

## **Pownal Middle School Recommendation Summary**

### **March 24, 2010**

An expectation of the budget development process is to consider the most effective use of our financial resources while providing the strongest programming possible for our students. The proposed budget was developed as a result of considering the equity of opportunity for our students and the parity of how we allocate funds to programs. It was a challenging task but the budget presented meets that expectation.

Equity of educational opportunities had been a concern expressed by several parents about Pownal's middle school program. Parents have commented on a strengthened middle level program this year; however, there are limited funds to increase student access to other offerings and opportunities. The question to consider was how, in light of decreasing state revenues, we can continue to provide varied academic, athletic, and co-curricular experiences to all of our students while limiting the impact to taxpayers. These considerations, in addition to the more detailed information below, led to the following recommendation:

Replace Pownal's current middle school program with the choice of attending either Durham or Freeport middle school. Transportation would be provided to either school.

#### **Recommendation Considerations:**

❖ **PK-5 Programming:**

The Pownal Elementary School is clearly at the heart of the community. The concept of keeping PK-5 children educated in the local community is important to citizens in all three communities. This recommendation would preserve a PK-5 program in Pownal and provide options for the meaningful use of the middle school classrooms.

❖ **Class Size:**

Freeport and Durham middle school could include Pownal's students in their middle school programs at a limited impact to either school. Class size would be at a targeted range of 20-22 students. This is a fairly typical range for middle school programs.

❖ **Academic Offerings:**

Providing strong educational opportunities for our middle level student would be more cost effective at two middle schools instead of three. Examples of such programs include World Languages and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) experiences are important elements. This would provide strong programming options for students with a reduced financial impact to taxpayers. The goal is to continue to strengthen our current offerings to make our programs even better.

❖ **Transportation:**

A bus route is currently in place between Pownal and Freeport High School. Middle school students could ride the same bus which would add a stop at Freeport Middle School. We have budgeted funds (\$5,000) to establish a new bus route from Pownal to Durham for our middle school students.

❖ **Financial Impact:**

This recommended change resulted in a budget reduction of \$185,000 due to the elimination of three teaching positions and the addition of transportation to Durham. This financial reduction enables us to continue to provide quality programs. It further offers choice between Freeport and Durham middle schools.

❖ **Use of Space:**

Student need requires the development of a self-contained program for students with special needs. One of the middle school rooms in Pownal could be used to house this new program. The community wants to ensure the building remains an active and dynamic environment. Members have suggested use of the spaces in a variety of ways with the focus on a meaningful and important role in the RSU.

Through public budget discussions in all three towns, we heard there is strong support for our quality programs and staff. Administration and the Board are challenged to find a way to continue to provide that quality while limiting the impact to our local taxpayers. The goal of this recommendation was to save funds while continuing to provide and enhance educational opportunities for our students. It was not an easy recommendation to make but one that is focused on the best interests of students and taxpayers.