



## The Birmingham News

### **Banks Middle closing pondered**

#### **Schools chief Mims suggests future Mitchell be K-8**

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A Birmingham school board committee on Monday discussed closing Banks Middle School and moving its students into the future Ossie Ware Mitchell school.

About 70 people packed the board room as the school board's Facilities and Technology Committee heard a recommendation from Superintendent Stan Mims to make the future Ossie Ware Mitchell school a K-8 school with the possibility of moving in students from nearby Banks Middle during the upcoming Christmas break to complete the school year.

Mitchell, now nearly ready for students, is just one of up to 10 schools the Birmingham board is planning to convert to K-8 before the start of the 2007-08 school year.

Like school systems in Philadelphia and Cincinnati, Birmingham is looking at K-8 schools because of some studies that they improve academic performance and reduce discipline problems. Supporters of middle schools which consist of grades 6 through 8, point to other studies that K-8 schools do little to affect performance.

School board members stressed that any proposal to move Banks Middle would have community comments early in the process before it comes before the full board for approval.

Mitchell could take in Banks' 482 students. It has a design capacity of more than 500.

Those students, however, could be transferred to other schools over the summer break when other schools are converted to K-8 schools.

Conversion to K-8 schools would require adding middle school staples such as lockers, appropriate furniture and band and choral rooms.

Mims also recommended leaving students in Robinson Elementary and Washington K-8 where they are. Earlier plans had some of Robinson's students going to Ossie Ware and Washington students moving to the Lincoln Building, until a more permanent facility was built.

John Harris, North Titusville Neighborhood Association president, submitted a petition with more than 400 signatures that stated the students in Washington should not move unless there are plans to return them to a permanent facility.

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