

Will Craig Middle School Reopen in 2019?

By Shawnta S. Barnes – October 18, 2017



Reopening Craig Middle School is one of three options the Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township is considering since their enrollment has consistently increased over the last four school years. Enrollment for the last two

school years has been higher than when Craig was closed. Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education Dr. Steven Goeglein said, “We also have to be realistic about what’s going on in IPS – closing down John Marshall...Will the families want to come here? There’s lots of movement. We know we’ve got to do something; doing nothing is not an option.”

Lawrence Township, dubbed the “district of destination” with the core values integrity, achievement and service, serves a little under 16,000 students on the northeast side of Indianapolis. It currently has four Early Learning Centers, 11 elementary magnet schools (grades 1-6), two middle schools (grades 7 & 8), two traditional high schools, one alternative high school and an Innovation and Technology Center. Most of its elementary schools are close to capacity. Two elementary schools, Amy Beverland and Sunnyside, are over capacity with some classrooms located in portables.

In 2009, due to a decline in enrollment, the school board voted unanimously to close Craig Middle School and move sixth graders from the middle school to the elementary school. Those changes went into effect during the 2010-11 school year. Currently 75% of the building formerly known as Craig Middle School is being used. The building is now known as the Lawrence Education & Community Center and houses district administration, the Lawrence Advance Academy (the district’s alternative high school where students complete a semester of work per quarter to graduate from high school) and other district activities.

The district is studying two other potential options to accommodate its growth. The second option is to remove all sixth graders from the elementary schools and send them to the former Craig Middle School as a sixth grade center for one year. The third option is to add two sixth grade academies to each of its currently existing middle schools, Fall Creek Valley and Belzer.

Lawrence Township is in the middle of its “Blue Ribbon” Facility Plan. Under this plan the district is improving its facilities, including building additions to a few schools, without increasing taxes. The plan selected to address the district’s growth will adjust the timeline of the current facility plan. The school board would have to vote on one of the proposed options by December 2017 for changes to go into effect by the 2019-2020 school year.

At the Building Capacity Community Forum held on Tuesday, October 17, district representatives made clear they were going to take the time necessary to study each option and consider community input. Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education Dr. Kathleen Rieke stated, “We aren’t going to be moving any kids before 2019 in the fall. That’s been our timeline and if we need more time, it’ll be 2020. We’re going to do it right and not rush.”

There also seemed to be more benefits for the options to either reopen Craig Middle School or add sixth-grade academies to the existing middle schools. Student services and special education saw no benefit to having a dedicated sixth-grade center and concluded, “a one-year transition would be detrimental to the educational welfare of students.” The district estimates it will cost approximately 16.3 million to open a sixth-grade center, 33.7 million to add sixth-grade academies to existing middle schools and 18.4 million to reopen Craig Middle School.

If you missed last night’s Building Capacity Community Forum, you can attend the next forum being held Thursday, October 19 at Lawrence Central High School, 7300 E. 56th Street, at 6 p.m. or you can view the Facebook live recording from last night’s meeting on the district’s Facebook page. It is important to stay informed and have your voice heard because changes are coming to Lawrence Township.