

Grade Configuration Update

July 29, 2014
School Board Update #3

Dr. Kim Riesgraf, Assistant Superintendent

Chairperson Lunt, board members and Superintendent Maguire.

This is the third monthly update on our work to change grade spans for our school system.

Grade Configuration Project Goal

Beginning the 2015-16 school year, the grade spans for the school district will be:

- elementary PreK/K-5,
- middle school grades 6-8, and
- high school grades 9-12.

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As you know, we're planning for a significant change in grade spans that will take effect in the 2015-2016 school year. Beginning Fall 2015, our grade spans will be PreK/K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. The new grade configuration will provide benefits to students at all levels, e.g., potential expansion of early learning opportunities; more flexibility with space at elementary schools; new opportunities to meet the social/academic needs of adolescents at middle level; a more coherent high school program with all courses required for graduation under one roof; and alignment with state K-12 academic standards.

Detail planning beginning



Project Initiation	Project Planning - High Level	Project Planning - Detail Level	Project Execution and Control	Project Closeout
Develop rationale	Develop Project Initiation Plan	Develop detail baseline project schedule	Manage constraints	Conduct post implementation review
Evaluate rationale		Risk assessment	Monitor and control risks	Perform Administrative Closeout
Select project priorities		Refine management Plans		

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We are using the Cornell Project Management Methodology for our grade span change. Each of the 5 project teams are involved in detail level planning that will include a timeline or schedule and a communication plan. Regular updates are being provided at each school board meeting on the progress made by each of the project teams.

Coordinating the work

Steering Committee - monthly

Project Team Leader Meeting – twice per month

- Middle level design
- High school programming
- High school facilities
- Human resources – teacher transfer, ESP Staffing
- Technology

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Coordinating the work requires regular meetings with groups of stakeholders and leaders

The steering committee is meeting monthly and is made up of key stakeholders including principals, union leadership, cabinet members, board members and other staff. The steering committee's purpose is to advise the superintendent and project manager on the work to implement the grade configuration changes. The steering committee had its second meeting today.

The detailed planning of the change is being carried out by the project teams. In addition to regular meetings with their individual project team, project team leaders meet twice a month to ensure that the Project Initiation Plan is integrated and to provide status updates to track and address issues as they arise.

Communication Planning

District plan

<http://www.district279.org/project-management-docs>

Individual project team communication plans

School transition plan

Department transition plan

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Clear, concise, consistent communication is essential in the planning for a smooth transition to the new grade spans.

The district communication plan is part of the project initiation plan that can be found on the website in the grade span changes section under project management documents. Key messages are included in the plan.

In addition, each of the project team leaders is in the process of developing a communication plan for their component. Key messages and communication strategies will be identified and integrated as part of the larger plan as well.

Communication planning will also be a component to the school transition plan. Every principal is responsible for developing a transition plan with a team at their school.

Middle School Design

Team Leader - Wendy Biallas-Odell

- 1) Middle level structure will be grade level interdisciplinary teams
- 2) Advisory period daily

August and September – meeting with teachers to continue detailed planning

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In our planning for new grade spans, designing the middle level program was an early priority. We have determined that our middle schools will use interdisciplinary teams for instruction in math, science, social studies, and language arts (“house” concept) and a daily advisory with structured curriculum around college/career planning, social/emotional learning, and academic oversight.

Key issues to tackle/resolve are curricular alignment, philosophy, advisory curriculum, licensure, and instructional materials.

The next steps will be to discuss vertical alignment of curriculum 6-8 and 9-12.

High School Programming

Team Leader – Astein Osei

Perspectives added counseling, registrars,
magnet school, counseling secretary, new
leaders

Reconvening August 4th

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The high school programming project team is charged with considering high school programming that is aligned with Minnesota's new World's Best Work Force requirements. The team is looking at curriculum areas, student services, and specialty programs such as International Baccalaureate, with an eye to how high school programming will look when grades 9-12 are all under one roof.

We have added new members to the team. The new members are:

John Groenke (new principal at Park Center)

Sandra Day (new secondary coordinator)

John Peterson (magnet school perspective/ IB coordinator at Park Center)

Jackie Trzynka (high school counseling perspective)

Angie VanHee (special education perspective/ replacing Kate Emmons)

Adding a senior high registrar and a junior high counseling secretary

So far, the team has reviewed -

9th/10th grade physical education requirements

Adding Career and Technical Education courses that could count towards core area credit for graduation

No decisions have been made. More work is needed and the next step will be to engage 6-12 content teams to look at course sequence.

High School Facilities

Team Leader – Dale Carlstrom

- 1) Building staff feedback on design development and preliminary schematic design
- 2) Begin July, construction documents

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The facilities team has identified tentative locations for building additions and space remodeling/repurposing at each of the three comprehensive high schools. Because the buildings were built at different times over a 50-year period and are used differently, the proposed additions and remodeling/repurposing projects are uniquely designed to meet the specific needs at each school.

The first draft of the drawings is complete and we have begun the department-by-department meetings to establish the final design and design details. We will have final drawings ready for the mid-August deadline.

I want to clarify that the current construction at Maple Grove Junior High is not related to the grade span change. The construction at Maple Grove Junior High is a community gym project that is a partnership with the Osseo Maple Grove Basketball Association and the City of Maple Grove and it is not being paid for by district funds.

No high school boundary change

- move 9th grade to high school
- create space at the 3 comprehensive high schools, and
- specifically avoid any boundary changes related to grade span changes

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Will high school boundaries change as a result of the change to new grade spans in 2015-2016?

No. We have learned that an inaccurate rumor is circulating in the community, claiming that high school boundaries will supposedly change within the next two years as a result of the transition to new grade spans. **This is not accurate.** In Spring 2014, in response to community feedback, the ISD 279 School Board approved a plan that would allow 9th grade to move to high school by creating space (building additions and renovations) at each of the three comprehensive high schools **specifically to avoid any boundary changes related to grade span changes.**

Please note that while changing grade spans will not result in boundary changes at any level, it does not mean that the district will never change school boundaries. Staff constantly monitors student enrollment and housing development. Periodic adjustments to school boundaries will continue to be necessary as populations shift in our communities and schools.

Human Resources

Team Leader – Janet Thomas-Bouyer

- Engagement of labor leaders and key stakeholders
- Teacher licensure requirements clarified
- Recommended teacher transfer timeline to occur after January 1, 2015
- Scope expanded to include staff communication that educates, informs and responds to HR-related questions

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We learned from the MN Dept of Education that teachers licensed K-6 and 1-6 are properly licensed to teach 6th grade in the middle schools. MDE does not require that these 6th grade teachers have a middle school endorsement.

The team explored the possibility of completing an early staffing process. Typically, the staffing timeline begins in late February and March. As a result of their review of data and information from district experts **the team recommends the staffing timeline begin after January 1, 2015.**

There are a number of processes and decisions that take place before staffing allocations are delivered to schools and sites. These include the annual year-end audit, enrollment projections, mid-year budget adjustments, annual budget planning for the upcoming fiscal year 2016, and secondary student registration. All of this work leads to staffing allocations that are as close to accurate as possible.

The team will continue to explore the possibility of moving the staffing process up a few weeks or modifying it in some other way.

Among Education Support Professionals, the key needs are communication/education and staff development.

Technology

Team Leader – Tim Wilson

Needs assessment related to technology systems in progress

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The team has started developing a comprehensive list of databases, scripts, and other technology systems that rely on fixed grade span definitions or site abbreviations (e.g., grade promotion processes, report cards, and health forms). All of those systems will need updates to reflect new grade level spans.

Each required change will be assigned a completion deadline and tracked. Some of the deadlines will be in the fall of 2014 for systems that need to be in place to prepare information for SY2015–16 planning.

The large set of databases and scripts operate largely behind the scenes. They are critical, however, to school district operations.

Stay informed

- Reports at each regular school board meeting
- Grade configuration location on website

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As you have heard, the planning for the new grade spans is well underway. I will continue to provide an update at each regular school board meeting. Another good source of information is our district website, where you can find an overview of the planning as well as the project management documents and updates.

Thank you.