

PARK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT EDUCATION MASTER PLAN

GRADE ALIGNMENT TASK FORCE - MEETING 1

February 12, 2019

Attendees: Valerie Nagasawa, Kelsey Madden (GSBS), Janna Young, Sam Salinas, Patricia Munoz, Liza K-Davis, Paula McKay, Emily Sutherland, Jim Tedford, Bill Rusconi, JoAnn Funseth, Kelly Cronley, Julie Hastings, Bob Edminston, Keri Hone, Genevieve Healy, Kim Abbett, Rhea Schomaker, Jodey Fey, Steve Joyce

History

- 5 years ago - elementary schools became crowded once Pre-K was introduced.
- Community felt like 9th grade should be in high school (curriculum matches, school credit is more relevant)
- Treasure Mountain and Ecker Hill used to each be 6-8th grades - there were socio-economic differences between the schools that caused tension
- District formed Grade 5-8 task force (teachers, counselors, admin from elementary to 9th grade) of about 20 people, met a number of times, researched, visited schools, called regional schools
- Discovered that lots of different things are/can be successful
- Tried to find what might work best for this specific community and made proposal for 5-6th grade middle school, 7-8th grade middle school, 9-12th grade high school
- Board accepted this proposal but then bond failed and everything went back to zero
- Concern that 5th and 8th graders would share counselors, which might be upsetting
- The actual vision was to have two separate schools and school buildings on a shared campus (not organized as one school in two buildings or sharing counselors)
- Community questioned whether the study was broad enough and included of all considerations
- There was not a thorough evaluation of resources (physical or staff)

Pros of Current Alignment (Pre-K - 5, 6-7, 8-9, 10-12)

- Group likes 6/7 combo (6th grade doesn't necessarily fit well with 8th grade)
- Preschoolers at the elementary schools - may be an easier transition into elementary school if attending the school already as preschooler (parents pay for this)
- K-5 is together and can align curriculum well

Cons of Current Alignment

- Classes start at three different times
- 9th graders should be with the high school (they are high schoolers and they don't feel like high schoolers when in middle school setting)
- Elementary setting might not be appropriate for 3-4-year olds
- 6th grade in Utah is classified as elementary school
- 5th graders have a hard time fitting in with 7th graders
- 9th grade curriculum is lumped with 9-12 grouping (state tests are same for 9-10, science standards are 9-12), science standards are 6-8
- Teachers from different grade level schools have difficulty meeting (different schedules, creates a division between the curriculum)
- Teacher certification - Ecker Hill spans between certification levels so it's hard to find teachers to staff this in-between classification (there is a 1-8 certification - you still often have to have a specialization)

- Being in a building at least 3 years gives students more of a sense of belonging, builds better relationships with teachers, counselors, etc. - allows them to be more prepared to learn - don't have that right now
- Would be better to minimize transitions (three is too many)
- There is a huge difference between 6th and 7th graders

Pros of 2015-2016 Proposed Alignment (Pre-K - 4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-12)

- 5th and 6th together is better for dual immersion

Cons of 2015-2016 Proposed Alignment (Pre-K - 4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-12)

- Parent involvement goes way down
- Increased transportation costs/more buses

Discussion:

- 6th grade curriculum is different from 7 and 8th grade
- Helpful for 5th graders to have a transition year where they begin moving to different classrooms and having four teachers instead of one
- Need to focus on ways to ease the transitions (especially from 8th to 9th grade)
 - 9th grade academy
 - Teachers need more time to vertically align to prep kids for the transition
 - Parents need to be involved in the transition
- Need to be more open to parents and families
 - Parent involvement is also by choice
 - Kids want less parent involvement
- Not having a neighborhood school makes parent involvement more difficult too
- 6,7 and 8th grade schools - schools within a school work really well, an example was given that included:
 - 6th graders having little contact with 8th graders
 - 6th graders having team of 2 teachers
 - 7 and 8th graders having team of 4 teachers
- Transportation and keeping schools closer to the population may be a factor in this conversation
- Minimizing transitions seems to be the best way
- Having kids in a school for at least three years at a time is beneficial - they are just barely getting comfortable after two years
 - Have demographics changed?
 - Have locations of populations changed?
- Preschool is good to have with rest of elementary school
- Sense of community and belonging is so important for students - part of this can come from a shift in educational and teaching practices
- School size
- Cultural or economic diversity/sense of community
- Consider parental involvement factors

Criteria to help us make a choice:

- Consider what is the best for kids and their education
 - Safety (size of school)
 - Academic achievement
 - Class size
 - Sense of community/belonging
- Rely on published data
- Consider transportation and location of school vs. kids (minimizing travel where possible)
- Minimizing transitions / being mindful of transition
- Align developmental stages of kids

- Curriculum and certifications of teachers / vertical alignment
- Overall space needs for future/current programs (flexibility)

Things we agree on:

- 7th & 8th grade should be together
- 9th grade should be part of high school

Things that need more information:

- 8th grade transition preparation for students and parents
- Data on efficacy of keeping students in a school for a minimum of 3 years before transitioning
- Where does 6th grade fall - elementary or middle school?
- Current demographics related to the current middle school locations
- Current discussion about making elementary schools magnets for Dual Language Immersion and other programs (rather than combining multiple tracks in one school)