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EDUCATION

East cluster 6th graders to move to East CLC, Akron Public School board votes

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The Akron Public Schools board on Monday voted to move sixth grade students in the East cluster of schools to the East Community Learning Center starting in the fall.

Students will move from Barber, David Hill, Mason, Robinson and Seiberling community learning centers, which have been serving grades K-6 but will now stop at the fifth grade. Those schools already feed into East CLC, but will now do so a grade earlier.

The 6-12 campus model is in use in several other clusters in the district, including Buchtel CLC and the Firestone high and Litchfield middle schools that have their own buildings but share a campus.

Interim Superintendent Mary Outley said students would have more instructional time at East CLC because the school day is longer at middle schools than elementary schools. Students would also have access to the East middle school college and career academy projects, which involve partnerships with area non-profits.

"We're excited about the opportunity, really, to be able to treat them like true middle schoolers," Outley said.

The proposal was one part of a much larger districtwide facilities plan, but was the only portion of the plan the board voted on Monday.

The board has a slew of options to consider that address many issues in the district, including several that require a decision soon. The board had originally planned to vote on the full slate Monday night but has now delayed those votes until at least April 10.

The options include building a new school for North High, a new school in the Kenmore neighborhood and closing a number of elementary schools and older buildings. The district also needs to find new homes for National Inventors Hall of Fame STEM High School, which

has an expiring lease for space at the University of Akron, and the Miller South School of Visual and Performing Arts, which has a deteriorating building.

The board reviewed three new options Monday night that play with the different variables: projects completed, buildings closed, time and finances.

Board member Diana Autry thanked the elementary school principals in the East cluster for taking on the sixth graders as they have, including making them mentors for younger students in their buildings.

"I know they're also looking forward to the opportunity for the sixth graders to have the true middle school experience," she said.

Board President Derrick Hall said he had received some concerns from parents as it pertains to student safety.

"There's some concern about the environment," he said.

Outley said the district made sure the middle school side of the building had enough room to house the additional grade without encroaching on the high school side of the building, so the two populations will not mix during the day. Parents of current fifth graders will have a chance to see the building before students are transferred there in the fall.

"We'll make sure that a transition plan is put into place so we can be very thoughtful of this movement of our sixth grade up to the CLC at East," Outley said.

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