

# MIDDLETOWN LEADS

## WHAT IS MIDDLETOWN LEADS?

*Middletown Leads* is a weekly newsletter intended to connect the Middletown community by providing information about the civic undertakings of the Town.

## TOPICS - TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - JUNE 17, 2019

Two important topics are on the Town Council agenda on June 17, 2019.

1. Senior Housing.
2. A response to Newport Superintendent Jermain's request to establish a committee to discuss potential unification of the schools..

Both topics have been under discussion for several years with no discernible action. In the spring, the Town Council finally directed its sub-committee to come back with a recommendation at the first meeting in May. A recommendation is anticipated on June 17<sup>th</sup>.

Superintendent Jermain is scheduled to return to the Town Council in anticipation of a decision – to discuss or not to discuss unification of K-12 or 9-12 schools in Newport and Middletown. This topic has been on the table since 2009, but it has gained impetus due to the state's commitment to finance facilities improvements, which has generated a potential 80% reimbursement.

In 2014, the question of consolidation of the high schools was placed on the ballot in a non-binding referendum. The item was approved in Newport. However, it was defeated in Middletown by a margin of 54.4% to 45.6%.

It remains to be seen if the climate has changed.

## SUMMARY OF A 2011 REPORT

In 2011, the Middletown Town Council's High School Exploratory Committee developed a report entitled "The Effects of Enrollment on Quality Education Grades 9-12: A Study of the Benefits of Critical Mass."

It compared island high schools with regional high schools in the state. It concluded that, while high school consolidation would not solve all the financial and quality of education problems, it would have a significant positive effect on area students.

In comparing assessment results, it found that one of the regional high schools had the best test results, and the regional schools performed competitively with the island schools, concluding that there is NO correlation between assessment and enrollment.

It then considered Advanced Placement data: number of AP courses offered, number available in the schedule, and exam results with a score of 3 or better for college credit. It found that the regional

schools averaged higher than in island schools, concluding that there is NO strong correlation between Advanced Placement data and enrollment.

Regarding course offerings, it found that 14 courses were offered in the MHS Program of Studies while only 6 courses were offered at the smallest regional high school, but only 33% achieved mastery at MHS while 85% achieved mastery at the regional, leading to the conclusion that the number of AP courses offered is not a good measurement of high achievement.

It also reviewed exam results of the previous 5 years for AP and VHS (digital) students and found no correlation between enrollment in AP or VHS courses with test results. It concluded that AP alone is not a good measure of a high school's success.

It found that the graduation rates of regional high schools were higher than those in all the island schools, concluding that there is no correlation between enrollment and graduation rate.

It compared the Programs of Studies of 20 RI high schools and 6 MA high schools and found comparable basic courses with more electives in larger schools. It found the primary impact was on hands-on electives and career programs/electives. Larger schools offered 3-4 course sequential programs leading to certificates and/or internships.

It found that some students in smaller schools left their home schools to attend career-related programs or they gave up their career interests. Larger schools provided programs, reduced scheduling conflicts, and created more availability.

It found a strong correlation between educational opportunity and enrollment. It found that a larger school size results in 1) placement in AP classes based on eligibility criteria, 2) greater diversity of academic and hands-on electives, 3) more scheduling flexibility and course availability, 4) greater availability of career-related programs and electives that support the needs of business and industry and promote local economic development.

It found no appreciable difference in per pupil spending between island and regional schools, but the data did show that there is a relation between academic programming and economic growth.

It stated that good schools develop a job market that brings business and investment, raises property values, increases the tax base, and results in a lower and/or stable tax rate.

It stated conclusively that

- 1) schools are the economic engine of the community
- 2) size correlates with opportunity
- 3) opportunity produces a workforce
- 4) a workforce increases the job market
- 5) investment brings economic growth, a higher tax base, and local prosperity.

## FOOTNOTE

Editorial essays appear occasionally at the following website: <https://middletownleads.blogspot.com/>