

QUARTERLY ASCERTAINMENTS / COMMUNITY ISSUES

STATION: WVAQ—December, 2023

SUBJECT: School Consolidation Could be Coming to Harrison Co.

DISCUSSION:

The Harrison County Board of Education is considering a plan to consolidate schools due to falling enrollment and staffing levels. On WAJR's "Talk of the Town," Superintendent Dora Stutler said data and public comments are under review to develop the best plan for the district.

"There's only so much money, and you cannot provide equity across the board and keep fully staffed buildings," Stutler said. "What you end up doing is you have to cut course offerings, and you start cutting positions because you can't do it."

Stutler said under consideration is a plan to merge Liberty High School with Robert C. Byrd High School, better utilizing the space there. Liberty High School has about 450 students with a capacity of about 1,100, and RCB has about 710 students with a capacity of about 1,200 students.

"I'm sitting at half capacity at one of the most beautiful buildings and campuses we have, which is Robert C. Byrd; they are at half capacity," Stutler said. "And I have a high school that is five minutes from that high school that is also sitting below half-capacity."

Further, the plan includes combining Washington Irving Middle School with students from Mountaineer Middle School at the current location of Liberty High School. Elementary school students from Salem and North View would move into the current Mountaineer Middle School building.

"I've got two small elementary schools within 10 minutes of that building, so logically, it makes sense they could come together, and we could have a beautiful elementary school there on that same campus with Liberty."

Stutler said the consolidation moves put staff and students in the newer facilities in the district, hopefully avoiding a repeat of the structural failure at Norwood Elementary School that resulted in an emergency closure.

"We had to conduct an emergency closure of a building over the summer, and that is not fun," Stutler said. "When you have a building and you have to move children and teachers in three weeks before school starts because you have structural issues, I don't want that to happen for our teachers or our students."

Stutler said due to state requirements, if the moves are approved, the earliest they could be made is in 2025.

"I will be putting a recommendation on the board just from all the information we've collected and the public comments, and the board will vote," Stutler said. "If the board votes to tell me to move forward, then I will move forward."

DATE: December 3rd, 2023

TIME / DURATION: 2:17

GUESTS: Harrison County School Superintendent Dora Stutler.

MEDIA INTEREST: Talk of the Town – WAJR, Dominion Post, WVAQ, WKKW, WBOY, WDTV, facebook, twitter

YEAR: 2023

QUARTER: 4th

