

April 11, 2019

Dear Creston School Community,

As some of you may know, the Creston School Board has explored the possibility of offering 7th and 8th grade at our school. We initially decided to look into the possibility of middle school due to the interest expressed by the school community through a questionnaire earlier this year. After several months of researching and discussing we have decided to hold off on this addition for the time being. We would like to share with you some of our thoughts as to how we have arrived at this decision.

First and foremost, the Board was tasked with considering the expense and sustainability of a middle school program. At this time, we are unable to effectively and accurately predict consistent enrollment numbers at the 7th and 8th grade levels to support the expenses associated with a middle school. These expenses would include additional classrooms, staff, curriculum, materials, technology, course electives, and extra-curricular activities. Additionally, the Board agrees it would be fiscally irresponsible to go to the community of taxpayers for additional funds due to unknown future enrollment numbers.

Additionally, we would need to ensure an exceptional experience of learning for all grade levels. While we are confident we can establish an excellent academic curriculum, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to offer the diversity of experiences available at some of the other schools in the Valley. Our current partnership with Kalispell Middle School allows our students to transfer into an academic program rich with electives such as culinary arts, wood shop, robotics, and programming, as well as many sports and music opportunities. While there are some benefits to a small learning environment, accessibility to quality programs is of great importance to our students as they move forward in their academic journey.

Finally, Creston School has developed relationships with other schools in our area to accept our 7th and 8th grade students. While Kalispell Middle School does not currently accept out of district students, due to our formal agreement with them our 7th and 8th grade students are able to enroll without an out of district fee assessed to families. If our district were to add a middle school, this agreement would no longer be valid. Because of this, the Board felt it was inappropriate to effectively take away that opportunity from families that may already be planning to attend the Middle School.

As you can probably imagine, this was a big decision and took a great amount research, thought and consideration. While we have decided not to pursue this expansion at this time, it is certainly something the Board will consider as our school and community continue to grow. If you would like to discuss this decision further, please feel free to reach out to Mrs. Ward or attend one of our Board meetings.

Sincerely,

Creston School Board

Matt Hartle, Board Chair
Joanna Massie, Vice Board Chair
Julie Tikka
Jessica Sandven-Sorensen
Shawn McDonough