

## Full Overview

# CMS Board of Education Considering Removal of the World Language Magnet from South Meck HS in 2022 – 23

### **BACKGROUND:**

The new E.E. Waddell Magnet High School is scheduled to open for the 2022 – 23 school year. The CMS Board Of Education is trying to **finalize what Magnet Program(s) will be offered through Waddell** and will vote on the recommendation in June/July. In addition to determining the focus of Waddell, CMS is trying to **solve an excess capacity issue at Myers Park High School (MPHS)**.

Between 2023-25, there will be two additional high schools that will open and will relieve ongoing capacity challenges at MPHS and Ardrey Kell High School (AKHS). Ideally, CMS would like High Schools to have about 2500 students enrolled versus the larger numbers currently at MPHS, AKHS, and South Meck High School (SMHS). NOTE: While SMHS is larger than the goal of 2500, it does not have a capacity issue, so does not need to reduce student numbers.

Currently, there are several high schools (including the new Waddell HS) that are not at capacity and can be leveraged to solve the challenges at MPHS. A recommendation the Board is considering is to move the Language Magnet from SMHS to Waddell to help populate the new high school. Doing so will open-up more than 700 student spots at SMHS, allowing a realignment of elementary feeder schools. Starmount, half of Sharon Elementary and half of Old Providence Elementary would shift to feed into SMHS.

South Meck has had the Language Magnet for over 10 years. There are 20 staff members and over 700 students enrolled in the magnet, 150+ of these students are also mapped to South Meck as their home school. All students enrolled have access to the languages classes, from Level 1 to Level 7, which is unique to South Mecklenburg High School due to the investment from the administration and staff. There were over 4,200 seats in the World Language Magnet classes this year, including non-magnet students.

### **CHALLENGE:**

Solve for the capacity issues at MPHS, position the new Waddell HS for success and maintain a mature, successful Language Magnet Program. Although CMS is concerned about the capacity at SMHS this is not a concern shared by families or the school itself.

### **PROPOSAL:**

**One of the primary proposals the Board is considering is moving the World Language Magnet (WLM) from South Meck (SMHS) to Waddell in 2022 and re-aligning some of the MPHS feeder schools to SMHS.** They will partner the WLM with one or two other magnets to try to fill the 1775 seats in the school. We do not believe that building a new WLM program at Waddell will set the school up for success and it will face the same challenges that other schools trying to support multiple magnet programs face.

## CONCERNS:

There are 5 primary concerns about moving the WLM from SMHS to Waddell: Multi-year impacts to Rezoning, Staffing a New WLM Program, Jeopardizing the Success of a Mature WLM Program, Impacting Diversity and Culture, Reducing Equity/Course Offerings.

### 1. Rezoning - This will result in at least 1500 students moving in/out of SMHS over three years.

Although CMS is concerned about the capacity at SMHS (not a concern shared by families or the school itself), moving the Language Magnet and filling in with feeder schools does not help with the capacity. It is just shifting one group of students for another. This is an unnecessary, disruptive step for South Meck given that additional changes will come in the following two years when CMS is required by law to rezone and will add two new HS to deal with capacity. (See chart)

# Year	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
	Language Magnet change	Rezoning	New Schools Open in Southern Part of the County Palisades & near British American School (East of Johnston Rd, N of 485).
Impact to SMHS	Remove up to 700 students from Magnet <i>(assuming students mapped to SMHS as home school will stay)</i>  Add 600+ from feeder schools <i>(Starmount and Sharon Elem &amp; Olde Providence Elem that map to Carmel Mid)</i>	Unknown	Remove 300+ from SMHS to new school East of Johnston Rd, N of 485 <i>(impacts students from End Haven feeder)</i>

### 2. Maturity of Language Magnet Program

SMHS Language Magnet has been in place for over 10 years and a move (change in staff/location) would jeopardize the success of the program.

- The Magnet represents 22% of the SMHS's total enrollment, with 736 students (20-21 enrollment) and is projected to be 894 in 21-22, which will represent 25% of the SMHS's population. These students are from Waddell Language Academy and Collinswood Language Academy (the blue and green transportation zones).
- All students enrolled have access to the languages classes, from Level 1 to Level 7, which is unique to South Mecklenburg High School due to the investment from the administration and staff. There were over 4,200 seats in the World Language Magnet classes this year, including non-magnet students.
- Overall scores, staff, campus resources, scholarship money are tethered to the language program in some way.

### 3. Staffing New Program

How will CMS be able to staff a World Language Magnet at Waddell? Where will they be able to find qualified, certified, native-speaking language teachers, especially with the issues with working visas for international teachers?

- Seventeen (of 20) of the World Language Magnet teachers are allotted through the CMS Staffing Allotment for SMHS including the new American Sign Language position. Most of these teachers would need to be retained at South to cover language classes for non-Magnet students, so staffing Waddell would require hiring mostly new teachers.
- SMHS could lose a specific language or teachers within a language if the Magnet moves to Waddell, which will reduce course offerings at South.

- **It is difficult to find certified, Native speaking language teachers** in Charlotte Metro that meet all Magnet requirements. **There is already a hardship trying to staff the new North K8 language school**, currently set to open this August, as well as vacancies at S.A.I.L, South Meck and North Meck.
- **CMS has limitations about paying for VISAs**, which creates a hurdle in recruiting new teachers for Waddell.

#### 4. Diversity and Culture

**With over 62 countries represented and the current SES (socioeconomic) makeup, South has the balance that CMS is trying to achieve for a more diverse and equitable culture, so this change is in direct conflict with these goals.**

	Mecklenburg County	SMHS	MPHS
White alone (not Hispanic or Latino)	46%	33%	60%
Black	33%	22%	20%
Hispanic	14%	39%	13%
Asian	6%	3%	3%
Other	1%	3%	4%
SES: High		26%	66%
SES: Med		36%	13%
SES: Low		38%	21%

*Race for Meck Co (2019) from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/mecklenburgcountynorthcarolina/PST045219>*

*Race for schools (2019-20) from <https://nces.ed.gov/globallocator/>*

*SES (Socioeconomic) 2019 - 2020 from CMS community interest meeting presentations on 5/18-20*

- Removing the Language Magnet and shifting students from MPHS will change the diversity and SES makeup by adding more than 500 White (not Hispanic or Latino) students, driving the SES High ratio up and the Med/Low categories down.
- **The current SES make-up at SMHS represents the balance that CMS is trying to achieve for a more diverse and equitable culture, so this change is in direct conflict with these goals.**
- **SMHS is very proud of the diversity of its student body and does not want to lose ground in the hard work done towards achieving equity for these students.**

#### 5. Equity / Course Availability

**Both Magnet and non-Magnet students at South Meck will take a step back with equity and course availability.**

- Waddell will not be able to offer the same number of, or the breadth of, non-language courses that South Meck does. **There will be limitations for AP, Performing and Fine Arts, CTE and general elective offerings based on the size of the school. There will also be limitations in the number of special interest clubs available.**
- Although students would have the opportunity to play sports either at Waddell or their Home School (if not offered at Waddell), they will not have the fully integrated experience that they would have if the Language Magnet is retained at SMHS.
- Concentration of languages brings exchange opportunities and internships to the entire high school community that *all* students can benefit from.

- Current **non-magnet language students at SMHS will be negatively impacted** by losing the Language Magnet.
  - Classes with blended student experiences help the immersion students have leadership and teaching moments and provide a richer learning experience for non-Magnet students.
  - Non-magnet students may have **limited language options in the future** (for example, Spanish and French only vs. Spanish, French, German, Chinese, Japanese, etc.)
  - Non-magnet students **may not have the opportunity to continue beyond 2 years of language, while 3 years is required and/or preferred by many colleges and universities.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

*We do not want to see a successful World Language Magnet program moved and be set up for failure due to staffing challenges and an uphill battle to build a brand new program with new staff and leadership. There are other alternatives to solving the capacity challenges at MPHS that the Board needs to consider.*

- **We are proposing that the Language Magnet stays at SMHS to maintain the integrity and success of the program and to help limit the achievement gap disparity at South Meck.**
  - This also ensures that current immersion students are able to have access to a broad array of courses (AP, Performing and Fine Arts, CTE, general electives), to play for sports teams at the school they attend, and to participate in some of the 48 special interest clubs available at SMHS.
- There are several Magnet Options that could be considered for Waddell. **One of the strongest/in demand magnet opportunities is for an IB or an IB/TD program** in the Blue Transportation Zone.
  - The 2021-22 CMS school choice lottery result numbers speak for themselves. **There is a big waitlist for both Myers Park IB and East Meck IB.** There are still openings in the World Language Magnet programs. This clearly shows the demand in CMS is for an IB Program.
  - There is **NO viable Magnet choice for an IB high school in the Blue Transportation Zone for families living in the southern part of the county.** Myers Park HS has a “closed” IB program that is open only to Myers Park residents. High school students in the Blue AND Green Transportation Zones must attend East Meck HS if they wish to pursue IB, but because of the waitlist East Meck currently has there is no available option for them.
  - Although CMS feels that an IB program at Waddell would impact the IB program at Harding, this is unlikely given that it is 12 miles north of the Waddell building, which is why families do not choose to attend there.
  - **Waddell and the West Side need every advantage** they can have to bolster the plan the County is looking for to show progress in academic gaps. An IB program at Waddell will provide academic and ultimately economic resources through internships and business support **to close academic gaps in that area.**
- **Because MPHS is a closed IB program, this further limits the IB Magnet spots for students in the Blue Zone. Waddell could help close the equity gap and fill this need** and could also add an offering for TD since there is not a high school program today, which is a gap for a district of our size. This could greatly improve equity and options for students throughout the county who cannot get into East Meck or into MPHS due to enrollment caps. An additional consideration, if numbers are a challenge, is to make this a middle/high school magnet to fill the gap at all grade levels 6-12.
- **There are other high schools in the district (like Providence) that are below capacity and could be used to realign MPHS’s excess capacity.** Depending on the school, it may help with the diversification of their student populations, the Equity/Coursework opportunities with a larger student body and would definitely level out capacities for the schools.
- We would recommend **holding off opening Waddell until the Rezoning takes place in 2023 -24** to minimize the amount of change to all of the involved schools AND to fully assess the enrollment impacts across CMS due to families choosing different options as a result of the pandemic.

***In summary, opening up a full IB magnet (either 6-12 or 9-12) at Waddell HS will allow the WLM to continue to be successful as well as provide equitable access to this desirable Magnet program to those in the Blue transportation zone. Leveraging a school like Providence will also solve the capacity challenges at MPHS.***