

UPDATED Turn All Middle/Elementary schools to K-8

12/13/18

Model/Option Overview

This approach would reconfigure all existing elementary and middle schools to kindergarten through 8th grade (K – 8) schools. Currently, there is only one K - 8 school in the Bethel School District (BSD), Elk Plain School of Choice.

Bethel Specific Information

Anticipated cost	High School N/A	Middle school \$ High	Elementary school \$Med	District wide \$
Potential capacity increase	Elementary : 1000 (current elementary capacity at -2,712 and MS at 955 for a net capacity reduction in overcrowding at the elementary schools by approximately 1,000 students)			

What would change? (schools affected)

- Students enrolled in existing traditional middle and elementary schools would change to a K – 8 system
- Students would have fewer academic transitions between grade levels
- Use of school facilities

Other District experiences

Districts currently / previously using this model

- Adams 12 School District | Thornton, CO
- Boulder Valley School District | Boulder, CO
- Lone Star School District | Sapulpa, OK
- Orleans Parish School District | New Orleans, LA
- Ouachita Parish School District | Monroe, LA
- San Diego Unified School District | San Diego, CA
- School District of the City of York | York, PA
- Many school districts in Florida

Interview feedback

The feedback provided below was gathered through a phone interview with Cubberley Elementary School Principal Cathleen Imbroane in the San Diego Unified School District. Cubberley Elementary has been using the K-8 school model since the mid-90s and Principal Imbroane has been teaching at K-8 schools for the past 12 years.¹

Anticipated/ experienced challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodating facility needs of both younger & older students. The Cubberley K-8 School was originally an elementary school. They were able to accommodate older students by adding portables. Now middle school aged students attend classes in
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	<p>portables and younger students attend class in the original school building. This is helpful since they have different bell systems for younger and older students. Cubberley also splits up space in their playground so that younger and older students are separated and have different lunch schedules for younger and older students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety concerns about younger & older students sharing facilities. Cubberley school has not had a problem with older and younger students sharing space, although they do separate their classes and use of facilities. Principal Imbroane says this is mostly to alleviate concerns from parents. She says older students are actually an asset for younger students, and at the Cubberley school they hold events that bring younger and older students together (e.g. full school runs, arts programs). • Middle school age extracurricular programs. The San Diego Unified School District has multiple K-8 schools with smaller sports teams. Principal Imbroane says this works since the K-8 schools can play each other in one division. They haven't had a problem building teams of about 12 students each at K-8 schools. • Elementary age extracurricular programs. The Cubberley School releases elementary age students early on Thursdays to allow time for teacher trainings. Early Thursday releases provide an opportunity for them to offer extracurricular programs to elementary students (art programs, skateboarding lessons, Lego engineering classes).
<p>Implementation timing considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cubberley School recommends adding one grade level at a time over a period of three years. Time is needed to build in programming for new grade levels. Taking more time also helps ensure that the school is not over staffing for new grade levels.
<p>Effects on learning outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very positive effect on learning outcomes. Kids “stay younger longer,” meaning the elementary school culture stays in place longer. Students don't worry about transitioning to new schools and parents can be involved in their child's education for a longer period. The transition from elementary school to middle school is also easier because teachers are closer to each other and can plan curriculum that better meets student needs. Academically, K-8 school students in the San Diego Unified School District are much higher performing than their middle school counter parts.
<p>Cost implications</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional costs to consider are staff and facilities based. To accommodate new students, portables need to be used. Since students follow different schedules, new bell systems need to be set-up. New teachers also need to be incorporated into schools to accommodate new grade levels.

Capacity gained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cubberley school did not gain capacity in their existing school facilities. They added portables to their facilities to accommodate older students.
Recommended for use in other districts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, Principle Imbroane would recommend using this model. She emphasized that older students are a resource for younger students in this model and schools should plan events that bring students of different ages together.

Benefits of The Model

✓ Student achievement/learning outcomes

Studies have shown that students who attend K – 8 schools perform better academically than students who attend traditional, secular elementary and middle schools.² Some research suggests that academic transitions, such as from elementary school to middle school or middle school to high school, have implications on how well students perform academically. Transitions add additional stress to students and may negatively impact academic achievement. K – 8 configurations limit transitions and can lead to improved academic achievement.^{3, 4}

✓ Curriculum

Separating elementary and middle schools often creates isolating environments for teachers where there may be little insight to other teaching and learning experiences. In some cases, “a middle school teacher will never have a single professional training session devoted to understanding what children learn in kindergarten through fifth grade.”⁵ However, under a K – 8 configuration, there is more opportunity for teachers to collaborate and create shared knowledge of teaching and learning experiences throughout all grades. This understanding helps teachers create more cohesive curriculums that can help improve student achievement.⁶

✓ Parent involvement

Some studies have shown that K – 8 schools have more parent involvement than schools with smaller grade configurations.⁷ Students remain at the same school for a longer period of time, which not only allows for a longer relationship between teachers and students, but also parents and schools. Additionally, “parents with one or more children at the same school for an extended period of time are more likely to remain connected to the school and enroll other students at the school.”⁸

✓ Student safety

Researchers suggest that the K – 8 model allows older students to have distinct opportunities for leadership and socialization, which can translate into becoming role models for safety and academic success for younger students. Older students “with younger siblings at the same school often assume roles as protectors, tutors, and role models in school.”⁹ Additionally, students in K – 8 schools “were less likely to report being victimized, less likely to report getting into trouble for bad behavior, and less likely to perceive their school as unsafe” as compared to more traditional schools.¹⁰

Additional capacity

Impacts fewer students (school-specific v district-wide)

Challenges of The Model

Community/Family

- Family schedule
- After-school care
- Vacation

Student

- ✓ Safety

There is a perceived safety problem with older and younger students going to school in the same space. Safety concerns can be alleviated by separating younger and older student classroom spaces and common areas.¹¹

Instructional

- Student achievement/learning outcomes
- Summer school/remediation

Teaching staff

- ✓ Classroom space

Classroom space may need to be added for older students, since it is recommended that spaces for younger and older students be separated.¹²

- ✓ Additional staff

Staff may need to be hired or move schools to accommodate new grade levels.¹³

- Curriculum
- Development
- State Testing

Administration

- Additional staff
- Professional development

Extracurricular activities

- ✓ Other classes

A limitation of the K – 8 model is that schools need to be able to provide sufficient resources for a wide range of ages and grades in the same building. Facilities for physical education classes, science classrooms, libraries, or spaces of elective courses may not be adequate or appropriate for all students.¹⁴ For example, students in grades 6-8 may require different facilities than those in grades K-5, or even K-2 and grades 3-5. Opportunities for younger students may be “seriously diminished” by catering too much to older students or vice-versa.¹⁵

- ✓ Athletics

See Clubs / social organizations for impacts

- ✓ Music / band

See Clubs / social organizations for impacts

- ✓ Clubs / social organizations

Schools need to provide separate athletic programs for elementary and middle school aged students. This can be challenging since younger and older students have different needs.¹⁶

Facilities maintenance

- Additional staff
- Access
- Time
- Storage space
- Increase in wear and tear

Transportation

- Additional buses/routes
- Additional bus drivers
- Increase in traffic during student pick-up & drop-off

Other

- ✓ Food services

Elementary students have single menu selections while 6th – 8th grade students are offered a variety of selections each day and different portion sizes. Some kitchens are not large enough or equipped to provide two sets of meal types.

Resources

- Blair, L. (2008). Back to the Future: The Shift to K-8 Schools. *SEDL Letter*, Xx(1), April 2008. Retrieved October 22, 2018, from http://www.sedl.org/pubs/sedl-letter/v20n01/k-8_schools.html
- Jacobson, L. (2017, October 18). NYU study: Students in K-8 model more academically confident than middle school peers. *Education Dive*. Retrieved October 21, 2018, from <https://www.educationdive.com/news/nyu-study-students-in-k-8-model-more-academically-confident-than-middle-sc/507471/>
- Meyer, P. (2011). The Middle School Mess. *Education Next*, 11(1), winter 2011. Retrieved October 22, 2018, from <https://www.educationnext.org/the-middle-school-mess/>.

¹ Imbroane, C. (2018, December 5). Phone interview.

² Schwerdt, G., & West, M. R. (2011). The Impact of Alternative Grade Configurations on Student Outcomes through Middle and High School. *Program on Education Policy and Governance Working Papers Series*. Retrieved October 19, 2018, from <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:8139254>

³ Alspaugh, J. W., & Harting, R. D. (1995). Transition effects of school grade-level organization on student achievement. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 28 (3), 145-149.

⁴ Schwerdt, G., & West, M. R. (2011). 19.

⁵ Needell Hollander, C. (2012, December 18). Why K-8 Schools May Be Better For Middle School Students. *The New York Times*. Retrieved October 20, 2018, from <https://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/06/18/the-middle-school-conundrum/why-k-8-schools-may-be-better-for-middle-school-students>

⁶ Hanover Research. (2014). *Best Practices in K-8 School Configuration* (Vol. May 2014, Rep.). Washington, D.C.: Hanover Research. Retrieved October 20, 2018, from https://www.normandysc.org/site/handlers/filedownload.ashx?moduleinstanceid=3258&dataid=2362&FileName=Best_Practices_in_K-8_School_Configuration.pdf.

⁷ Hanover Research. (2014).

⁸ Ibid. 15.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Anderman, E. (2002). School effects on psychological outcomes during adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94(4), 797. Retrieved October 20, 2018, from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.538.6276&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

¹¹ Imbroane, C. (2018).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Educational Impact. (n.d.). Advantages and disadvantages of various grade-level organizations. Retrieved October 19, 2018, from http://www.educationalimpact.com/resources/msl/pdf/MidSchLead_2A_advantages.pdf

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Imbroane, C. (2018).