

Elementary Educator's Feedback Session

Expand Middle School to Include 6th grade

Benefits

I saw this in JFK Northampton. My son was successful. Teachers can pool talent and provide a stronger education utilizing their interests and strengths and educational background. Kids seriously benefit.

Opportunity for us to be creative—a mix of elem school set-up and middle school

(Benefits) Retention/less choice-ing out

- Perhaps less kids would choice out to charter schools/private schools?
- Promotes population growth in middle/high school level
- Community stays in the rest of the district—keeps us diverse
- Less children, less families effected by change = Happier kids, families, & community
- We could keep kids in the district by having then bond a year ealier with friendships
- Might be able to keep more kids in the district if they try Mohawk and realize that it is not so bad 😊(+)
- Parents/students could connect w/Mohawk, so there night be less loss to charter schools

(Benefits) Transition

- Students could begin “middle school” expectations sooner (i.e., study groups, departmentalized education (++)
- Having a smoother transition by stepping up and becoming familiar with the routine

(Benefits) Enrichments

- Kids may be able to participate in sports and extracurricular activities
- Able to participate in extracurricular activities (++)
- More access to technology (++++++)
- Better technology access for 6th graders.
- 6th grade will be exposed to more enrichments (+)
- Access to sports/club/afterschool enrichment (++)
- More opportunities for students on sports teams and special subjects (++++)

- More science hands-on labs! (+)
- Could the kids take a 2nd language earlier in 6th?
- Kids can participate in organized sports 9++)

(Benefits) Middle school model for students

- Students begin to adjust to learn with peer similar to ones own age
- Students would be able to use the middle school model. Proven to benefit learning.
- Better use of resources—less shifting and reorganizing.
- Education field trips on a larger scale
- Homeroom ELA w/HR teacher Rotate for Science, SS, Math (++)
- Team teaching (more than one teacher). All teachers know all kids. (+)
- More opportunities for different teaching styles—better fit for some students
- Theoretically improved instruction from “specialists” rather than generalists (certification may make this difficult.
- Less kids pulled for “intervention” because classes could go at different paces
- Access to substantial separate classrooms
- Students able to access more curriculum at Mohawk (specials, etc)
- Students from small schools would have a larger 6th grade peer group(+++++)
- 6th graders get to see higher ed curriculum and students they will be striving up.
- Some 6th graders seem ready for a Middle School environment (+)
- Easier to group by ability
- 6th graders seem to be ready to move on by about Oct of their 6th grade year, or soon thereafter.
- Students begin to adjust to learn with peers similar to own age
- Better use of resources—less shifting and reorganizing.

(Benefits) Middle school model for teachers

- More team teaching possibilities
- Teachers could specialize and focus, rather than trying to be an expert in multiple subjects (+)
- More opportunities for different teaching styles—better fit for some students
- Teachers could specialize and focus, rather than trying to be an expert in multiple subjects (+)
- 6th grade teachers would be a team (+)

- More collaboration if more than 1 teacher (+++)
- More team teaching possibilities

(Benefits) Social/Emotional

- Better opportunity to find friends...Less isolated = More involved student (+)
- Age-wise- they are ready.
- From smaller enrollment schools, this allows for more student to student interactions
- Students would be with appropriate age groups
- Some kids ready for Middle School environment
- Socially, beneficially. Widen social circles (some kids have been together since pre-k which often causes more harm than good) which helps academically.
- More social opportunity (+)
- Kids have been together for 6 or 7 years. This will give them a chance to meet new friends. (+++)
- Some 6th graders are sooo ready to have a new horizon (++++)
- Generally 6th graders are ready to move on and this would be a small step sooner (++)
- Students are physically bigger and seem ready for this transition (+)
- Age group feels more a part of an older crowd but don't have to content with high schoolers yet (+)
- Students will already know older children from their "sending" elementary school
- Larger student population
- 6th graders seem to be ready to move on by about Oct of their 6th grade year, or soon thereafter.
- More independence
- More social opportunity (+)
- Kids will have more peers and changes for new friendships
- 6th grade can handle longer commute, for ex Heath to Mohawk (+++)
- Socially have more students to develop friendships who share same interests.
- 6th graders will have role models. (+)

(Benefits) General/Misc

- More opportunities for students both academically and socially (++)
- Easy to "un-do" if population increases?

- Social-emotional support for age group as well as shift.

Concerns

I sat at an all-school meeting in the first week of school; watching 6th graders listen/participate patiently +compassionately while all-school behavior was modeled, mostly for younger students benefits. They were exactly where they needed to be—a place to be “top dogs,” leaders and caretakers. If they had been sitting in an assembly at the middle school it would have been all about them—their social scene, etc. Keeping them in the elementary school for that extra year is a way to help them be more humane, more compassionate citizens.

(Concerns) Loss of leadership opportunity

- Sixth graders lose leadership opportunity that is at a very crucial point in their social/emotional development.
- 6th graders won't be able to be the “role models” of their school.
- Kids will lose chance of being leaders in school
- Good for 6th graders to be “big dogs’ in elementary school
- By not being in elementary, losing the benefit of strong leaders for younger kids at an age where they blossom as leaders.
- 6th graders will lose the experience being role models for younger grades. 5th graders will have that experience, but at less depth and breadth because of their year less maturity.
- The 6th graders are leaders and role models in our school.
- Students wouldn't be a role model for the younger kids.
- Our school gives 6th graders privileges and leadership opportunities, not convinced 5th graders can handle as well.

(Concerns) Loss of traditions

- Special end of elementary trips at each school wouldn't happen—Mexico, Washington, Nature's classroom.
- If implemented, kids may feel like they missed out on something (social)
- 6th graders would in some cases, first year, miss out on traditional privileges and responsibilities.

(Concerns) Don't have maturity level necessary

- Not being able to handle all of the middle school issues.
- Not ready socially
- Bad influence from older students
- 6th graders will miss their small town feeling of community. Especially if they were there since K or early on

- Not mature enough to navigate the issues that can arise in middle school.
- They will be the youngest at a time when they thrive being leaders.
- 6th graders not @ middle school maturity level or ready to be @ a school that goes up to 12th grade. Think about the bus!
- One class will lose out on being “head of the school.”
- Might cut childhood short (some 6th graders still very young and easily influenced by middle school issues). (+)
- Children would be exposed to experiences beyond their years. (+++)
- 6th graders would need social-emotional support for their developmental/learning stages with joining 7th, 8th grades which is huge transition for children from a small rural school going to a much larger school population.
- Not ready maturity-wise.
- Possibly not ready socially, emotionally, to handle “big kids school.”
- Parents lose control of exposure to mature material.
- Too immature to be with older children
- Kids will be exposed to more adolescent issues
- The entryway “scene” at Mohawk isn’t in the best interest of 6th graders. I understand that 6 graders will be in the middle school wing but there’s a lot to experience before getting to their “home base.”

(Concerns) 6th graders on buses with 12th graders.

- Buses for young 12 yr old with older kids
- 6th graders with 12 graders on bus, etc?
- 11 yr olds with 18—too big.

(Concerns) Developmentally unprepared

- Are they developmentally ready for this big change?
- 6th graders are in a large part still physically, emotionally, and hormonally younger and fit better with elementary than middle school.
- Developmental differences are huge between 6th graders and upper classmen (seniors). How would safety (physically, socially, emotionally) be ensured on busses, locker rooms, hallways, etc?
- Developmentally, 11-12 yr. olds are at so many different levels. Some capable of responsibility, some not.

(Concerns) Middle school model for students

- As a 6th grade SPED teacher in both 6-8 and k-6 models, I believe it's a significant loss for kids on IEPs to move to an inclusion model a year early. Often are consolidating skills they have been working on in resource rooms in the 5th and 6th grade yrs. They basically lose access to individualized and specialized instruction in inclusion mode which focuses on strategies and support.
- 6th graders who need extra supports that elementary services bring would miss a WHOLE YEAR of preparation for the added load of Mohawk.
- Would the 6th grade lose para's and other support staff—reading, math, OT, PT, Psychologist, Phys Ed, Recess, Break. How would all of that be covered?
- 6th graders still benefit from aspects of elementary social scene—recess, story time, buddy systems.
- Little fish Big Pond—will the 6th be ready for the transition?
- Kids in 6th grade were asked (10 of them) about this. They said they would want to stay in their elementary schools to be the models for others and they felt they were not ready for middle school. Kids had heard that there is less structure in middle school. They expressed they were not ready for that.
- How would we get students ready organizationally earlier? Some students still getting crucial academic needs met on lower levels.
- Concerned students would not get personalized, individual, educational attention (+)
Some high flyers may be ready for middle school model educationally but many other are firming up reading and writing skills and elementary models allows for more personal support and monitoring.
- Average 6th grader not organized enough to manage a middle school model.
- 6th with 8th will impact the needful academic attention of 6th
- Students with 504 and IEPs will/may have different service delivery according to their Ed. Plan. (+)
- What happens to the elementary schools w/5th graders as the new oldest students. Having taught 4th, 5th, and 6th grade, I don't think 5th graders are at the maturity level needed to be school leaders and enjoy the same privileges and responsibilities traditional for the oldest.
- Schooling w/ older kids= exposed to dating, drugs, etc one year sooner than now. Social skill are so important in a child's academics. Comfortable socially can help with focus, anxiety, etc.
- Jacquie Goodman will go to Mohawk

Questions

What about a more fluid 6th- to 7th-grade transition? Think of different models. Elementary school model at Mohawk for the first half of 6th, then integrated more slowly. Advisory/homeroom groups that stay together over the years, not academic, responsible for social and emotional health.

(Questions) Transitioning

- How do we prep for change in teaching organization (ie, elem model to MS model? (+)
- Would there be a transitional program for 6th grade @ Mohawk, or would they be expected to jump right into middle-school level education.
- Do we have 6th grade teachers w/strong Math, Science, Language. Social Studies backgrounds. I envision kids rotating. Have you look at JFK model in Noho.
- What bridging will be constructed for their transition and for their support throughout the year

(Questions) Retention

- Are we sure this will keep kids from going to charter, or just a hunch? (+)
- Could charter schools start to incorporate 6th as well in the next few years?
- Why would a family choose to stay in the district because of this scenario? Many will choice out if 6th moves to Mohawk. We are fortunate to have pre-K to 6 schools.
- Will 6th grade parents have a choice between Mohawk or remain @ current school? Or is Mohawk the only choice? (+)
- Could going to Mohawk for 6th be an option for those who are ready? (+)

(Questions) Class configuration/model

- Will they be changing classes or staying together? (+++)
- Would 6th adapt the same type of schedule (as 7&8) or use a team teaching model?
- Would more classes be available (foreign languages, related arts (++)
- Can 6th follow one model (not necessarily the same one as 7th and 8th?
- What model for 6th grade? Hybrid advisory class with same teacher, perhaps? (Math and Science Academy in Greenfield does this.)
- Will 6th follow the block schedule that 7th and 8th currently use?
- Will there be interaction with 8th graders?
- What would the day of a 6th grader be? Contained classroom? Middle school model?
- Would they be completely mixed in with the 7th & 8th? (+)
- How integrated will they be with the 7th and 8th grade?
- How would this look for the related arts team? Who would teach 6th art, music PE?
- Would learning be able to be supported adequately in this scenario?
- Will there be integration with 7&8 graders?

- I think the age kids leave elementary is arbitrary. (attended a k-4 when I was a kid. Then 5-8, 4-12. Whatever.)
- Can 6th grade participate in sports (++++)

(Questions) Space

- I think the space for them is a wonder (?). Is there space for them?
- How would this look? Meaning would 6 have separate wing in middle school? Would 8th grade move to high school section?
- It works to have a community of 6th, 7th, 8th, but there should be a physical divide between 7th/8th. Where will 6th grade classes go? I attended a 6th grade at a MS and taught at one also.
- Are 6th graders kept separate from the older high school students? (+)
- Will the 6th graders be all in the same class like they do now, or will they change classes?
- Will they follow block scheduling or be Grade 6 to Mohawk an a house room (++)
- Will there be interaction with the 7th & 8 grades.

(Questions) Social/Emotional

- Are they too young? Just right? Too old? Preparation/Bridging (+)
- Would a counselor trained in elementary counseling be available?

(Questions) Supports and/or Resources

- How will Mohawk support more students with counseling, speech, reading support, math, and PT/OT?
- Will there be a counselor/asst principal/administrator specifically for MS (not shared with 9th grade)?
- 6th grade will need their own school counselor to address needs(++).
- I am a reading specialist. Would kids still have access to reading support outside of special ed?
- What about special field trips that kids have done for years ~40 plus?
- Can class trips still happen to important places? Washington, Boston?
- Would this free up space in elementary schools to add other resources in extra rooms?
- Currently 6th graders receive title 1 Math support daily. What kinds of educational supports are in place for them at Mohawk.
- Would SPED kids get the 1-1 services they need?(+++)
- How would 6th graders be given/afforded the space to be 6th graders when joining the more complex social-emotional years of the 7th and 8th graders. They will be facing a great deal of change at a vulnerable time? Is this fair to the 6th graders?
- Would there be a school counselor to address the this developmental issue?

- How would this change impact extra-curricular's like sports, club...Would it strengthen or tax these programs?
- Too many middle schoolers to deliver related arts without taking away from High School; classes RA or hiring just a middle school RA team(good idea)

(Questions) Certification/Dollars/General Questions

- Will 6th grade teachers be certified in a specific field or be general 1-6 certified?
- How will this work with certifications (+++)
- How can we improve what we've got now? Is this a long term solution? How much \$ savings?
- How much \$ is saved by moving 6th to Mohawk? How was/is this savings determined?
- What type of discussion have taken place w/districts that do this type of model?
- Would teachers and para's loose their positions because of consolidating? (+)
- Teachers? Who?
- What are the educational benefits?

Middle School Educator's Feedback

Expand Middle School to Include 6th grade

Q: What should the model for 6th grade at Mohawk look like and why?

To facilitate the transition from elementary to middle school:

- 6th grade would need to be separated from the rest of the school as much as possible.
- 6th graders rotate class to class in teams (the same group of students all day)
- They would go to different objects throughout the day
- 6th grade teachers would be a team
- They have an advisor/homeroom teacher who they spend a significant amount of time with on a regular basis

Other considerations

- We need to increase staffing and offerings for related arts classes. Right now our related arts teachers also teach in the high school. We should consider having dedicated middle school related arts teachers and dedicated high school related arts teachers.
- We could offer additional related arts by having core middle school teachers each teach an elective (having their grade divided into 4 groups instead of 5, and having their 5th class be an elective). This would give middle schoolers 3 elective classes
- We may need to consider getting rid of the high school block schedule
- We may want to completely overhaul the middle school schedule
- We may want to have 6th and 7th grade located together and move 8th grade near 9th grade in the high school. 8th and 9th would be separated more significantly from the rest of the high school.
- If we are bringing in an agricultural program and 6th grade at the same time, our resources (space, staffing, supplies, money) will be stretched and this is a lot of transition at once. Worry it won't be well thought out or implemented well
- Transitional issues will diminish over time.

Questions

Is there a model used elsewhere that we can learn from?