

Morris County Schools

USD 417 employees, parents, and patrons through their cooperative efforts assure district students of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to develop into lifelong learners who respect themselves and others, contribute to their communities, and succeed in a changing world.

**From Doug Conwell,
Superintendent**

Grade 7th-12 Configuration Report March 12, 2015

Executive Summary

Over the course of a two-month period of time, the 7-12 Configuration Committee met 5 times to review information and to discuss this possible change to our school structure. The primary purpose of the committee was to provide feedback on the concerns about moving to a 7-12 grade structure. Members on this committee consisted of the superintendent, 8 parents, 6 teachers, and 4 administrators. While it is not the case that all members of the committee were present at each meeting, there was a clear majority of the committee present for all meetings.

The committee spent the majority of this time reviewing and discussing survey responses from students, parents, and teachers. The district solicited input on the concerns and benefits for moving to a 7-12 grade configuration. It was the consensus of the committee that the number one concern expressed by parents and students involved potential misbehaviors (bullying in particular) emanating from combining these grade levels in one facility. More specifically:

- Concerns regarding older students bullying younger students;
- Proper supervision from the adults in the school to minimize potential problems between the younger and older students;
- Greater potential for exposure for the younger students to drugs and alcohol;
- Possible inappropriate relationships between older boys and younger girls.

Ways to minimize the interactions between these age levels and to provide as many safeguards as possible were discussed. These include:

- Creating separate classroom and locker spaces for grades 7 & 8 from grades 9-12;
- Establishing different entrance and exit areas at the school, including separate bus loading and unloading areas for 7th/8th grade students and 9-12 students;
- Developing separate lunch schedules for 7th/8th grade students from 9-12 students;
- Having separate PE spaces as well as restroom spaces for these grade levels;

- Establishing supervision of halls on the very few occasions when all grade levels may need to pass through common spaces to get to classes.

School Visits

Approximately 6 committee members took a tour of nearby schools that have a 7-12 or K-12 configuration. They toured the Chase County and Mission Valley schools. Comments brought back from both site visits were very positive. It was shared that the same concerns being expressed by our parents and students are the same that were expressed when these schools moved to a 7-12 (K-12) configuration. Today, these schools have grown to where students do mingle some without the worries of adults.

Space Configurations

The committee also reviewed work being done with a local architect regarding possible changes in space design to help with separation of students. I have been working with Ben Moore regarding space configurations to help with the separation of students in the CGHS facility. I think it proper to state that finding complete separation of the 7/8 and 9-12 students is simply not possible. So, if total separation is a goal then we likely will not meet it. I would also say that in most every district that has a similar configuration of students, there are some spaces where separation does not occur. For example, in many schools there is a shared library, office, and/or cafeteria. While within these spaces care is taken to separate students whether through scheduling or creating separate areas within the shared space, there will be times when there is contact between these students.

The separation issues specific to this facility center around the current location of three spaces. These are the library, the office, and the Family & Consumer Sciences room. The issue involving the library comes down to the placement of our 7th & 8th grade students for their primary classes. If these classes are located on the first floor of the school, then there will be senior high students using the library before, during, and after the school day on a daily basis. There will be student traffic to the office/nurse's areas as well. Also, with HS students coming and going from the FACS classes, they will be in the MS portion of the facility throughout the day. If grade 7 & 8 students are located on the second floor of the school then these are no longer an issue.

Regardless of where the grade 7 & 8 students are placed, access to the office and nurse's station will have students mixing for attendance and possibly some behavior issues. We will be able to schedule lunches in such a manner that grades 7 & 8 will have their own lunch period and we can always travel to the cafeteria through the old gym to avoid hallway/auditorium issues.

There really should be limited hallway mingling unless the middle school schedule involves exploratory classes (business, art, agriculture, FACS) for our students. If we choose to have a schedule where there are exploratory classes, then unless we build a schedule where students are released early or held until shared passing periods end, there would be two passing periods where there would be mixing of younger and older students in hallways. Building a plan where students

start, or end, the day and then are released early to go back to their respective home rooms is a viable option to offset this concern.

Scheduling and Staffing Efficiencies

The administrative team and counselors held four meetings to work on a schedule that essentially answered the following question, "Is there a schedule that would allow us to find staffing efficiencies such that the district can realize budget savings without sacrificing current courses." The answer to that question, based on the work of the scheduling committee is yes. In fact, we believe we can eliminate two teaching positions by moving to a 7-12 facility. We will also be able to reduce staff by one administrator and possibly one classified staff member.

The potential annual savings for moving to a 7-12 configuration at the CGHS is approximately \$203,800.

Part I: Survey Information

Enclosed in this document you will find a summary page regarding the concerns and the benefits to having a 7-12 school structure as expressed by parents, students, and teachers. These were reviewed and discussed by the 7-12 committee. It is important to note, as the committee also discussed, that some of these concerns are ones that will have to be handled by parents. For example, if it is a concern that a younger child might end up getting in a car after school with an older student, this becomes a parent issue. The school can and will establish separate exits and bus pick up locations but in the end, if a younger child decides they are going to meet an older student off our campus and get into a car with them, there is little the school can do to stop this from happening. So, it is important to understand what is in the school's locus of control and what is not. As we do this, the school will make every effort to safeguard all students and to provide a positive and challenging educational experience for our students. Below is a list of topics of concern discussed by the committee with comments on how the school can address the concern.

Concerns:

- Separation of students: While we cannot and should not promise absolute separation of students, we can control this separation for the majority of the school day. All 7th & 8th grade classes with the exception of P.E., music, and perhaps exploratory classes will be held on either the 2nd or 1st floor only. The best opportunity for separation would be to hold these classes on the 2nd floor if possible. There will be a separate lunch period. At the start and end of school, 7th & 8th grade students will use the north doors to the high school while students in grades 9-12 will use the south doors to the cafeteria. We will have to determine how to handle breakfast and perhaps one passing period depending on the selected schedule. Buses will pick up and drop off at these separate, designated locations.
- Loss of traditions: There is concern for the loss of traditions and it may be the case that some of these traditions no longer exist. However, with this new beginning comes the opportunity to determine what traditions to keep or start and what traditions to eliminate. There is a commitment to the 7th & 8th grade students having their own identity, their own assemblies, trips, and other unique experiences. All involved in our discussions do not want grades 7 & 8 to become just another part of the high school experience. Everyone wants the middle school experience to be something different so students have that to look forward to in the future.
- Need for additional counseling: Everyone involved in our discussions felt that this was out of the control of our work. So, while it is important for us to recognize that our parents, students, and teachers feel this is a need for our district, it is not in our control within the discussion of establishing a 7-12 facility.
- Larger class sizes: This is a concern for all parents, particularly those whose students attended PHMS where class sizes are 11 to 13 students. Unfortunately, with state finance as it is, the district is forced to make some

very tough decisions, hence the 7-12 configuration study. The reality for many of our classrooms is that we will likely see some increases in class sizes in the coming years.

- Do not take away curricular opportunities from HS students: As the committee has worked on a schedule to answer the question about staffing efficiencies, we have been very careful to not eliminate HS offerings. While there may be an instance or two where a class is offered every other year (we already do this for at least two classes), schedules have been developed that keep classes for high school students. Even with the possibility of offering exploratory classes for our middle school students, we believe we can offer our high school students the same classes as offered this year.
The other issue that was important was high school student access to the school library. Our HS students use the library before school, throughout the school day, and after school. Creating a separation that will continue to allow for HS access to the library is difficult. One option is to move MS students to the second level of the school though this is not the most efficient use of our space. In the end, we will need to decide if allowing HS students access to the library at all times during the day requires that MS classes are on the second floor in order to provide for desired separation.
- Not having as good of teachers in a combined school: All parents on the committee seem to like the teachers that teach in our middle schools. There is great pride in these schools. The district is committed to placing the best teachers possible in our classrooms and we believe that all of our students can have great success with any of the teachers at both PHMS and CGMS.
- Loss of leadership opportunities: The key here is for our new school to find ways for students to be involved. Once we develop these opportunities, all students need to have an equal chance to participate. Concern was expressed that by sheer numbers, leadership opportunities determined by student election would favor students from CGMS. While this has not been the experience for our 9th graders when they come together, if the staff feels it to be necessary the first year to establish quotas (or for every year for 7th grade leadership opportunities) then they will have the freedom to do so. Our teaching staff will want this to be a quality experience for all of our students.
- Busing: Concern was expressed about having MS students riding the bus with HS students. Currently that is what happens with all of the students who ride our buses. If however this were to become a problem for the trip between Alta Vista and Council Grove, we typically run two different buses and can separate the PH middle school and high school students.
- Bullying: This issue was a major point of discussion. There is a perception among some in our communities that the high school has a bullying problem and is non-responsive to these complaints/concerns. How much of this perception is based on factual information is hard to determine. We have bullying complaints in all of our schools. From what I have seen over the past two years at CGHS, and especially this year, when a complaint is lodged there is appropriate follow up. When it is determined that bullying has taken

place, action is taken in accordance with school policy. I have shared this perception with the HS and MS staff and have had discussions with Mr. McDiffett as well. Should we move to a 7-12 configuration, we will certainly need to address the issue of bullying more with our students and staff. We do have the Olweus program in place for our MS students and this would continue to be used with our 7th & 8th grade students in a 7-12 configured school.

- Parent buy-in: There is an acknowledgement that not all parents will buy-in to making this change. The school and district will need to do a good job of putting parents minds at ease. That in fact a 7-12 configuration works elsewhere in the state and it can work here in USD 417 as well. One of the things that I believe will be important is to find a way to staff the middle school with trusted teachers from both schools. It will also take a lot of communication with parents and attention to detail during implementation.

Benefits: The benefits are outlined on the summary document. To highlight a couple of points, I would offer the following comments. First, there is a benefit to having students have one less facility relocation in their K-12 education. There are savings for the district to be had that can help address the state finance cuts that are currently taking place with more to come for the 2015-16 school year. MS and HS staff will have more frequent opportunities to plan together. There is a possibility, if the district so desires, to offer exploratory classes. This would be a significant change in philosophy and while there is a schedule that can provide this opportunity, the district may choose to keep the current class schedule in place.

Summary of Surveys Regarding Concerns & Benefits of a 7-12 Configuration

Expressed Concerns

- Separation of students/General supervision of students – The committee understands the idea that students will be separated through general class periods. Concerns regard the following parts of a school day.
 - Passing periods and hallway behaviors – Mixing could occur during passing periods as MS students go to PE, music, computers, and lunch. Having teachers present in hallways or having junior and senior students serving as hallway monitors can help minimize misbehaviors. Further, developing paths for the different students might help as well.
 - Lunch period – There would be a separate lunch period scheduled for MS students.
 - Before/After school hours – Different loading and unloading zones will be created for MS and Sr. high students. Designated areas that students can be during these times would be established. Again, it is possible to have Jr./Sr. student monitors if needed. If students stay for after school activities, parents will have to be responsible for knowing their child is staying and for knowing that in doing this there will be potential mixing of students in our general commons area.
 - Library usage before and after school – High school students like to be in the library at this time primarily for access to computers. The school will have to develop a plan on this is handled. We do NOT want discourage any students from accessing the library regardless of time of day.
- Loss of traditions, programs, and trips – There is no way to guarantee that traditions specific to one school or the other won't be lost unless we choose to continue one for all MS students. Events mentioned included 8th grade promotion ceremony, 8th grade annual trip in the spring, Veteran's Day program, spelling bee, geography bee, science fair, scholar's bowl (concern expressed here is that we currently field 2 A teams and 2 B teams between the two MS. Loss of opportunity for students was expressed by parents since we would move to single A and B team)
- Need for additional counseling – Our district has some community based services for our schools to access which is important to keep in mind. The district recognizes the need for additional counseling help, which was one of the factors that started this look for efficiencies. However, under this configuration services remain as currently structured so there is no reduction of counseling services.
- Larger class sizes – This is certainly probable for a segment of our MS student population. Conversely, for another segment of our MS student

population, class sizes may decrease if an additional section for a subject is needed due to consolidation.

- Do not want this configuration to take away course offerings – At the MS level there may be a class that is lost but the concern is to make sure that HS students do not lose classes in order to offer electives to MS students. The administrative is committed to not taking away HS elective courses only to provide such an opportunity for MS students.
- Not having as good teachers – Both schools have good teachers and parents at both schools are proud of these teachers. The district always tries to hire the best possible teachers. Both staffs, particularly the PHMS, has had turnover the past two years. There may well be more turnover before the 2016-17 school year. And, we do not know who may or may not be interested in being part of the MS staff or staying with the elementary students.
- Loss of leadership opportunities – As students reach 8th grade in particular, there are chances for them to become student leaders through StuCo, cheer leading, and other activities. The idea is that all of these activities for which students can find leadership opportunities will still be offered if 7th & 8th are combined at the CGHS facility. Also the concern was mentioned about whether all students would have equal chances to be “elected” to leadership positions when the MS are combined. The experience at CGHS is that being from one MS or the other is not an indicator of being selected for a leadership role. However, at least for the first year, the school could discuss how to provide equal opportunities for all students.
- Busing – There were three issues discussed in regards to busing. First, for the 7th and 8th grade students coming from the Dwight/Alta Vista area, there will be an additional amount of time riding a school bus. It will be a direct route from Alta Vista, which will mean an additional 13-15 minutes. For current CGMS students, the route time will still be the same. Second, buses can have separated drop off locations at the high school. MS students can be dropped off at the front door (north side) and HS students can be dropped off at the activity entrance (south side). Last there is concern regarding MS students riding the bus with HS students. This actually already happens throughout our district. The one different aspect will be the bus route between Alta Vista and Council Grove. While I do not perceive any other problems may come from this than what may already be occurring, if need be we can designate a MS bus and a HS bus. We have two buses that can shuttle each grade level of students from AV to Council Grove.
- Bullying – This is a concern for all of our children at all of our schools. If properly separated and with proper supervision, we can minimize the times that such behavior might occur. Too, the adults in the building can have conversations with and expectations of our older students that they will not bully or mistreat the younger students. Whenever students mix there is a possibility for bully behavior to occur. This could be at the

swimming pool, church school, or on weekends. So, we will do our best to keep this from happening.

- Parent Buy-in – There is a realization that not all parents may buy-in. However, there is a plan for adults from each community to come together to talk and to build relationships in the hopes of overcoming any animosity that might currently exist and to help support school changes.

Perceived Benefits

- Facility - By attending 7th & 8th grade at the high school facility, students will be familiar/comfortable with the school as they enter high school classes. There will be more space than what some students are used to having. The gym facility is much larger than what some students have been used to using.
- Educationally – There is a possibility for different classes, perhaps electives for some of our students. Perhaps better career exploration possibilities for MS students. Class size will be larger which can offer a different atmosphere including student interactions in classes. Better utilization of staff may mean additional learning experiences. There is a pathway for more advanced courses for some students which would help to push them academically. Students with special needs may have different grouping opportunities due to the MS being larger population wise with more teachers available. Physical education opportunities arise with more space and possible access to the HS weight room. Students will have some contact with HS teachers prior to attending HS. Interested HS students can help MS students by tutoring and MS teachers through becoming a classroom aide. Collaboration between MS & HS teachers can provide for better preparation and coordination of curriculum as well as common performance expectations.
- MS Student Relationships- By combining PHMS and CGMS students, there are greater opportunities to make many new friends. This year's 8th grade students just attended school with this year's 9th grade students so friendships can be maintained.
- Food Service – MS students will have access to the ala carte menu at the HS.
- Sports – MS sports can start at the completion of the day without waiting on the transfer of students for our combined sports teams. Too, football, cross-country, wrestling, and track are held at the HS facility so students are already at the school. Conversely however, volleyball and basketball will have to be bused to the CGES facility for practice.
- Transitions – This configuration means one less transition for students than they have had in the past. Again, the familiarity with the HS would make the transition to HS easier.
- The elementary students have more access to the larger gym for PE classes.
- There is a potential for savings.

Part II: Schedule Options

A committee comprised of school administrators, the Director of Curriculum & Instruction, school counselors, and the superintendent held four meetings to develop a schedule designed to answer the following question, "Is there a schedule that would allow us to find staffing efficiencies such that the district can realize budget savings without sacrificing current courses." The short answer to this question is yes. Keep in mind however that the design of the HS schedule has to be negotiated and the work that we have done here did not include teachers. I felt it was more important at this time to keep teachers in classrooms working with our students. If the BOE chooses to move to a 7-12 configuration with a change in the HS schedule, then I will begin the process of working with teachers on the schedule issue.

The committee discussed several options and it is our belief that if needed, we could keep the current schedules for each of the schools. One drawback to this is it is not efficient in the sharing of teachers when needed. A second drawback would be the need to have two bell schedules and whether it is even possible to run two bell schedules in the same building without having bells ringing in all classrooms. In the end, matching the two schedules would work best for a shared building.

To this end, the committee did develop a schedule where both MS and HS run on a "7-Period Day." HS courses would be 50 minutes long and would occur every day. The HS would move back to semesters, instead of trimesters. The MS course lengths are adaptable based on preferences of the length of class periods by course. In other words, do we want our MS ELA class period to continue at roughly 75 to 90 minutes or are we comfortable with 50-minute class periods, which is typical in middle schools. Here is what the MS class periods would look like under the committee's scenario:

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| ELA | 50 minutes daily |
| Math | 50 minutes daily |
| Science | 50 minutes daily |
| Social Studies | 50 minutes daily |
| PE/Health | 50 minutes daily |
| Band/Vocal or TT | 50 minutes daily (TT is Tier Time) |
| Exploratory | 50 minutes daily |

All students get seminar - 4 days are study hall and 1 day is class meeting/Olweus.

The committee did a short exercise to develop what we believed to be the pros and cons for this type of a schedule for both MS and HS and this is what we came up with, though there may be other items as well.

Middle School Benefits

- PE/Health daily

- Exploratory courses – There would be exploratory for both 7th and 8th grade students. 7th grade exploratory classes would have a fine arts emphasis with a rotation of art, instrumental vocal classes, and drama/speech. 8th grade exploratory classes would focus on business, agriculture, and FACS. If the state funding formula still has vocational weighting in it, these CTE courses could count as introductory courses so that students start high school in classes that are state funded.
- If student is in Tier II/III - still option for fine arts exploratory
- Includes Tier Time available for all students
- Social studies and science classes would meet every day for 50 minutes. This is an increase over our 60 minutes every other day. Social studies and science will have to help with the writing and perhaps some other ELA standards. This should not be much of a problem since they are already written in to these standards.

Middle School Disadvantages

- Shortened ELA (50 min.) compared current 90 min. block
- Need plan time for ELA and SS teachers to collaborate to help with shortened ELA block and shared standards
- Shortened Math (10 min.) compared to current 60 min. block
- Study Hall during Seminar (not daily due to class meetings, etc.)
- 1st year of implementation of exploratory classes would require 8th grade classes and Freshman Intro classes in the same year
- More transitions during the day

The following is a list of advantages and disadvantages for a trimester versus 7-period day class schedule.

Trimester (90-minute class) Advantages / These would also be 7-Period Day (50-minute class) Disadvantages if written in those terms

- Math enrichment courses work well with trimester system; math all year for those students who need the enrichment courses
- Length of time for hands-on courses
- More elective opportunities
- Potential credits go from 28 (7 period day) to 30 (trimester)
- Fewer classes each semester
- Fewer preps for students
- Trimester aligns with KSHSAA activities
- One class period can address both reading/math interventions (90 minutes)
- More options for credit recovery
- More opportunities to take college credit

- Fewer transitions during the day
- Students in enrichment courses could complete math credits by the end of sophomore year
- More opportunity to graduate early. For some students it is a benefit, for others, it may be a disadvantage.

Trimester (90-minute class) Disadvantages / These would also be 7-Period Day (50-minute class) Disadvantages if written in those terms

- Transitioning to a trimester system from traditional schedule was/is difficult for community/educators
- Transferring credit/placing students in courses is difficult for incoming/outgoing students in a trimester schedule
- Course scheduling is difficult and more time consuming for counselors; takes away from working with kids in a trimester schedule
- Year long courses must address pacing (1A/B must end at same spot)
- Courses are not all year long (i.e. math/ELA)
- Math required credits could be obtained by the end of sophomore year (if no math is taken junior/senior years then students can be unprepared for workforce)
- Students who want to take band & vocal do not have as many options for other electives
- Trimester system has only been adopted by a handful of schools in Kansas
- Scheduling state assessments is difficult (i.e. students may not be in content area classes during the time of year they are assessed)
- More opportunity to graduate early. For some students it is a benefit, for others, it may be a disadvantage.

I want to take a minute here to discuss how making a change to a 7-12 facility addresses the administrator issue. Currently the CGES has 23 teachers and over 300 students to supervise through grade 6. CGHS has 23 teachers and over 200 students to supervise grades 9-12. Both of these are large for one supervisor but doable (at least this is typical for many elementary schools in Kansas). When you add in the 7 middle school teachers and another 100 students to either load, it really is too much for one person. It is very typical for a high school to have well over 300 students and over 30 teachers to supervise with two administrators.

The point I want to make here is this, it is far more typical for a facility with older students, middle school and high school, to have student and teacher numbers of this size with a second administrator because that person typically also handles athletic director duties. To have an elementary and middle school combination with over 400 students and over 30 teachers supervised by one person is asking too much. This is why we added the second principal at this location. So, from an administrator staffing standpoint, it makes more sense to combine 7th & 8th grade

into the 9-12 building where there is two administrators if we are trying to find efficiencies and savings. It would be hard, even though I will do it anyway, to offer an option where we have only one principal at a school comprised of our CGES and CGMS students and teachers. The best option for staffing efficiency is to move grades 7 & 8 to the CGHS facility.

7-period Day: 50-minute Classes

Start Time 8:15 AM Passing 3 Class Length 50
 End Time 3:27 PM Seminar 30 Lunch 25

| First Semester | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------|--------------|----------|----------|----------|-----------------|----------|----------|--|--|
| Start | 8:15 AM | 9:08 AM | 10:01 AM | 10:54 AM | 11:27 AM | 11:55 AM | 12:23 PM | 12:51 PM | 1:44 PM | 2:37 PM | | |
| End | 9:05 AM | 9:58 AM | 10:51 AM | 11:24 AM | 11:52 AM | 12:20 PM | 12:48 PM | 1:41 PM | 2:34 PM | 3:27 PM | | |
| Instructor | Period 1 | Period 2 | Period 3 | Seminar | 4A | 4B | 4C | Period 5 | Period 6 | Period 7 | | |
| ELA 1 | Comp App (7)-1 | Comp App (7)-3 | ELA (7) | MS Seminar 1 | MS TT | Lunch | MS TT | ELA (7) | PLAN | ELA (7) | | |
| ELA 2 | ELA (8) | ELA (8) | | MS Seminar 2 | MS TT | Lunch | MS TT | Comp App (7)-5 | PLAN | | | |
| Soc. Study 3 | SS 8 | SS 7 | SS 7 | MS Seminar 3 | Plan | Lunch | Plan | SS 8 | Civics | | | |
| SCI 1 | Sci 7 | Sci 7 | Sci 8 | MS Seminar 4 | MS TT | Lunch | MS TT | Sci 8 | PLAN | | | |
| Math 1 | Math 7 | Math 8 | Math 7 | MS Seminar 5 | MS TT | Lunch | MS TT | Math 7 | PLAN | | | |
| PE 3 | PE/Health (7)-2 | PE/Health (7)-4 | PE 8 | MS Seminar 6 | MS TT | Lunch | MS TT | PE/Health (7)-6 | PLAN | | | |

| High School Schedule Semester 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| Start | 8:15 AM | 9:08 AM | 10:01 AM | 10:54 AM | 11:27 AM | 11:55 AM | 12:23 PM | 12:51 PM | 1:44 PM | 2:37 PM | | |
| End | 9:05 AM | 9:58 AM | 10:51 AM | 11:24 AM | 11:52 AM | 12:20 PM | 12:48 PM | 1:41 PM | 2:34 PM | 3:27 PM | | |
| ELA 3 | English I A | PLAN | English I A | HS Seminar 1 | VPL | Lunch | Reading T2 | Speech | VPL | Speech/Drama (7) | | English I A |
| ELA 4 | English II A | PLAN | English II A | HS Seminar 2 | Lunch | Drama | English IV A | Speech | Yearbook | Trigonometry | | English II A |
| ELA 5 | English III A | PLAN | English III A | HS Seminar 3 | MS TT | Lunch | MS TT | Algebra I A | Geometry A | PLAN | | English IV A |
| Math 2 | Algebra I Enrichment | Algebra I A | Algebra I A | HS Seminar 4 | MS TT | Lunch | MS TT | Algebra I A | Geometry A | PLAN | | PLAN |
| Math 3 | M T3 | Geometry A | Geometry Enrichment | HS Seminar 5 | Geometry A | Lunch | Geometry A | Geometry A | Geometry A | PLAN | | PLAN |
| Math 4 | Algebra II Enrichment | Algebra II A | Algebra II A | HS Seminar 6 | Lunch | Algebra II A | Algebra II A | Algebra II A | Government | US History A | | US History A |
| Soc. Study 1 | US History A | PLAN | US History A | HS Seminar 7 | Lunch | US History A | Government | Government | World History | World History | | World History |
| Soc. Study 2 | World Geography | PLAN | Current Social Issues | HS Seminar 8 | Economics | Lunch | Economics | Economics | Reading T2 | Reading T2 | | PLAN |
| SCI 2 | Biology A | Biology A | Biology A | HS Seminar 9 | Lunch | Biology A | Anatomy A | Anatomy A | Physics A | Physics A | | PLAN |
| SCI 3 | Chemistry A | Chemistry A | Chemistry A | HS Seminar 10 | Applied Chemistry/Physics A | Lunch | Engineering Design | Engineering Design | Physics A | Physics A | | PLAN |
| Music 1 | Choir 9-12 | Brave voices 9-12 | Choir 7-8 | HS Seminar 11 | Choir 7-8 | Lunch | Band 7-8 | Band 7-8 | Music Appreciation (7) | Music Appreciation (7) | | Band 9-12 |
| FL 1 | Spanish 1A | Spanish 1A | Spanish 2A | HS Seminar 12 | Lunch | Spanish 2A | French 1A | French 1A | French 1A | French 1A | | Band 9-12 |
| Art 1 | Art 2-D | Art 2-D | PLAN | HS Seminar 13 | Lunch | Art 3D | Art 3-D | Art 3-D | Intro to Art (7) | Intro to Art (7) | | Art 2-D |
| PE 1 | Plan | PE/Health A | PE/Health A | HS Seminar 14 | Lunch | Weights | Weights | Weights | Weights | Weights | | PE/Health A |
| PE 2 | Plan | Advanced PE | VPL | HS Seminar 15 | VPL | Lunch | Lunch | VPL | VPL | VPL | | Advanced PE |
| AG 1 | Horticulture A | Animal Science A | PLAN | HS Seminar 16 | Ag Welding A | Lunch | Lunch | Ag Mechanics A | 3 Intro to Ag A | 3 Intro to Ag A | | Animal Science A |
| FACS 1 | Family Studies | Nutrition & Wellness 1 | PLAN | HS Seminar 17 | Human Growth & Dev. | Lunch | Lunch | Career & Life Planning (8) | 3 Career & Life Planning | 3 Career & Life Planning | | Nutrition & Wellness 1 |
| Bus/Comp | Braves Business | Accounting A | PLAN | HS Seminar 18 | Lunch | Braves Business | Lunch | 8 Business Essentials | 8 Business Essentials | 8 Business Essentials | | Management & Leadership |

Part III: Facility

The issue of separation and minimizing the times our 7th and 8th grade students would be around our high school students was a primary concern for our parents. So, to help me with reviewing our space and looking for options on how best to locate our students, I asked Ben Moore to help with reviewing the high school facility. Mr. Moore toured the school with Mr. McDiffett to get perspective on our current room usage. In order to meet our MS classroom needs, we need 6 rooms plus a gym space. We would dedicate the old gym as the MS gym. In order to meet our HS needs, we need 12 classrooms not counting our 2 science rooms, business room, agriculture rooms, FACS room, art, P.E., and music.

Enclosed with this document you will find three diagrams of the CGHS facility. Diagram A1 illustrates the under utilized space that we have in the school. We have 7 rooms that are virtually abandoned (though one of these is used for stage props and scene storage). There are another 3 rooms that are under utilized. Please note that in A1, Mr. Moore shows a SPED room, business room, and VPL as being under utilized but this is not correct. These are rooms that are used for teaching much of the day. So, in total there are 10 rooms that are available for 6 MS classrooms. The key is how to arrange these spaces to create sufficient separation between MS and HS students.

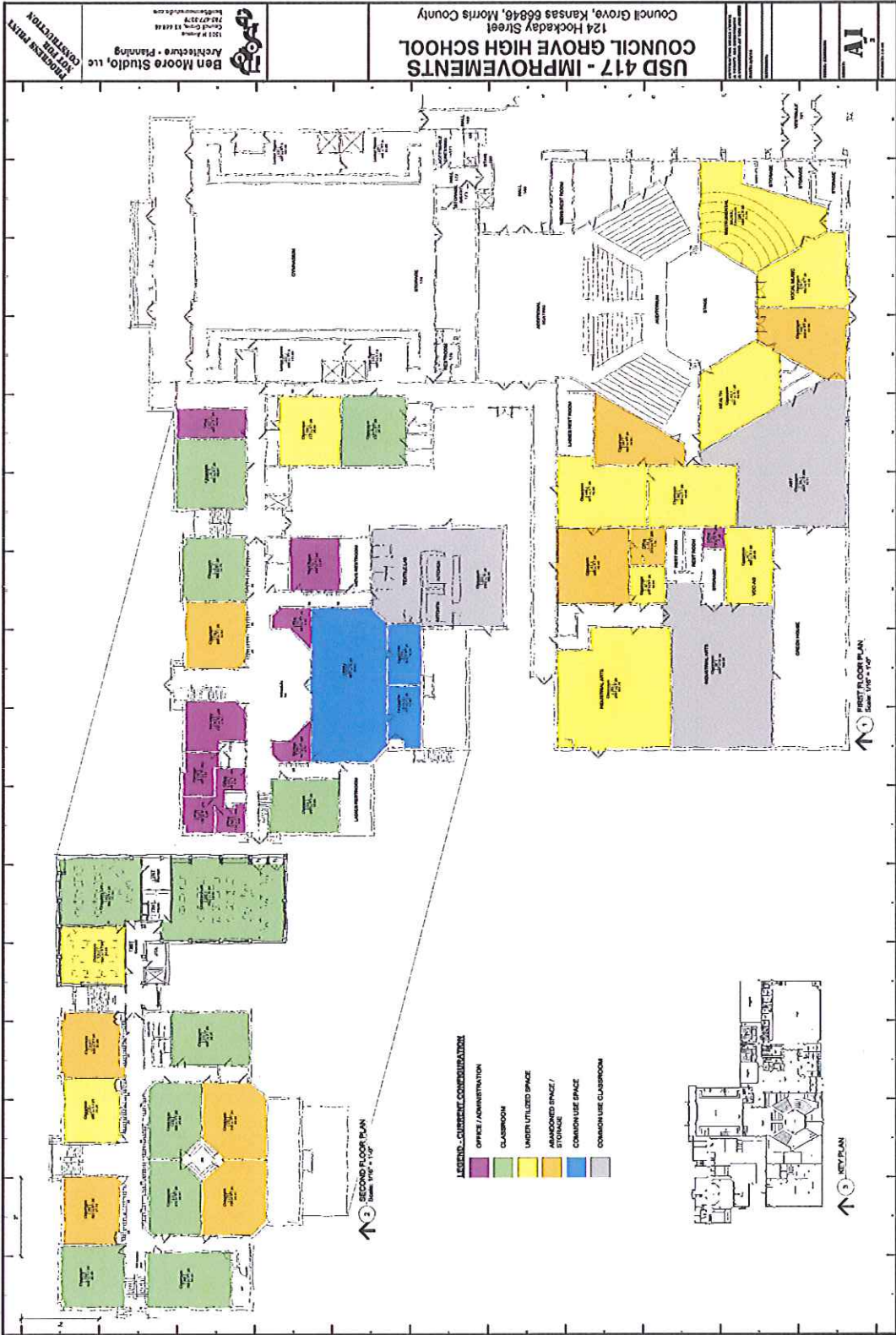
Diagram A2 illustrates what we should consider doing if the 7th and 8th grade students were to be located on the first floor of the school facility. In order to do this and to provide the most separation possible, we would propose moving both the teacher's lounge and the FACS room to different locations. This would allow the 6 MS classrooms to be located in rooms that surround the library. We would install a door to separate this space right before the east stairwell. The door would allow for passage either way since we will have HS students needing to access the school library and office areas.

Diagram A3 illustrates what we should consider doing if we located the 7th and 8th grade students on the second floor of the high school. This is the least efficient option when it comes to room utilization but provides the best separation option. Middle school students would be located in the classrooms on the 2nd floor directly above the library/office area. A door to separate this area would be placed at the east part of this section so as to include the restroom entrances into the MS area. Also in the MS area of the facility we would relocate the teacher's workroom, the conference room, and we would have a space to make into a library/tech room for MS students if we want. In order to gain an additional room for HS classes, the current agriculture classroom space, which is quite large, would be made into two classrooms.

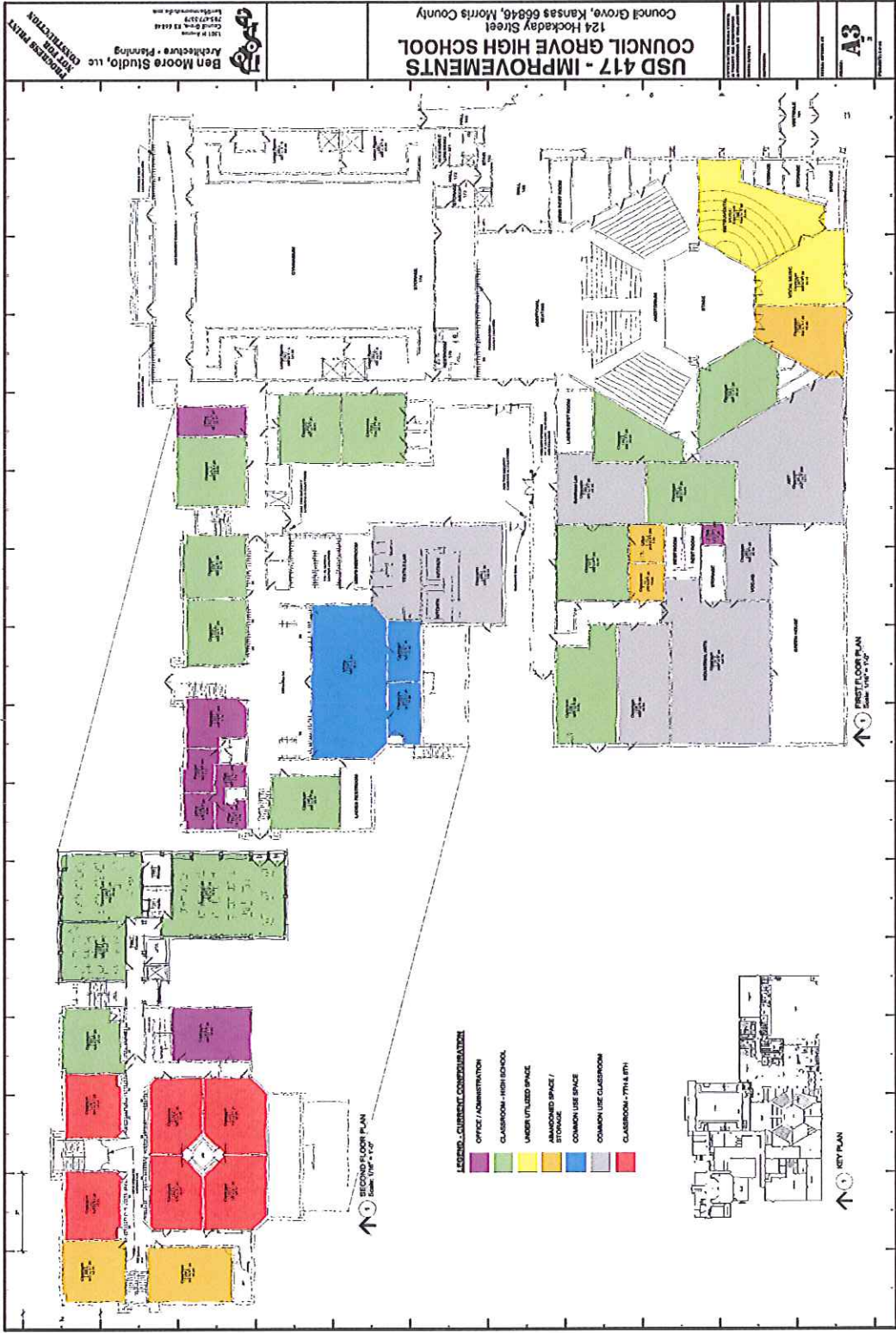
The price tag for these options ranges from \$210,235 (A2) to \$177,000 (A3). We will have to make some modifications to our facility if we want to meet our parental expectations for separation. This will cost us now but in the end, the district will be money ahead by investing in the development of this 7-12 facility. The proposed annual savings of \$203,800 will yield the district over \$2 million in savings over the next 10 years. Now, it is true that most, if not all, of this savings will help us to cover the cost of state cuts. This though is certainly preferable to cutting programs and/or closing more schools in the future. In the end, the chances are

good that our community will have to move to a 7-12 configuration sometime in the not too distant future anyway.

I do not recommend simply pulling from capital outlay to pay for this work. We will need our capital outlay funds for other items in the near future. The preferred way to approach this project would be to finance it utilizing what is called a Capital Outlay Bond. Under such a scenario, we use approximately 1 to 1.25 mills of the remaining 2 mills that are available to the district for our capital outlay fund for this work. We would finance this remodeling work for four years. I have attached two sheets that illustrate the financing for both options offered above. In the end though, I would recommend that the BOE use the option illustrated in A3, having MS students located upstairs in the CGHS facility.







USD 417 --- HS Modifications --- OPTION 1

| Courtyard | | | |
|--------------------|--------|------|--------------|
| Gate at Courtyard | 10 LF | 50 | 500 |
| Security Hardware | 1 LS | 2500 | 2500 |
| Cameras | 2 Each | 350 | 700 |
| Wiring for cameras | 585 LF | 3 | 1755 |
| Locate Strands | 1 LS | 5000 | 5000 |
| Demo--- CIP wall | 1 Each | 750 | 750 |
| Header @ CIP | 1 Each | 1500 | 1500 |
| Columns @ CIP | 2 Each | 3000 | 6000 |
| Doors / Glazing | 84 SF | 68 | 5712 |
| Subtotal | | | 24417 |

| Gym Lobby | | | |
|--------------------|--------|-----|-------------|
| Camera | 1 Each | 350 | 350 |
| Wiring for cameras | 310 LF | 3 | 930 |
| Subtotal | | | 1280 |

| 2nd Floor Classroom Repair | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-----|-------------|
| Demo | 1 LS | 500 | 500 |
| Misc. Framing | 620 SF | 2 | 1240 |
| Sheet Rock & Finish | 620 SF | 3.5 | 2170 |
| Adjust Ceiling | 70 LF | 20 | 1400 |
| Subtotal | | | 3910 |

| 2nd Floor Sound Doors | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|-----|--------------|
| Doors --- west | 85 SF | 68 | 5780 |
| Doors --- north | 125 SF | 68 | 8500 |
| Braces | 4 Each | 500 | 2000 |
| Subtotal | | | 16280 |

| Replace Locker Fronts | | | |
|------------------------------|----------|----|--------------|
| Demo 2nd Floor | 192 Each | 5 | 960 |
| 2nd Floor | 192 Each | 32 | 6144 |
| Demo 1st Floor | 150 Each | 5 | 750 |
| 1st Floor | 150 Each | 32 | 4800 |
| Subtotal | | | 11694 |

| New Lockers | | | |
|--------------------|----------|----|--------------|
| Demo 2nd Floor | 192 Each | 30 | 5760 |
| 2nd Floor | 192 Each | 58 | 11136 |
| Demo 1st Floor | 150 Each | 30 | 4500 |
| 1st Floor | 150 Each | 58 | 8700 |
| Subtotal | | | 24336 |

| 2 New Classrooms | | | |
|-------------------------|---------|------|-----------------|
| Demo--- Masonry | 1 Each | 250 | 250 |
| Header at Masonry | 1 Each | 1000 | 1000 |
| Demo Floor for Block | 100 LF | 50 | 5000 |
| New Footing | 7.5 CY | 284 | 2130 |
| Slab for Wall | 300 SF | 3.5 | 1050 |
| New Block Wall | 900 SF | 14.4 | 12960 |
| New Door and Frame | 3 Each | 2250 | 6750 |
| Paint | 2583 SF | 1.5 | 3874.5 |
| New Floor Covering | 2088 SF | 2.05 | 4280.4 |
| New Ceiling | 2088 SF | 4.31 | 8999.28 |
| New Electrical | 12 Ea | 150 | 1800 |
| New Lighting | 22 Ea | 250 | 5500 |
| Subtotal | | | 53594.18 |

| Family and Consumer Science (relocated) | | | |
|------------------------------------------------|--------|-------|--------------|
| Demo---CIP opening | 1 Each | 1000 | 1000 |
| Header at CIP | 1 Each | 1500 | 1500 |
| New Cabinets Plam | 75 LF | 210 | 15750 |
| New Countertops Plam | 75 LF | 40 | 3000 |
| Existing Cooktops | 4 Each | 100 | 400 |
| Slab for MAU | 100 SF | 3.5 | 350 |
| MAU, hood & ansul | 1 Each | 19746 | 19746 |
| Labor on install | 1 Each | 6000 | 6000 |
| Ductwork | 15 LF | 250 | 3750 |
| Electrical Allowance | 1 Each | 5000 | 5000 |
| Subtotal | | | 56496 |

| New Teacher workroom | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------|------|-------------|
| New Cabinets | 8 LF | 210 | 1680 |
| New Countertops | 8 LF | 40 | 320 |
| New Sink | 1 each | 2500 | 2500 |
| New Electrical | 6 Ea | 150 | 900 |
| Subtotal | | | 3720 |

| 1 New Classroom (former teacher) | | | |
|-----------------------------------------|--------|------|----------------|
| Demo--- Cabinets | 1 Each | 2200 | 2200 |
| Demo Floor | 437 SF | 4 | 1748 |
| New Floor Covering | 437 SF | 2.05 | 895.85 |
| New Ceiling | 437 SF | 4.31 | 1883.47 |
| Paint | 700 SF | 1.5 | 1050 |
| Subtotal | | | 7777.32 |

| 1 New Door at Auditorium Classroom | | | |
|-------------------------------------------|---------|------|---------------|
| Demo---Masonry wall | 1 Each | 250 | 250 |
| Header at Masonry | 1 Each | 1000 | 1000 |
| New Door and Frame | 1 Each | 2250 | 2250 |
| Infill 2 Openings | 64 Each | 14.4 | 921.6 |
| Subtotal | | | 4421.6 |

| A/E Fees | | | |
|--------------------|--------|------|-------|
| Architecture | 1 Each | 6000 | 6000 |
| Structural | 1 Each | 2500 | 2500 |
| MEP | 1 Each | 4500 | 4500 |
| Construction Admin | 1 Each | 1000 | 1000 |
| | | | 14000 |

Grand Total --- Option 1 **210232.1**

USD 417 --- HS Modifications --- OPTION 2

| Courtyard | | | |
|--------------------|--------|------|--------------|
| Gate at Courtyard | 10 LF | 50 | 500 |
| Security Hardware | 1 LS | 2500 | 2500 |
| Cameras | 2 Each | 350 | 700 |
| Wiring for cameras | 585 LF | 3 | 1755 |
| Locate Strands | 1 LS | 5000 | 5000 |
| Demo--- CIP wall | 1 Each | 750 | 750 |
| Header @ CIP | 1 Each | 1500 | 1500 |
| Columns @ CIP | 2 Each | 3000 | 6000 |
| Doors / Glazing | 84 SF | 68 | 5712 |
| Subtotal | | | 24417 |

| Gym Lobby | | | |
|--------------------|--------|-----|-------------|
| Camera | 1 Each | 350 | 350 |
| Wiring for cameras | 310 LF | 3 | 930 |
| Subtotal | | | 1280 |

| 2nd Floor Classroom Repair | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-----|-------------|
| Demo | 1 LS | 500 | 500 |
| Misc. Framing | 620 SF | 2 | 1240 |
| Sheet Rock & Finish | 620 SF | 3.5 | 2170 |
| Adjust Ceiling | 70 LF | 20 | 1400 |
| Subtotal | | | 3910 |

| 2nd Floor Sound Doors | | | |
|------------------------------|--------|-----|--------------|
| Doors --- west | 85 SF | 68 | 5780 |
| Doors --- north | 125 SF | 68 | 8500 |
| Braces | 4 Each | 500 | 2000 |
| Subtotal | | | 16280 |

| Replace Locker Fronts | | | |
|------------------------------|----------|----|------|
| Demo 2nd Floor | 192 Each | 5 | 960 |
| 2nd Floor | 192 Each | 32 | 6144 |
| Demo 1st Floor | 150 Each | 5 | 750 |
| 1st Floor | 70 Each | 32 | 2240 |
| 1st Floor --- New location | 140 Each | 58 | 8120 |

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|--|--------------|
| Subtotal | | | 18214 |
|-----------------|--|--|--------------|

New Lockers

| | | | |
|----------------------------|----------|----|--------------|
| Demo 2nd Floor | 192 Each | 30 | 5760 |
| 2nd Floor | 192 Each | 58 | 11136 |
| Demo 1st Floor | 150 Each | 30 | 4500 |
| 1st Floor | 70 Each | 58 | 4060 |
| 1st Floor --- New location | 140 Each | 58 | 8120 |
| Subtotal | | | 33576 |

2 New Classrooms

| | | | |
|----------------------|---------|------|-----------------|
| Demo---CIP opening | 1 Each | 1000 | 1000 |
| Header at CIP | 1 Each | 1500 | 1500 |
| Demo Floor for Block | 115 LF | 50 | 5750 |
| New Footing | 8.5 CY | 284 | 2414 |
| Slab for Wall | 350 SF | 3.5 | 1225 |
| New Block Wall | 1000 SF | 14.4 | 14400 |
| New Door and Frame | 3 Each | 2250 | 6750 |
| Paint | 2650 SF | 1.5 | 3975 |
| New Floor Covering | 2108 SF | 2.05 | 4321.4 |
| New Ceiling | 2108 SF | 4.31 | 9085.48 |
| New Electrical | 12 Ea | 150 | 1800 |
| New Lighting | 22 Ea | 250 | 5500 |
| Subtotal | | | 57720.88 |

2nd Floor Classroom --- Ramp/Stair

| | | | |
|------------------------|--------|------|--------------|
| Demo---Masonry opening | 1 Each | 1000 | 1000 |
| Header at Masonry | 1 Each | 1500 | 1500 |
| New Stairs | 1 Each | 4500 | 4500 |
| New Door | 1 Each | 2250 | 2250 |
| Electrical Allowance | 1 Each | 1500 | 1500 |
| Subtotal | | | 10750 |

New Teacher workroom

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------|------|-------------|
| New Cabinets | 8 LF | 210 | 1680 |
| New Countertops | 8 LF | 40 | 320 |
| New Sink | 1 each | 2500 | 2500 |
| New Electrical | 6 Ea | 150 | 900 |
| Subtotal | | | 3720 |

1 New Classroom (former teacher)

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|------|----------------|
| Demo--- Cabinets | 1 Each | 2200 | 2200 |
| Demo Floor | 437 SF | 4 | 1748 |
| New Floor Covering | 437 SF | 2.05 | 895.85 |
| New Ceiling | 437 SF | 4.31 | 1883.47 |
| Paint | 700 SF | 1.5 | 1050 |
| Subtotal | | | 7777.32 |

1 New Door at Auditorium Classroom

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------|------|---------------|
| Demo---Masonry wall | 1 Each | 250 | 250 |
| Header at Masonry | 1 Each | 1000 | 1000 |
| New Door and Frame | 1 Each | 2250 | 2250 |
| Infill 2 Openings | 64 Each | 14.4 | 921.6 |
| Subtotal | | | 4421.6 |

A/E Fees

| | | | |
|--------------------|--------|------|-------|
| Architecture | 1 Each | 6000 | 6000 |
| Structural | 1 Each | 2500 | 2500 |
| MEP | 1 Each | 3500 | 3500 |
| Construction Admin | 1 Each | 1000 | 1000 |
| | | | 13000 |

Grand Total --- Option 2**176852.8**

Financing Information for A2 Plan

Unified School District No. 417

Morris County, Kansas (Council Grove)

Capital Outlay Fund Mill Levy Analysis

March 4, 2015

| Year | Assessed Valuation ¹ | Series 2015 Net Debt Service | Total Debt Service | State Aid ⁴ | Motor Vehicle Revenue ⁵ | Debt Service After State Aid & MV Revenue | Fund Balance ³ | Total Mill Levy ³ |
|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2014 | 57,388,123 | | | | | | | |
| 2015 | 56,791,530 | | - | - | \$0 | - | - | 1.300 |
| 2016 | 56,791,530 | 63,338 | 63,338 | - | 0 | 63,338 | 6,800 | 1.300 |
| 2017 | 56,791,530 | 62,220 | 62,220 | - | 0 | 62,220 | 14,718 | 1.300 |
| 2018 | 56,791,530 | 61,680 | 61,680 | - | 0 | 61,680 | 23,175 | 1.300 |
| 2019 | 56,791,530 | 60,900 | 60,900 | - | 0 | 60,900 | 32,413 | 1.300 |
| Totals | | 248,138 | 248,138 | - | - | 248,138 | | |

Assumptions

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| ¹ Annual AV growth | 0.00% |
| ⁴ State Aid | 0% |
| ³ Tax collection rate | 95% |

\$240,000 issued 6/1/2015, funding a \$225,000 project

PiperJaffray,

Financing Information for A3 Plan

Unified School District No. 417

Morris County, Kansas (Council Grove)

Capital Outlay Fund Mill Levy Analysis

March 4, 2015

| Year | Assessed Valuation ¹ | Series 2015 Net Debt Service | Total Debt Service | State Aid ² | Motor Vehicle Revenue ³ | Debt Service After State Aid & MV Revenue | Fund Balance ³ | Total Mill Levy ³ |
|---------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 2014 | 57,308,123 | | | | | | | |
| 2015 | 56,791,530 | | - | - | \$0 | - | - | 1200 |
| 2016 | 56,791,530 | \$3,013 | \$3,013 | - | 0 | \$3,013 | 11,730 | 1200 |
| 2017 | 56,791,530 | \$7,035 | \$7,035 | - | 0 | \$7,035 | 19,437 | 1200 |
| 2018 | 56,791,530 | \$6,540 | \$6,540 | - | 0 | \$6,540 | 27,640 | 1200 |
| 2019 | 56,791,530 | \$5,825 | \$5,825 | - | 0 | \$5,825 | 36,557 | 1200 |
| Totals | | 222,413 | 222,413 | - | - | 222,413 | | |

Assumptions

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| ¹ Annual AV growth: | 0.00% |
| ² State Aid: | 0% |
| ³ Tax collection rate: | 95% |

\$215,000 issued 6/1/2015, funding a \$200,000 project

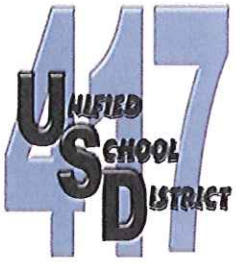
PiperJaffray.

Part IV: Potential Savings

The last piece that I want to cover is to take a look at potential savings from moving to a 7-12 configuration. I am comfortable in the savings projections from the two teaching positions. The administrator estimate is an average of school administrator salaries. Remember that these figures include FICA, health, and other payroll taxes.

- Teacher 1 \$59,400
 - Teacher 2 \$42,000
 - Administrator \$72,400
 - Other costs from closing CGMS facility \$30,000 (estimated)
 - Total \$203,800
-
- Possible: Reduction of 1 classified position \$25,100

Appendix 1: Comments from Administrators



Morris County Schools

USD 417 employees, parents, and patrons through their cooperative efforts assure district students of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to develop into lifelong learners who respect themselves and others, contribute to their communities, and succeed in a changing world.

**From Doug Conwell,
Superintendent**

Notes from Discussion with Bev Mortimer, Superintendent at Concordia Public Schools

The Concordia, KS school district has consolidated their 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in their high school facility. Concordia is experiencing a budget issue due to reduced state funding and a declining enrollment. The district has been seeking ways to find efficiencies through cost reductions and the sharing of staff members among other ideas. They recently were granted an innovative schools status from the state of Kansas. While this did not necessarily help with their budget issues, it did help them with some staffing issues. I spoke with Bev Mortimer, the superintendent of the school system, about their 6-12 school facility and what they may have gained from this configuration. Here are some highlights from this discussion.

- In designing the use of the school, attention was paid to ensuring that grades 5-6 and 7-8 were housed in wings separate from the 9-12 students.
- They do share the library though 5-6 grade students enter from a different door. Books are separated into different sections so younger students are not checking out high school age literature. The librarian oversees this aspect of the shared space.
- They also share the lunchroom. Because the high school is typically the school that has the ala carte offering, their grad 5 through 8 students now have the opportunity to select ala carte items. This has helped sales in the food service program.
- Grades 7-8 share CTE elective teachers. By having 8th grade student begin career tech education classes, they get the intro classes out of the way. Intro classes are not funded by the state. This adds money to their career tech program (and the district budget) as 9th grade students begin taking classes that are funded. In the past, 9th grade student would take the intro classes.
- 7th and 8th grade students who are good with math can accelerate their math program. All 7th grade students take pre-algebra with 1 class scheduled for students not prepared for pre-algebra. 8th grade students then take Algebra and at times these students will be in classes with some 9th grade students who took pre-algebra as an 8th grade student.
- The schedule for 7-12 is a 7-period day with a 30-minute seminar.

- They share teachers as the schedule allows in grades 7-12 allowing for more efficient use of teachers which leads to savings.
- The district did not hold many meeting when moving either the 7 & 8 grade students or the 5 & 6 grade students into the high school facility. They spoke with the site council and held a parent meeting then proceeded with the changes. Bev Mortimer has been in Concordia forever and has a lot of credibility established with parents, the community, and the BOE. The community understands the financial situation of their respective school district.

I also spoke with Dr. Jim Sutton of the Riverside Community School District out of Carson, Iowa. Jason Shelangouski shared Dr. Sutton's contact information with me as this is Jason worked prior to coming to Council Grove. Riverside recently reconfigured their school district to include a 7-12 school configuration.

- Dr. Sutton held community meetings in each of the communities in the Riverside school district. The conversation was more informative as the district was in the process of building a new school facility. The idea from the BEO was to move to a 7-12 facility when the new facility was planned.
- Sharing instructional resources (teachers) and planning for student needs is easier in the 7-12 facility. There is more focus on what students need to be successful for their high school work.
- They have not experienced any bullying incidents at the school.
- This solution eased their space issues where district consolidation had occurred.
- This improved the work of high school teachers as the MS teachers brought a more focused narrative to the whole group with the emphasis on teaching children and not subject areas.
- MS teachers injected new energy into the HS staff.
- There is better integration of curriculum.
- Everything in small schools seems to revolve around athletics. Making sure there is a plan for practices is really important. (Note, there are other gyms in the district but they did not want to load up buses of students to travel to these communities every day).
- The district saved money through the consolidation of staff.

I asked Mrs. Gentry to solicit comments regarding a 7-12 configuration from the list serve that is used by Directors of Curriculum and Instruction. Here are responses that she has received to date.

Kelly-

I am Bill Anderson and I am the principal of the Sterling Junior/Senior High School. We have a K-6/7-12 configuration in our district. I have been in several school districts in my short 22 career of education. I personally think there are some real advantages to a 7-12 model. Being the principal in both buildings provides an opportunity for me to have a "thumb print" on students as they enter my building as 7th graders. I enjoy being able to prepare my 7th and 8th graders for the transition into my high school. I will often have conversations through orientation, class meetings etc., to reinforce the importance of what they are learning as being foundational for their success in high school. It also allows me to start early establishing relationships with them and having them get used to my leadership style. Also, when we have professional development time it helps to have my teachers working so closely with the high school teachers to help establish important curricular goals. I try to align schedules as closely as possible so that my 7-8 students can take advantage of the building facilities, which seems to support our district's goal of utilizing our staff across buildings more effectively.

I will be honest I have not checked into this closely, but if you have "marker" points in your required curriculum you certainly have greater flexibility with a (7-12) model to ensure students are exposed to the necessary instruction before they graduate.

Strictly coming from personal perspective, I do not embrace a true middle school model. I am grateful that our 6th graders are still down at the elementary. This fits with my thoughts that 6th graders do not have the maturational ability to handle the changes that come with 7th-8th grade.

Hope this helps!

William H. Anderson/Principal
Sterling Public Schools

We have a Pk-12 building at Norwich and a K-8 bldg at Kingman. There really have not been any disadvantages to either configuration, though a PK-12 bldg or at least a 7-12 bldg would be helpful for staffing purposes.

Diepenbrock, Bob <bdiepenbrock@knusd331.com>

We do and it all works great! I used to worry about all these things, but the kids do great, they help each other and the culture is great. We have a K-12 campus. We structure separate lunch times, but they all eat breakfast together. No worries, they just all do what they need to do and we are so used to it. The older kids are always helping the younger ones and brothers and sisters can assist one another as well. Much LESS worry for parents and guardians as well.

Thank you,

Jan

Janet K. Neufeld

Superintendent
Twin Valley USD #240

We try to keep our junior high in a separate location within the building. They have their own locker area and "hang out area" for after lunch and prior to school. I am noticing that my junior high students want to grow up more quickly when they mix in with the high school more. Therefore, I would also encourage separate lunches if possible. Work to help the high school students adjust to the junior high students being in the building.

Advantages: Sharing of teachers, saving on building costs by eliminating one building, transition to high school is much easier, one schedule,

Disadvantages: growing up too quickly, teachers adjusting to the junior high mentality when they've only worked with high school students, adjusting practice schedules if you lose a junior high gym,

Glenna Grinstead
Chase High School
Raymond Junior High
Chase, Kansas 67524

We have grades 6-12 in the same building for the last 10 years and it's now working very well.

We found it's important to have specific MS and HS areas during free time, like lunch, before school, etc.

It's also important for teachers to be visible before school, during passing times, and after school to avoid conflicts in passing in the hallways.

For a class 1A school it's working well for us.

Kevin
Kevin Schmidt <kschmidt@usd360.com>

USD #386 has a 7-12 building

Positives:

Staff can be shared 7-12

Older students have easier access to mentor younger students

Our experience has really been very positive.

Ryan Bradbury <rbradbury@usd386.net>

Kelly,

We are 7-12 and our greatest advantage is being able to share staff. The only down side I have witnessed is that they lose their identity as a junior high.

Shane Clark <sclark@usd252.org>

Hi Kelly,

I came to Concordia in 1998, and the building was already a 7-12 building. The 7-8 students really had their own wing, and were kept fairly separate from HS

students. However, we're in our 2nd year of a major change in configuration. Our 7-12 building is enormous, and we had empty classrooms, due to declining enrollment. So, we made the decision to move the 5th & 6th graders to the building.

Our 5th & 6th graders occupy the space that was previously used by 7-8. They are separate from the rest of the building, but share some common spaces; lunch room (have their own shift), library, music, gyms and art rooms. They have their own schedule, and their own principal.

We moved our 7th & 8th graders to the 2nd floor of the high school, and 9-12 used the main level. All have their own spaces, but they also share spaces similar to the 5th & 6th graders. 7-12 are on the same schedule and there is a little crossover with classes. For example, our high school business teacher teaches computer applications, so 8th graders go down stairs to that room. They share the library, cafeteria, music, art, and other elective and CTE spaces. One advantage is that we now have some classes with 8th & 9th graders together.

We have 2 principals for 7-12 and 2 counselors. And, a 3rd counselor that is 5-8. I really think our "overlapping" will help students with transitions. This also lends itself to mentoring by older students, and helps our "Bigs in Schools" program. High School kids didn't seem to mind, as long as they got their traditional "senior" lockers.

I am happy to answer any specific questions. But, this has worked well for us. I'm sure there are some "territory" issues, but I have had no complaints about the configuration since the first of last year.

This change actually eliminated some travel between schools for some of our elective teachers.

Please call if you have any questions.

Bev Mortimer, Superintendent

USD 333 Concordia

Kelly,

For over seventy years Caldwell has had that configuration. It has allowed them to share staff members on subject areas. As enrollment has dwindled here and we built a new facility we even moved the sixth grade over and eventually allowed us to drop a staff member during the budget cuts and the staff member retiring. We are at the point that K-9 certified teachers are very valuable as they can take on certain subjects and allow us a 1.5 staff to cover 6-12. Some subject areas are just one person covering all classes.

People/parents will be concerned about the different age groups mingling, but we seem to be way past that and actually have the older kids looking out for the younger kids in the hallways. Good luck.

Alan Jamison <ajamison@usd360.com>

Hi Kelly,

USD 216 Deerfield has a HS/MS facility that keeps 6-8 and 9-12 in separate wings. Students 6-8 are only allowed to be in the halls of the 9-12 for shared classes. Having grades 6-12 in one building, but separate wings is ideal for shared teachers. There is NO travel time that needs to be built into the schedule for shared classes. Grades 6-12 eat lunch in the elementary cafeteria across the street. Times are scaffold to prevent too many students

eating lunch at the same time. At present there is little concern with social-emotional issues. In fact, the governance allows for peer mentoring with little effort:). Although 6th grade cannot participate in athletics, the district encourage participation in organization activities that build relationships grades 6-12, one example is MS Leadership Team. The leadership team carries a "voice" similar to a HS STUCO. As a superintendent, and with limited time to walk through classrooms, I find this type of arrangement to be very positive.

If I can be of further help, do not hesitate to contact me.

Cheryl Cook-Keim
USD 216 Deerfield
Superintendent

Cheylin USD 103 is a small district but this works just fine for us and has for quite some time. No issues to speak of.

Thank you,

Shelly P. Angelos
Superintendent/PK-12 Principal
USD 103 Cheylin

Schroeder, Darren
Marysville
Jan 28 (5 days ago)

Answered questions below. Contact me anytime.

Darren Schroeder
Principal
Marysville Jr/Sr High School
USD #364
dschroeder@usd364.org
(785) 562-5386

I am sending out this email to several administrators so please excuse my lack of formal greeting. I write in search of information which I hope you can provide for me. USD 417 is looking at restructuring to a grade 7-12 facility. Currently our 7 & 8 grade students are located in a different facility than our HS students. I believe your schools have a similar 7-12 (of close) grade configuration in a single facility which is why I write. Here are some question for which I am seeking answers to give me a look at your school's administrative team.

Does your school have a separate administrator for grades 7 & 8 students and one for 9-12 students? **No** If not, is the administrative team one head principal and one assistant principal for the school? **yes** Or, are you the only principal grades 7-12? **I am the principal for 7-12. We have a 7-12 assistant principal/ A.D.**

If the administrative team is you and an assistant or you by yourself, do you hold separate faculty meetings with 7th & 8th grade teachers and 9-12 teachers or do you combine these meetings? **I combine the faculty meetings. Also, I combined our Junior High RTI committee and High School MTSS committee into one which I call STATS - Student Assistance Teacher Support Team.** Is your structure to keep a separate MS and HS identity? **As the year has progressed I am discovering that 7-12 helps to align curriculum, etc. but there needs to be a separate identity in focus areas. For example next year I will have a focus area for our Junior High and another for our High School. There are different issues at each level. I would suggest having the group together for STATS but have the flexibility to meet on specific level issues separately. This is my first year and it is the first year that a 7-12 position was put into place. My slogan for this year as well as the future is ONE GROUP + ONE GOAL = BULLDOG FAMILY.**

Do you have a separate AD position or is this one of the responsibilities of a principal? If separate, is this full time or part time? If part time is it shared with a teaching position? **As previously stated we have a 7-12 assistant principal / A.D. He is in charge of all athletics/activities, 7-10 discipline and attendance. Next year he will probably have 7-12 discipline. He has the majority of away supervision but the Supt., Elementary Principal and myself assist as much as possible and at home games and any time we have multiple events. I have a**

middle school child so I take all away supervision for that level off his plate. Feel free to contact me anytime.

I hope answering is not too intrusive on your time, I know how busy everyone is. Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,
Doug

Doug Conwell
Superintendent
USD 417

The happiness of your life depends on the quality of your thoughts.

Brad Womack
Silver Lake
Jan 28 (5 days ago)

When our district went to the 7-12 configuration in approximately 1995 we had two administrators and a 9-12 counselor in the building. Five years ago when budget cuts became necessary our district eliminated the assistant principal and the K-8 counselor. A current configuration is a single administrator and a K-12 counselor.

We hold combined faculty meetings. Again, the initial plan was to maintain a separate of an identity as possible. The reality however is that we are now sharing many teachers (band, art, algebra, journalism, etc) so not only do the staff interact a lot so must the students move through our high school hallways. We do require our staff to escort the JH students through the HS hallways and/or release them a few minutes early to make through the HS hallways prior to the bell.

We have recently added back our AD position. He serves half time as the 7-12 activities director and half time maintaining our online learning program.

I hope this information is helpful in your transition.

Sincerely,
Brad Womack
Silver Lake Jr/Sr High School

Daryl Moore
Beloit
Jan 29 (4 days ago)

Doug: Beloit Jr. Sr. High is a 7-12 building with 364 students. We have a Principal and an Assistant Principal/AD. Just the two of us. We have both types of meetings combined and separate depending on the subject. We have to work to find things to make the Jr. high feel special and to get them recognition because it is easy for them to be over shadowed by the High School. With all the KSHSAA activities we host it keeps the two of us busy. dm

Monte Couchman
Southeast of Saline
Jan 29 (4 days ago)

Glad to help out...here's some information regarding USD 306 Southeast of Saline Junior/Senior High School:

We are a K-12 facility. About 750 students attend in all grades here. My 7-12 side of the building has about 350 students in those six grade levels. My teaching staff of 30 includes teaching staff, two special education teachers and four paraprofessionals. Our district has a K-8 counselor (so, I share him with the K-6 side of the building) and a 9-12 counselor. For office staff, I have an administrative assistant, a bookkeeper/activities secretary and a counselor's office secretary.

1. I have been principal here at SES for 15 years. For 11 years, I was the only administrator for 7-12th grade. We were able to add a K-12 Assistant Principal four years ago and it has been a huge relief! I share the assistant principal with K-6, but as we are all in the same facility, it is a very easy set up for us. All three building administrators actually work out of the same office in the school. The assistant principal's primary job duties for the secondary building are to track and monitor student attendance, student discipline and general student improvement. He is also the district test coordinator. Our job description is for grades 7-12...so we do not split admin duties by jr high/sr high. In addition to my assistant, we also have a Sr High Athletic Director. He is a 1/2 time teacher and 1/2 time AD. He is paid a regular teacher salary and also has a supplemental contract for the AD work. I also have a Jr High Athletic Director. She is a full time teacher and has a supplemental contract for the AD work.

2. All aspects of our program are considered blended. Nearly every one of my teaching staff crosses between Jr. High and Sr. High...I have only a handful of teachers who don't work at both grade levels. Thus, all faculty meetings, communications, and even to some extent, policies are considered "secondary school" events. I do have two separate student handbooks just because there is enough difference between academic policies and some daily routines to make that necessary, but I think about 80% of the two handbooks are the same. We run a modified block schedule. My Sr High has 8 academic periods (four per day) and a short Seminar period at the end of the day. We run an A/B block Monday through Thursday and then on Friday we have all 8 periods for a shorter class period. My Jr High meets all core academic (math/reading/SS/Sci) in the morning every day. They then hop on to the Sr High block schedule after lunch because those classes are almost all taught by high school teachers (classes like Ag Ed/FACS/Phys Ed/Music/etc). I will honestly tell you that it is difficult to maintain a separate JH and SH identity in our model. Part of the

problem for us is that kids attend school in the same facility all thirteen years of school. So, there is never really that opportunity to "start over" in a new school as you transition from grade school to Junior High and then to High School...in our case, students literally move lockers from one side of a hallway to another when they get into high school! Generally, teaming for staff development/professional learning is organized by content department, but there are times when only jr high staff meet together on specific issues for those grade levels.

3. I covered the AD questions in #1 I believe.

I'd be glad to offer any further information or observations about a 7-12 structure if needed!

Bill Ellis
Caney Valley
Jan 29 (4 days ago)

Bill Ellis
Principal
Caney Valley High School
Caney, KS 67333
620-879-9220

On Jan 29, 2015, at 9:20 AM, Conwell, Doug <dconwell@cgrove417.org> wrote:

I am sending out this email to several administrators so please excuse my lack of formal greeting. I write in search of information which I hope you can provide for me. USD 417 is looking at restructuring to a grade 7-12 facility. Currently our 7 & 8 grade students are located in a different facility than our HS students. I believe your schools have a similar 7-12 (of close) grade configuration in a single facility which is why I write. Here are some question for which I am seeking answers to give me a look at your school's administrative team.

Does your school have a separate administrator for grades 7 & 8 students and one for 9-12 students? ***We have a separate admin for 7-8 and 9-12.*** If not, is the administrative team one head principal and one assistant principal for the school? Or, are you the only principal grades 7-12?

If the administrative team is you and an assistant or you by yourself, do you hold separate faculty meetings with 7th & 8th grade teachers and 9-12 teachers or do you combine these meetings? ***We hold all staff meetings. Occasionally we will meet with only the JH teachers if needed.*** Is your structure to keep a separate MS and HS identity? ***We are small about 60-70 students per grade and we share teachers so the only we separations are lunch times and locker locations.*** Do you have a separate AD position or is this one of the responsibilities of a principal? ***We have a separate AD*** If separate, is this full time or part time? ***He is part time. If part time is it shared with a teaching position? He is also a PE teacher and a Driver's Ed teachers. He does AD two hours a day.***

Eric Koppes
Rock Creek
Jan 29 (4 days ago)

Will write responses with each question below...
Eric

I am sending out this email to several administrators so please excuse my lack of formal greeting. I write in search of information which I hope you can provide for me. USD 417 is looking at restructuring to a grade 7-12 facility. Currently our 7 & 8 grade students are located in a different facility than our HS students. I believe your schools have a similar 7-12 (of close) grade configuration in a single facility which is why I write. Here are some question for which I am seeking answers to give me a look at your school's administrative team.

Does your school have a separate administrator for grades 7 & 8 students and one for 9-12 students? If not, is the administrative team one head principal and one assistant principal for the school? Or, are you the only principal grades 7-12?

Rock Creek has a 7-12 principal and a 7-12 AP/AD.

If the administrative team is you and an assistant or you by yourself, do you hold separate faculty meetings with 7th & 8th grade teachers and 9-12 teachers or do you combine these meetings? Is your structure to keep a separate MS and HS identity?

Our schedules align for the purpose of sharing faculty where necessary. We do have one faculty meeting as we are collaboratively one building BUT the JH teachers share a common planning period and a common lunch which does allow them to plan for collaborative JH activities and teaching. We do take steps to minimize the mingling of JH and HS students through several practices.

Do you have a separate AD position or is this one of the responsibilities of a principal? If separate, is this full time or part time? If part time is it shared with a teaching position?

We have a full time 7-12 AD/AP. It is a daily challenge to effectively do both. AD and Principal work collaboratively to cover discipline and all evening events.

Bryce Wachs bryce.wachs@usd333.com
Concordia
Jan 29 (4 days ago)

Good evening,

These are responses to the questions that you sent out regarding the combining of 7th and 8th graders with senior high students. If you have any questions or want more information please call and I can help you in any way.

Does your school have a separate administrator for grades 7 & 8 students and one for 9-12 students? **Same administrator for all grades.** If not, is the administrative team one head principal and one assistant principal for the school? **We have 1 head principal 7-12 and 1 assistant principal 7-12.** Or, are you the only principal grades 7-12?

If the administrative team is you and an assistant or you by yourself, do you hold separate faculty meetings with 7th & 8th grade teachers and 9-12 teachers or do you combine these meetings? **We combine all of our staff meetings 7-12. Our content collaboration teams and interdisciplinary teams are also made up of teachers 7-12. Our building leadership team is broken up into 3 areas climate, literacy, and at-risk and each of these teams have members from different content areas and grade 7-12.** Is your structure to keep a separate MS and HS identity? **We do both sometimes student activities and programs are 7-12 other times it is separate. For example our 7th and 8th do not participate in homecoming activities during the week of homecoming. They have a week to celebrate red ribbon week later on.**

Do you have a separate AD position or is this one of the responsibilities of a principal? **Our AD position is part of our assistant principals duties. Supervision of activities and athletics is shared between principal and assistant principal.** If separate, is this full time or part time? If part time is it shared with a teaching position?

Again if you have any other questions don't hesitate to call.

Bryce
Bryce Wachs
Principal
Concordia Jr./Sr. High School
PH: 785-243-2452
F: 785-243-8805

"Our Mission is to create and to maintain an environment that ensures Engaged LEARNING, Effective TEACHING, and Trusting RELATIONSHIPS, so that all members of the school community reach their highest level of academic achievement."

George Owens
Cherryvale

Doug we have operated as an attendance center for 7-12 since 1998. I will give you answers and offer you an invitation to come and visit our setting.

1/ We have a Principal, Vice principal, AD and councilor for the building.

2/ We operate as one faculty and have one identity, Chargers. We do have the 7-8 students in one wing for their core subjects but share specialty subjects.

3/ Our AD position is a teaching/AD. Mr. Vigil teaches two classes, has a plan, and AD four periods.

I hope this helps and if there are any other questions please contact me.

George Owens

620-336-8100

gowens@usd447.org

Cherryvale Middle/High School

Appendix 2: Research

This is a summary of research that Mr. Estes sent to me regarding a 7-12 configuration. I wanted to include this with the other research though it may be duplicated from one or two of the included studies. Feel free to do your own research in regards to 7-12 configurations. I always like to see what research tells us and to discuss the merits of research studies.

- School-to-school transitions negatively impact academic achievement. The fewer transitions, the better chance a student has of completing high school; the more transitions, the higher the drop-out rate.
- If there is a transition into a new school for high school instruction, 7th grade appears to be the ideal time as it shows the lowest drop-out rate; the higher the grade at the time of the transition, the higher the drop-out rate, most significantly for boys. Researchers believe that making a change in the 7th grade gives students more time to acclimate to new surroundings.
- Traditional middle schools are falling out of favor. In a study of eight different schools with seven different grade spans, sixth-grade students in both elementary and combination K-12 schools outperformed sixth graders in middle schools or junior high schools. The number of transitions has been determined to be a significant factor.
- The reduction of school-to-school transitions and longer grade spans within schools is correlated with improvements in student achievement in a 2003 study of 232 Michigan schools.
- Schools with more grade levels per building have demonstrated not only higher academic achievement, but better attendance rates, self-esteem and attitudes towards school. They have also resulted in fewer suspensions and behavior programs, regardless of socioeconomic status.
- More opportunities exist for cross-age activities such as tutoring and older role model programs in schools with a broad span of grades levels.
- Longer grade spans also allow for more collaboration among teachers across grade levels and better alignment of curriculum across grades.
- A significant number of districts across the nation are transitioning away from the use of middle schools. The use of middle schools peaked in 2005 with just over 9,000 across the U.S. David Hough, the dean of Missouri State's education school and a former editor with the *Research in Middle Level Education*, recently reported that "the trend is definitely away from stand-alone middle schools" and estimated there will be fewer than 7,950 when the 2010 data are in.
- Researchers have found that students who attended middle school in sixth grade were twice as likely to be disciplined relative to their counterparts in elementary school.
- Longer grade spans have been linked with better behavior. Sixth-grade boys, in particular, experienced more suspensions in middle schools or junior high schools than in elementary schools, possibly related to the effects of the transition, the school organization or school size.

In addition to fewer transitions, the programming and practices within those schools with a longer grade span configuration are also likely drivers in the schools' improved achievement. As some educators and researchers explain: "Effective programs and practices, not grade configuration, determine the quality of schools," and "Grade configuration per se may not make the difference, but it does make a difference."



OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Transformational Recommendations for the Concept of 7-12 Schools

Kanata ARC North and South Joint Meeting
May 26, 2011

Considerations

- Academic implications for Grades 7 – 12 students
- Program implications for Grade 7 and 8 students
- Social/Communal implications for K-6 Schools and 7-12 schools
- Review of the 7-12 model in other Ontario boards
- “Protective factors” required for successful implementation of 7-12 schools based on the Ontario Ministry of Education Student Success model of Protective Factors

Academic Considerations for 7-12

- There is no research data looking broadly at academic achievement in the 7-12 model
- Research does indicate some loss of academic progress for middle schools (grade 7-8 schools, US data) when separated from younger cohorts, but this research does not include broader grade configurations, or models which include high-school grades. (*Paglin & Fager, 1997; Abella, 2005*)
- *McKenzie, et al (2006)*, in their paper on the impact grade range has on school performance conclude that there is yet to be a consensus on which grade span configuration is most beneficial. “Since there is little empirical research supporting a certain grade range configuration, schools are left doing what they have always done or wishfully trying new configurations”.
- Research indicates that broader grade configurations in secondary schools, including the 7-12 model, have a significant effect on reducing drop-out rates, most significantly in males. (*Alsbaugh, J. W., 1999*).
- The two Upper Canada schools that include a broader grade span both tend to perform above the Board and Provincial average for EQAO Math and Literacy Test assessments.
- Port Hope High School of the Kawartha Pine Ridge noted increased student achievement on grade 9 EQAO math assessment and grade 10 literacy scores.

Program Implications for 7-12

- Planning is essential to create a one school community while honouring the needs of two groups of students and staff.
- Access to a broader range of specialized programs, including technology, hospitality, music, and art. Upper Canada cautions that creating classrooms for 7 and 8 and giving them access to specialty programming must not be accomplished at the expense of the 9 – 12 students' accessibility to specialty areas and availability of essential programming.
- Cross-panel teams and programs from basketball - literacy.
- Reach-ahead and opportunities for enrichment for gifted/talented students with subject experts in high schools are possible.

Social Implications

- In schools with the 7-12 model, in general, secondary students, rather than bullying younger students, have benefited from taking on mentorship roles, and increased opportunities to serve as tutors, coaches, etc. There are improved opportunities for earning meaningful Community Service hours supporting after-school programs.
- Evidence indicates that K-6 schools can benefit from an improved tone, where grade 6 students take on more of a leadership role, and are not intimidated by the blossoming adolescents in grade 7-8. (*Halton DSB, PARC Report on School Grade Configurations*)
- The 7-12 model is by far the most common secondary school model in the Eastern Ontario Catholic District School Board and the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic District School Board and now the Upper Canada District School Board. They have found it a very effective structure for programming, and have not noted significant problems associated with the 7-12 social milieu.
- Kawartha Pine Ridge has moved to a 7-12 configuration for many of its secondary schools. In their models, the schools run as "Distinct schools within the same building", sharing administration, resources and facilities, but existing as separate entities.

Protective Factors for Successful Implementation

- Are identified and detailed in the work of Dr. Kate Tilleczeck, Associate Professor of Sociology Laurentian University in the Ontario Ministry of Education *Student Success* model of vital Protective Factors, *Grade 8 to 9 Transition Project: Being, Becoming, Belonging*.
- Other boards have noted the importance of thoughtful and careful planning of;
 - Transitions for students
 - Student supports for in place for academic and social needs
 - Timetables, bells, and scheduling
 - Supervision, different for 7 and 8 compared to 9-12
 - Transition plans/team building for staff – Secondary sharing with intermediate staff
 - Understanding the fears of the Secondary staff – they experience change as well
 - Merging the community
 - Merging of the School Councils, strategic plans
 - Traditions of feeder schools, of staff, School Councils, i.e. graduations, bursaries, closing ceremonies, trophies, etc.



Conclusion

Examples from around the province indicate that when implemented in a thoughtful manner, with due consideration for protective factors and the infusion of required resources, 7 to 12 schools can be an effective model for students, both academically and socially.

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TPS SHARES RESEARCH SUPPORTING GRADES 7-12 SCHOOL CONFIGURATION

Published 4/20/2011

DATE/TIME

4/20/2011 , to

LOCATION

Tulsa Public Schools

CONTACT

Chris Payne (Saxum)
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As Tulsa Public Schools moves toward making a final recommendation based on public comments and opinions related to Project Schoolhouse, the district today made available highlights from third-party research that is supportive of a 7th through 12th grade school configuration. The research comes from a variety of sources, and is supportive of the 7-12 configuration because it minimizes a student's transition from one school to another at a very critical time in a child's development, among other reasons.

The studies, which are highlighted on the TPS website at

http://www.tulsaschools.org/4_About_District/documents/pdf/Project_Schoolhouse/research_7-12.pdf, offer these findings:

- School-to-school transitions negatively impact academic achievement. The fewer transitions, the better chance a student has of completing high school; the more transitions, the higher the drop-out rate.¹
- If there is a transition into a new school for high school instruction, 7th grade appears to be the ideal time as it shows the lowest drop-out rate; the higher the grade at the time of the transition, the higher the drop-out rate, most significantly for boys. Researchers believe that making a change in the 7th grade gives students more time to acclimate to new surroundings.¹
- Traditional middle schools are falling out of favor. In a study of eight different schools with seven different grade spans, sixth-grade students in both elementary and combination K-12 schools outperformed sixth graders in middle schools or junior high schools. The number of transitions has been determined to be a significant factor.²
- The reduction of school-to-school transitions and longer grade spans within schools is correlated with improvements in student achievement in a 2003 study of 232 Michigan schools.³
- Schools with more grade levels per building have demonstrated not only higher academic achievement, but better attendance rates, self-esteem and attitudes towards school. They have also resulted in fewer suspensions and behavior programs, regardless of socioeconomic status.⁴
- More opportunities exist for cross-age activities such as tutoring and older role model programs in schools with a broad span of grades levels.⁵
- Longer grade spans also allow for more collaboration among teachers across grade levels and better alignment of curriculum across grades.⁶
- A significant number of districts across the nation are transitioning away from the use of middle schools. The use of middle schools peaked in 2005 with just over 9,000 across the U.S. David Hough, the dean of Missouri State's education school and a former editor with the *Research in Middle Level Education*, recently reported that "the trend is definitely away from stand-alone middle schools" and estimated there will be fewer than 7,950 when the 2010 data are in.⁷
- Researchers have found that students who attended middle school in sixth grade were twice as likely to be disciplined relative to their counterparts in elementary school.⁸
- Longer grade spans have been linked with better behavior. Sixth-grade boys, in particular, experienced more suspensions in middle schools or junior high schools than in elementary schools, possibly related to the effects of the transition, the school organization or school size.⁹
- In addition to fewer transitions, the programming and practices within those schools with a longer grade span configuration are also likely drivers in the schools' improved achievement. As some educators and researchers explain: "Effective programs and practices, not grade configuration, determine the quality of schools."

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and "Grade configuration per se may not make the difference, but it does make a difference."¹⁰

"I am pleased with the consistent support we find among noted educational researchers for the 7th through 12th grade configuration," said Superintendent Keith Ballard. "Clearly, there is a positive influence on academic achievement, lower drop-out rates, improved self-esteem and better alignment of curriculum that comes with longer grade spans and fewer school transitions. The 7-12 configuration could be an attractive option for Tulsa Public Schools as we look at improving educational opportunities for all students while concentrating our resources. The key to making any grade configuration successful, however, is to make sure we have a great teacher in every classroom and a great principal in every building."

The final Project Schoolhouse proposal is expected to be unveiled on Friday, April 22. Next week, the Board of Education will host a public hearing for Project Schoolhouse on **Tuesday, April 26, 2011, at 6 p.m.** in the Gymnasium/Auditorium, ground floor level, at **Eisenhower International School**, 2819 South New Haven, Tulsa, Oklahoma. The board is expected to vote on the proposed plan on Monday, May 2.

Please visit the TPS website at www.tulsaschools.org for additional information and updates related to Tulsa Project Schoolhouse. Project Schoolhouse refers to the TPS initiative and process to examine the best possible use of existing financial and physical resources to provide a quality learning experience for every student.

Sources:

¹Alspaugh, J. W. (1999). *The interaction effect of transition grade to high school with gender and grade level upon dropout rates.* (ED 431066). Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association); (Alspaugh, J. W. and Harting R. D. (1995). *Transition effects of school grade-level organization on student achievement.* Journal of Research and Development in Education. 28(3), 145-49.

²Paglin, Catherine, & Fager, Jennifer. (1997). *Grade configuration: Who goes where.* Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/464.

³Wren, Stephanie (2003). *The Effect of Grade Span Configuration and School to School Transition on Student Achievement.* ED479332. 2003. <http://www.eric.ed.gov>.

⁴Alspaugh, *supra*. Offenberg, R.M. (2001). *The efficacy of Philadelphia's K-to-8 schools compared to middle grades schools.* Middle School Journal, 35(1).

⁵Paglin & Fager, *supra*.

⁶George, P.S. (2005). *K-8 or Not? Reconfiguring the Middle Grades.* Middle School Journal. 37(1).

⁷*The Middle School Mess*, Education Next, Winter 2011.

⁸Philip Cook, Robert MacCoun, Clara Muschkin, and Jacob Vigdor (2008). *The negative impacts of starting middle school in sixth grade.* Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 27, 104-121.

⁹Franklin, B., Glascock, C. (1996). *The relationship between grade configuration and student performance in rural schools.* Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Rural Education Association.

¹⁰Coladarci, T. & Hancock, J. (2002). *Grade-Span Configurations: The (Limited) Evidence Regarding Effects of Academic Achievement.* ED467714, 8/2002. <http://www.eric.ed.gov> quoting a finding of the National Middle School Association Research Summary.) (Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands (2010). *Reference Desk Response No. 431: School Grade Configurations K-8.* Newton, MA.

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Tulsa Public Schools
Research Supporting a 7-12 School Configuration

I. Minimizing Transitions to Improve Academic Achievement:

A transition from one school to another brings a different facility, unfamiliar teachers and administrators, new groups of friendships and classmates, as well as different expectations. As detailed below, research reveals that school-to-school transitions negatively impact academic achievement. The fewer transitions, the better chance a student has of completing high school. If there is a transition into a new school for high school instruction, however, grade 7 is preferable to transitioning in later years. Schools with more grades, and fewer students per grade, are also related to improvements in academic achievement and the dropout rate.

- There is a decline in achievement during a student's transition year from elementary school to the next level. As the number of transitions experienced by a student increases, so does the high school dropout rate. Further, the higher the transition grade level (the later the student transitions into the high school), the higher the dropout rate, most significantly for boys. Specifically, of the high school configurations studied (7-12, 9-12, and 10-12), the lowest high school dropout rates were seen in high schools where students transitioned in at grade 7. The highest dropout levels were seen in 10-12 grade high schools. Alspaugh suggests that the link between higher dropout rates and later-grade transition years is most likely attributed to the academic achievement loss commonly experienced during the transition year and the fact that students transitioning at grade 7, as opposed to grade 9 or 10, have more time to acclimate to high school. In addition, he notes that schools with more grades (i.e., 7-12 schools) are usually smaller schools with fewer students per grade. Smaller high schools typically have lower dropout rates than larger schools. Consequently, his findings also supported previous research that with regard to minimizing dropout rates, it is optimal to structure schools with more grades and fewer students per grade. (Alspaugh, J. W. (1999). *The interaction effect of transition grade to high school with gender and grade level upon dropout rates*. (ED 431066). Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association); (Alspaugh, J. W. and Harting R. D. (1995). *Transition effects of school grade-level organization on student achievement*. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*. 28(3), 145-49).
- In a study of eight different schools with seven different grade spans, researchers found that sixth-grade students in both elementary and combination K-12 schools outperformed sixth graders in middle schools or junior high schools and considered the number of transitions a significant factor. (Paglin, Catherine, & Fager, Jennifer. (1997). *Grade configuration: Who goes where*. Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/464).
- A 2003 study of 232 schools in Michigan revealed that the reduction of school-to-school transitions is correlated with improvements in student achievement and that longer grade spans within schools is positively correlated with student achievement. The number of transitions was a significant predictor of student achievement. The study evaluated student performance on the state assessment administered in grades 4, 5, 7, 8 and 11.

(Wren, Stephanie (2003). *The Effect of Grade Span Configuration and School to School Transition on Student Achievement*). ED479332. 2003. <http://www.eric.ed.gov>).

- A researcher from Johns Hopkins revealed in a 1987 study that the positive impact of longer grade spans in schools teaching sixth graders was an advantage most evident among students of lower socio-economic status. (Becker, H. J. (1987). *Addressing the needs of different groups of early adolescents: Effects of varying school and classroom organizational practices on students from different social backgrounds and abilities*. Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Dept. of Education).
- Some studies have found that schools with more grade levels per building (i.e., fewer number of transitions) evidenced not only higher academic achievement, but also better attendance rates, self-esteem and attitudes towards school, with fewer suspensions and behavior problems, regardless of socioeconomic status (Alspaugh, *supra*) (Offenberg, R.M. (2001). *The efficacy of Philadelphia's K-to-8 schools compared to middle grades schools*. Middle School Journal, 35(1)).
- A 1997 study of Connecticut elementary and middle schools found that sixth graders performed better on standardized tests when they were in K-6 configurations, as opposed to 6-8 middle school configurations. The researchers also determined that a K-6 configuration led to greater school accountability for sixth grade performance than that occurring in a 6-8th grade configuration. (Tucker, Charlene G., and Andrada, Gilbert N (1997). *Accountability Works: Analysis of Performance by Grade Span of School*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association. ED 411 278. <http://www.eric.ed.gov>).

II. Other Benefits of the PK-6/7-12 Grade Configuration:

- In elementary schools, student environment is more nurturing with fewer stressors than a middle school. The stressors of a middle or high school—navigating through the school, forming peer relations, organizational instructional adjustments—are so critical that they neutralize or even diminish the achievement gains made in elementary school. (Wren, *supra*).
- Schools with a broad span of grade levels present opportunities that do not exist in middle schools. There is more opportunity for cross-age activities such as tutoring and older role model programs like “kindergarten buddies.” Parents are more involved in a school in which their children are more likely to be in the same building. (Paglin & Fager, *supra*).
- The shift to longer grade span elementary schools allows students to stay in their neighborhood schools for a longer period of time. (George, P.S. (2005). *K-8 or Not? Reconfiguring the Middle Grades*. Middle School Journal. 37(1)).
- Having schools with longer grade spans allows for more collaboration among teachers across grade levels as well as better alignment of curriculum across grades. With regard

to a K-7 school, it can become a place where subject matter depth and expertise is more highly valued and leveraged than before the reconfiguration, and its secondary students and teachers can benefit from the “whole child” perspective of education more commonly found in elementary schools. (George, *supra*).

III. Challenges and Criticisms of Middle Schools

A significant number of districts across the nation are transitioning away from the use of middle schools. The use of middle schools peaked in 2005 with just over 9,000 across the United States, and as of 2007-2008, the National Center for Education Statistics reported 500 fewer middle schools. David Hough, the dean of Missouri State’s education school and a former editor with the Research in Middle Level Education recently reported that “the trend is definitely away from stand-alone middle schools” and estimated there will be fewer than 7,950 when the 2010 data are in. (*The Middle School Mess*, Education Next, Winter 2011). Many in the education reform community believe that the reconfiguration of schools is a response to the evidence showing that middle schools have failed to serve the academic and developmental needs of 6-8th grade students. *Id.* Studies critical of the middle school configuration include the following studies.

- In an award winning study by researchers from Duke and the University of California, researchers studied and compared sixth graders in North Carolina in the 2000-2001 school year who were in middle schools serving grades 6-8 and sixth graders who were kept within the elementary school. The researchers found that students who attended middle school in sixth grade were twice as likely to be disciplined relative to their counterparts in elementary school. They found that the behavioral problems of these middle-school sixth graders persisted beyond the sixth grade year through the ninth grade and that exposing sixth graders to older peers had persistent negative consequences on their academic trajectories. The authors note that their results complement the recent findings by other researchers that school systems that move sixth graders from elementary to middle school experience a 1-3 percent decline in on-time graduation rates. As such, the authors explained, “Based on our results, we suggest that there is a strong argument for separating sixth graders from older adolescents (Philip Cook, Robert MacCoun, Clara Muschkin, and Jacob Vigdor (2008). *The negative impacts of starting middle school in sixth grade*. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, 27, 104-121).
- The 2010 study by Columbia Business School researchers Jonah Rockoff and Benjamin Lockwood concluded that “middle schools are not the best way to educate students” in urban districts. These researchers compared academic achievement of New York City’s middle schools (6-8) to the city’s K-8 schools. Data revealed that students who enter public middle schools in New York City fall behind their peers in K-8 schools. The effects are large, present for both math and English, and evident for girls as well as boys. The academic achievement lag persists at least through 8th grade, the highest grade for which we could obtain test scores. The most notable lag by students in middle school as compared to a K-8 school was experienced by children with lower initial levels of academic achievement. The researchers also found evidence that student absence rates increased when students entered middle schools as compared to their counterparts in a

K-8 school. Further, parents' perception of schools declined more in the 6th to 8th grade years when the students attended a middle school than when they attended a K-6 or K-8 school. Finally, sixth grade students reported less academic rigor, less mature social behavior among students, that the schools are less safe and that the school provides lower quality education than do sixth graders in K-6 or K-8 schools.

Rockoff and Lockwood explain that the grade size (cohort size) has a pronounced influence on student achievement in the 6th to 8th grade years. Though they could not find evidence to support any particular cause, they speculate that it is harder to educate middle-school aged students in large groups because of their developmental stage, which is characterized in part by negativity, low self-esteem, and an inability to judge the risks and consequences of actions. They also suggest that some of the difficulty is a result of the combining of students from multiple elementary schools, which disrupts students' immediate peer group.

(Benjamin Lockwood, Jonah Rockoff (2010, December). *Stuck in the Middle: Impacts of Grade Configuration in Public Schools*, Journal of Public Economics). (Offenberg, *supra*.)

- Several studies on grade configuration have reported middle schools to be less effective in terms of test scores than K-8 schools in the same district. The evidence is especially strong for students in high-poverty schools. (Offenberg, *supra*).
- An analysis and comparison of middle schools with various configurations revealed that each time students switch schools, their feelings of anonymity increase. Further, the researchers found that sixth-grade students in both elementary and combination K-12 schools outperformed students in middle schools or junior high schools and considered the number of transitions a significant factor. (Paglin & Fager, *supra*).
- Authors of a book regarding the interaction of puberty and school context report that upon transition into middle school or junior high school, girls in early adolescence frequently suffered from a drop in self-esteem, extracurricular participation, and leadership behaviors, but not if they remained in an elementary school setting. The effects of this transition persisted throughout the school years. For boys transitioning into middle and high school, there were similar negative effects in extracurricular participation and grades, but not in self-esteem. The authors concluded that the relatively protected elementary school setting made the entry into adolescence less stressful for both boys and girls. Moreover, the authors state that the students who had not had the stress of the earlier transition seemed to cope better with the transition into high school than did other students (Simmons & Blyth (1987). *Moving Into Adolescence: The Impact of Pubertal Change and School Context*).
- In a study undertaken in rural Louisiana schools that examined the relationship between grade configuration and student behavior, researchers concluded that longer grade spans were linked better behavior. Specifically, they found that sixth-grade boys experienced more suspensions in middle schools or junior high schools than in elementary schools, possibly related to the effects of the transition, the school organization, or school size.

(Franklin, B., Glascock, C. (1996). *The relationship between grade configuration and student performance in rural schools*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Rural Education Association).

IV. Recommendations and Caveats Relating to School Configuration

- While research suggests that the absence of school-to-school transitions may be one factor that contributes to higher academic achievement in longer-spanning elementary schools, the programming and practices within those schools resulting from the longer grade span configuration are also likely drivers in the schools' improved achievement. As some educators and researchers explain: "Effective programs and practices, not grade configuration, determine the quality of schools." and "Grade configuration per se may not make the difference, but it does make a difference." (Coladarci, T. & Hancock, J. (2002). *Grade-Span Configurations: The (Limited) Evidence Regarding Effects of Academic Achievement*. ED467714, 8/2002. <http://www.eric.ed.gov>) quoting a finding of the National Middle School Association Research Summary.) (Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands (2010). *Reference Desk Response No. 431: School Grade Configurations K-8*. Newton, MA).
- When school-to-school transitions must occur, regardless of the grade, there should be articulation and transition activities that ensure the alignment of curriculum and the smooth transition of students into a new school. "Teachers and students alike should have an informed view of the instructional and social world of the next school in line." (Coladarci, T. & Hancock, J. (2002). *Grade-Span Configurations: The (Limited) Evidence Regarding Effects of Academic Achievement*. ED467714, 8/2002. <http://www.eric.ed.gov>).
- When making decisions regarding grade configurations and adapting to new grade configurations, schools should consider and address the following:
 - The cost and length of student travel
 - That parent involvement typically decreases in the higher-level schools, but parent involvement is greater in elementary schools.
 - Combining schools into separate grade centers may affect whether neighborhood schools close or remain open.
 - Current buildings may have a design more suitable for several grade levels.
 - School population may increase or decrease substantially as configurations change.

(Clearinghouse on Early Ed. and Parenting. <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/poptopics/gradeconfig.html>).

Appendix 3: CGES K-6 Room Assignments

