

College comes early

The staff and students of GJHS have been ecstatic about the new school that is going to be built after the bond passed in November of 2021.

However, the transition to the new school will be more than just moving into a new building-- there will be an entirely different system we will be adopting. Architects have proposed an idea, as directed by the school district, in which there will be no designated classrooms for teachers. Instead, there will be classrooms equipped with basic materials for say, a Comp. 10 class, but teachers who teach Comp. 10 will all share that classroom and move to different classrooms where they will teach their different classes.

Essentially, the new school will have a collegiate feel where both the teachers and students are moving around the building each period.

"It causes a staleness that public schools shouldn't want to foster. It's OK to go to a college and it's kind of a different level right, but when you come to high school or middle school or elementary school it just feels like there should be a place for the teacher... I feel like there is personality lost in it," said David Sleeper, English teacher at GJHS.

This entire concept is supposed to support the Academy model GJHS has worked hard to implement over the past few years.

"The district told us they want an academy type model so we are trying to design the building to accommodate that," said Peter Icenogle with the Blythe Group, one of the head architects of the new building.

Although many are unaware of it, in the freshman seminar classes, students are grouped together by their field of interest (ex. Health and Human Services, Engineering, etc.). The new building will be set up where each wing houses classrooms specific to these fields, which is why both students and staff will be moving around the building.

However, nothing is set in stone. Teachers have been invited to many meetings held by the architects to get feedback on the current plans.

"The whole goal with [the new

building] is flexibility in the future," said Icenogle.

According to Icenogle, the function and the set-up of the building is subject to change even after the building is finished. The final set-up in the building will be determined by attendance, scheduling, and the needs and wants of the students and staff.

The current plan, however, in which teachers will not have

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their own classrooms raises many concerns.

First and foremost, privacy is an issue. Because teachers would only have a personal office cubicle, students needing one-on-one private support from a teacher might find it hard to reach out to get help. Although there will be conference rooms for such purposes, the availability and accessibility of those rooms for student use is ambiguous.

More than just serious conversations, however, teachers having their own classes encourage students to come in at lunch just to visit and get to know each other, not strictly from an in-class setting.

"I feel like I wouldn't have a teacher to talk to," said Bailey Schmidt, senior at GJHS.

Also, most teachers become teachers because they like being

around students. Taking away their classrooms would also take away from this draw for teachers.

"I think about all the mini-conversations I have just in those five minutes of passing period, between you coming and going from my room. If I'm running to my next class... I'm not able to do that at all," said Sleeper.

Furthermore, classrooms are often decorated with student work and resources to reinforce student learning. They also represent a teacher's personality and

"I don't think [not having designated classrooms] is too good of an idea. I feel like a lot you can tell about a teacher is their classroom," said Sadie Waters, senior at GJHS.

Moreover, some teachers say their classrooms are integral to their teaching style. Without the flexibility to arrange their classrooms how they want and provide students with what teachers believe are the necessary materials for their classes, it is unknown how this will impact student learning.

Lastly, the fear is the school culture would take a downward turn.

It is hard to know how exactly the set up of the new building will affect student learning and the overall culture of the school, but everything is subject to change. Architects are awaiting student and staff feedback before finalizing plans for the new building to start construction in June.



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