

Expansion of McAuliffe - Frequently Asked Questions

The following FAQs have been updated since the December 30th announcement from DPS to move forward with the expansion of McAuliffe and in response to questions that were posed in the DPS community meeting at McAuliffe on January 6th. A video can be viewed on our website that shows a visual representation of the 'house' model described below.

Does McAuliffe have a vision for how it will grow and use the whole Smiley building?

Since moving to the Smiley building, we have been sharing the campus with Venture Prep High School. DPS has announced that Venture Prep will move to another location in 2016-2017 in order to provide more middle school capacity in the shared boundary.

With the decision to allow McAuliffe to grow and use the entire Smiley building, we envision a very thoughtfully designed arrangement with each grade—and 'house' within each grade—having a designated floor and wing within the building.

Within each grade of 360 students, there will be two 'houses' of 180 kids each. This is a model used more commonly in schools on the East Coast and in the Midwest. It may seem counterintuitive, but this 'house' model and use of the whole building will not only provide more space but also will enhance the small-school experience within the larger school environment. There will be a dedicated counselor and assistant principal for each grade level that will move with kids as they transition to the next grade, ensuring each child feels connected and valued.

Students will have all of their core classes, plus Engineering and their World Language, in their designated floor and wing with their fellow 'house' students. They will only travel outside of this 'house' for PE, their Arts elective, and more specialized electives such as Advanced Mandarin. Likewise, their lockers will be located in the same floor and wing as most of their classes.

Will all grades go to this house model right away?

No, we will start this 'house' model with 6th grade students next year, and we will phase in this model each year until 7th and 8th grades also become organized in this manner.

For the 2016-2017 school year, McAuliffe will also host the new McAuliffe at Manual middle school, which will move its permanent home at the Manual High School campus the next year. We anticipate this new school will enroll up to 180 6th graders, and these students and staff will have their own designated area of the building next year. Hosting this new school in our building will not impact our ability to move to this house model in 2016.

How will kids be placed in one of the two houses in their grade level?

Our goal will be to have both houses at a given grade level equally heterogeneously mixed by gender, race, academic levels, and elementary school origin. Ideally, your rising 6th grader will know friends

from their elementary school while also having a good opportunity to meet many new friends. While students will spend about 80% of their school day with their fellow 'house' students, they will also have a chance to see friends in the other 'house' during electives, PE, sports, after-school activities, and social events.

Will each 'house' remain the same or will students be mixed up the following year?

We're in the process of researching how other schools that do a 'house' model manage this from one grade to the next, and we'll also seek input from students and the larger community. While there may potentially be changes in the house groupings from one year to the next, the grade level leader and counselor will move with the kids as they transition to the next grade in order to provide stable relationships with the kids.

How many lunch periods will there be each day?

As we fully transition to this 'house' model, we will eventually have 6 lunch periods. Because we will not have the logistical challenge of coordinating lunch times with another school in the building, we anticipate that managing these lunch periods will be a smooth process with diminished crowding.

What impact will this 'house' model have on teachers?

We're excited about the many positive aspects of this growth and transition to a 'house' model for our staff. Teachers will be able to focus more on their area of specialty -- for example, honors math, traditional math, and intervention math. Teachers will also have a dedicated counterpart to partner with -- for example, the 6th grade social studies teacher in one house will be able to partner with and support the 6th grade social studies teacher in the other house.

Finally, one big benefit is being able to bring our engineering and world language teachers into the same floor and wing as their grade-level colleagues.

How many administrators and counselors will there be for students?

Our 'house' model calls for an assistant principal and a counselor to serve each grade level (not each house). This administrator and counselor will transition with students to the next grade level.

With the move of the Engineering classes to their 'house' locations, will we still have the equipment and resources needed?

Yes, we're already underway planning for this transition to make sure we move any special equipment, computers, tables, and 3D printers to their new locations. We're also making sure there is ample power and internet speed and access to run the engineering programs.

If Engineering classes move from their current location in the basement, what will take place in those vacated rooms?

We're considering several options for these basement spaces, including potentially using them for additional PE space and being able to provide areas for yoga, dance, and other activities.

What are the chances a student can play on a sports team as the school grows bigger?

We're working with DPS Athletics now to discuss possible options for adding more sports teams or more games to allow more kids to play. We would also look to continue building our club sports program and intramural program. We'll be sure to provide more information to our community as our planning with DPS Athletics progresses.

How will building access, traffic and transportation be modified as the school grows?

When McAuliffe grows to occupy the full Smiley building, we'll be able to distribute this student traffic through the main doors as well as the north and south doors. Likewise, we're looking at options for distributing buses to more than just the south side of the building and will continue working with DPS Transportation to further refine our plan and minimize the impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

What sort of planning is DPS doing to address the student population growth and demand in the shared boundary in the coming years?

DPS is looking at projected growth in the shared boundary and presented at our Jan. 6th meeting that more middle school capacity will be needed by 2018 or 2019. Due to the growth of Stapleton, particularly building north of I-70, these projections are analyzed on a regular basis, and planning is already underway for possible scenarios to address this needed capacity.

Is there any special priority Park Hill residents get to enroll at McAuliffe?

No, at all of the DPS enrollment zones across the city, including the shared Park Hill / Stapleton middle school boundary, there is no special preference to enroll in any one school regardless of proximity, and all placements are handled through the DPS lottery. When McAuliffe moved from its original location in Stapleton to its current home in the Smiley building in Park Hill, this was done with an understanding across both communities that all middle schools in the shared boundary would provide equal access to both neighborhoods. It is our hope that with further capacity being added in the coming years and with the growth of McAuliffe to maximize the use of the Smiley building that most families will get their top middle school choice.

How are students performing academically at McAuliffe?

Historically, students at all levels grow more academically than the district average while at McAuliffe, moving from partially proficient to proficient and from proficient to advanced. This has remained true as the school has grown in size.

In the newly released PARCC data from last year's tests, in 7th and 8th grades in Language Arts and Math we had more kids exceed expectations than any other school in the district. About 30-40% of our students exceeded expectations on PARCC, and 65-70% of our student body either met or exceeded expectations. These results are significant compared to state results – across Colorado, 18.9%-31.7% of middle school students met or exceeded expectations in math, and 39.1%-41% met or exceeded expectations in English/Language Arts.

Highlights of McAuliffe's 2015 PARCC results include:

- #1 in DPS for the percentage of students Exceeding Expectations in 7th grade mathematics
- #1 in DPS for the percentage of students Meeting or Exceeding Expectations in 7th grade mathematics
- #2 in DPS for the percentage of students Exceeding Expectations in 7th grade literacy
- #1 in DPS for the percentage of students Exceeding Expectations in 8th grade literacy
- #1 in DPS for the percentage of students Exceeding Expectations in 8th grade mathematics

In addition to our high overall scores, four McAuliffe students achieved perfect scores on the English/Language Arts exams, and eight McAuliffe students achieved perfect scores on the mathematics exams. And on our CMAS Social Studies exams taken last spring, five McAuliffe students earned perfect scores.

What types of extracurricular opportunities are available for students in a school of McAuliffe's size?

One advantage of a larger middle school is the breadth of both academic and extracurricular opportunities available to students. McAuliffe offers many extracurricular options for students, with the goal of making sure all students can participate in something that interests them. In addition to offering the most robust middle school athletics program in DPS, we also offer many academic clubs, after-school enrichments, GT programs, leadership and service opportunities, intramurals, and social and cultural activities. Find more details about all of our offerings on our website.

What options are there in the shared boundary for students who wish to attend a smaller school?

Currently there are five middle schools in the shared boundary, four of which are smaller schools. Additionally, DPS has presented that there will be another middle school option needed north of I-70 by 2018, which is also presumed to be a smaller school. A small charter middle school is also planning to launch next year in North Park Hill, and there is discussion of the possibility of expanding Isabella Bird elementary to a K-8 model. In this range of choices in the shared boundary, McAuliffe would offer a larger middle school option. We understand that each family looks at a range of factors such as size, location, programming, and many other aspects and will rank their school choices according to what is most important for them.