available to grades K-6.

Our gardens and greenhouses will be moved, if necessary, depending on the interest of the students.

Conclusion/Next Steps

We feel this proposal maximizes resources, saves programs and positions, and opens up the possibility to expand the offerings to our students through the reallocation of funding.

If this proposal is approved, the following next steps would be recommended:

- Communicate the decision to all school and community stakeholders.
- Develop a Community Use Agreement with the Town.
- Convene the Facilities/Long-Term Planning Subcommittee to review the roll-out of the move as well as conduct an ongoing assessment of the roof.
- Convene the Policy Subcommittee to review policies relating to building use and possible renaming of buildings.
- Convene the Finance Subcommittee to review the budgetary implications of this plan and begin outlining priorities.
- Convene the Negotiations/HR Subcommittee to review the new facilities and maintenance structure and accompanying job descriptions.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl A. Clarke
Superintendent