

K-8 Educational Research Committee Report

**Data gathered and recommendations made
to assist with the decision-making process to
restructure K-8 education in the Conway School District**

2009

K-8 Educational Research Committee

Committee Members

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Mission Statement

To explore data on all grade configurations and provide detailed information to the Conway School Board for consideration, that includes information on educational validity and financial responsibility. The school board will then make decisions that utilizes funds in a responsible manner to best provide all students with a quality education.

Procedure

The committee was divided into 4 subcommittees, each assigned the task of researching various scenarios. The following factors were reviewed:

1. moving grades 5 & 6 to the middle school
2. moving only 6th grade to the middle school
3. closing one elementary school
4. adding full day kindergarten to the elementary schools

Subgroup Assignments:

- #1: Move grades 5 & 6 to KMS and add full day kindergarten
- #2: Move grades 5 & 6 to KMS and close one elementary school
- #3: Move Grade 6 to KMS and add full day kindergarten
- #4: Move grade 6 to KMS and close an elementary school

The full committee met a total of 4 times. Subcommittees set their own meeting schedules. The full committee reviewed the work of all the subcommittees and came up with recommendations and considerations for the Conway School Board.

-See Attachments For Each Subgroup's Notes And Recommendations-

Grade Configuration Recommendations

Grade 5

The Committee recommends keeping grade 5 in the elementary schools.

Discussion: The discussion focused on the developmental and social/emotional needs of the 5th grade students. Concerns were expressed that children as young as 10 would be exposed to teenage social pressures and the influence of 14-15 year olds. Developmentally, 5th grade students are closer to students in the lower grades than to those in the 6th to 8th grade range. Members of the committee expressed the need to let 10 year olds remain children and not push them into the teenage years before they are developmentally ready. All subgroups looking at the option of moving both 5th and 6th grade students to the middle school agreed that it would not be in the students best interests to house the 5th grade in the middle school.

Grade 6

The Committee recommends proceeding with further analysis and planning before making the decision to move the 6th grade into the middle school. The school board should proceed to review the program for 6th graders as if they were in the middle school.

Discussion: After looking at a wide variety of factors, the committee agreed that there were many positive reasons to move the 6th grade to the middle school. However, there were some major challenges that needed to be resolved before a decision to make such a major move could be made.

Reasons for moving the 6th grade to the middle school:

Students would have one more year in the same building, lengthening the time between transitions. The transitions on either end of the middle school (elementary to 7th and 8th to high school) currently come too close together, allowing for little time for adjustment and stabilization in achievement rates for middle schoolers. Research shows that transitions correlate with a drop in academic test scores. The grade 6-8 configuration may help to alleviate drops in achievement due to frequent transitions.

The committee felt that while some students may be at a younger age developmentally and need more support in middle school environment, most 6th graders are more aligned with 7th and 8th grade students than those in K-5. In addition there may be benefits to the students being exposed to more mature students.

The middle school would provide 6th grade students with opportunities to experience increased academic, ancillary and extra curricula offerings such as World Languages, Family and Consumer Science, sports, clubs, dances etc.

Sixth grade students would have more time to mature socially, given increased freedom and independence during the school day.

Infrastructure is in place in the middle school to accommodate an additional 100 students without much change to the facility. The 6th-8th grade configuration would provide for a more efficient use of the large building. It also might lower the per pupil cost of education depending on the staffing structure of the new model.

By moving the 6th grade to KMS, the 5th graders would be able to develop leadership skills and more confidence as the oldest role models at the elementary school level.

The addition of full day kindergarten would enter as a factor which would add to the reasons for moving the 6th grade. The move would make space for the additional kindergarten classrooms.

Challenges to moving the 6th grade to the middle school:

The 6th graders are currently successful in the elementary schools; there could be a negative impact to their academics and social/emotional skills with an earlier transition.

The committee felt the school board's decision for changing grade configurations should not be exclusively monetary. The children's best interests should be the most important determining factor.

The move could affect **Project Succeed**, which is currently a site based program with no program in place at the middle school level. This could be a challenge for parents who rely on the program for after-school programming and care for their children.

Transportation issues: Is it appropriate to put 11 year olds on a bus with 18 year olds?
Will we need separate buses for middle and high school?
Will starting times for the schools need to change due to changes in transportation?

Staff Development: 6th grade teachers will need training in the middle school model, teaming, etc. All teachers in KMS will need training in how to integrate 6th grade into the middle school and how to address the issues of the developmentally younger kids. It will also be a challenge to find time to add the additional training needed into the schedule.

The **tuition agreement** with sending towns may be a challenge. It states that a mutual agreement must be reached in order to pursue other educational arrangements that may be in the best educational and/or financial interest of the parties. (see Conway Tuition Agreement).

Sports. Currently 6th grade students play sports through the two Community Centers in Conway. Would 6th grade student s play on the 7-8 teams or would there be separate 6 grade teams? Would more coaches need to be hired?

The biggest challenge of all may be **public opinion**. It is essential to weigh the input from all stakeholders (including parents, teachers, administrators, and community members) before making a decision to reconfigure KMS to a grade 6 through 8 school.

Further recommendations concerning moving the 6th grade to the middle school

It is recommended that a comprehensive approach to program planning for a 6th through 8th middle school grade configuration be completed before the school board takes steps to implement this new model. There was consensus that a major step that would need to be completed before moving the 6th grade was thorough planning of how all aspects of the program would work, including transitions, scheduling, number of teachers, assignments of teams, curriculum, academic course offerings, ancillary services, sports and other co-curriculars, and staff development, transportation.

Questions that arose within the subcommittees included, but were not limited to the following: Would the 6th grade be divided into teams? Would they have a different teacher for each subject and change classes 5-6 times per day? Would they have the same course offerings as the 7th and 8th grade or would they be different? Would they physically be located separately from other grades or integrated into the school? Would they have their own co-curricular activities or integrated into 7 & 8 grade activities?

In order for the 6-8 model to work, Freedom and Madison need to be on board and they should be heavily involved in the planning process. There was discussion regarding the effect of having different schools send the students to KMS at different grade levels and the committee determined that this would not be advisable. It undermines the cohesiveness the social groups, wreaks havoc with academic levels due to differences in curriculum, will create additional transition problems and have a negative financial impact to Conway.

Financial impact

A thorough analysis of financial impact and budget specifics was not undertaken by this committee because of the complexity of multi-factors impacting the proposed scenarios in addition to the limited time we had available for the Committee to complete its mission. However, an estimation of the financial impact was considered.

Estimated Cost Increases to KMS due to adding Grade 6 students (in addition to transfer of staff and budgets from the elementary level)

<u>Addition</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Assistant Principal	\$85,000
Start up renovations	\$50,000
Athletics	\$ 7,500
.5 Guidance	\$22,000
Total	\$164,500

Projected cost to sending towns

Projections were established using the current tuition formulas, taking all of the sixth graders out of Conway's elementary schools and moving them to the middle school. (2009-2010 budget)

Estimated cost changes:

Conway's annual cost would increase \$195,603
Albany's annual cost would increase \$26,920
Eaton's annual cost would increase \$4,223
Madison's annual cost would decrease \$28,594
Freedom's annual cost would decrease \$11,704

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CLOSURE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee does NOT recommend closing an elementary school at this point in time.

It appears that the financial savings of closing an elementary school would be centered around core services, such as administration, custodial, library, nursing, guidance, and overall maintenance and utility costs of a building. Most of the instructional positions would likely transfer with the student load.

There are several other factors that would need to be considered. Which elementary school would close? Would we mothball the school, find another use for it or rent it out? What would be the costs to mothball?

One of the major factors in the committee's decision is the perceived lack of public support for closing a school. The concept of neighborhood/village schools is highly valued in this community and is an emotionally charged issue. Other factors include enrollment projections and the consideration of adding a full day kindergarten which would require more space/classrooms.

The committee recommends the following in regard to this issue:

Update enrollment projections

Set enrollment thresholds for reopening the elementary school closure discussion

Set financial thresholds for reopening the school closure discussion (i.e. due to further state budget cuts)

Cost Savings for closing one elementary school

Total Budget \$2,260,150 2009-10		Reduce by:	savings
Salaries and benefits	\$1,156,686		
Classroom teachers		13 - 3 = 10	\$171,000
art		50%	
music		50%	
PE		50%	\$84,000
Function 1100 (supplies)	50,420	25%	\$12,500
Function 1200 (SPED)	\$371,810		
Function 1400 (co-curr)	\$2,184		
Function 2113 (support services)	\$44,162		
Function 2120 (Guidance services)	\$75,519	50%	37,759
Function 2130 (Health services)	\$51,318	75%	\$38,488
Function 2140 (Psych services)	\$2,703		
Function 2150 (speech services)	\$500		
Function 2160 (OT services)	\$500		
Function 2210 (Improve Instruction)	\$14,621	10%	\$1,462
Function 2220 (Educational media)	\$66,251	75%	\$49,688
Function 2410 (office of principal)	\$175,925	100%	\$175,925
Function 2620 (op/maint plant)	\$236,530	75%	\$177,397
Function 2725 (pupil Transportation)	\$10,971	100%	\$10,971
Total Savings			\$759,190
Other cost factors:			
Bussing			
Mothball/rental/etc			
SPED + or -			
New room prep		Full day Kindergarten?	
food service + and/or -		School Capacity?	
KMS tuition rate adjustment			
Albany and Eaton higher KMS bond		due to more students Gr 5 & 6	
tuition contracts K-6 & 7-8 ??????		Back to a town meeting(s)???	

Full Day Kindergarten Recommendations

The Committee recommends to continue exploring the option of full day kindergarten

Discussion

Some of the main issues involved in the discussion of full day kindergarten are content of curriculum and instruction, school readiness, cost and space availability. Some benefits of full day kindergarten include more time to explore subjects in depth, a more flexible, individual learning environment, more time for individual and small group interaction with a teacher. There are also more opportunities to emphasize language development and emergent literacy skills.

While some people feel that a full day may put more pressure on children, it was also noted that most children spend time in childcare each day.. For those children who currently make multiple transitions between home, school, and child care, full day kindergarten offers a more stable, less stressful stimulating environment. There is also a benefit to parents who will have less stress finding and paying for childcare and making transportation arrangements to transport their child to or from school. There would also be more opportunities for parental involvement in the classroom and more time for greater communication with the teacher.

One of the reasons more school districts are lengthening the kindergarten school day is the emphasis on standards and accountability, combined with high numbers of educationally and economically disadvantaged students. It is hoped that more time in learning will help close the achievement gap, and increase readiness for first grade socially, emotionally and academically.

Full day kindergarten benefits children who are at risk or have identified special needs. These children often need more time for specialized instruction and specialist services such as Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy or Physical Therapy. Having a full day program provides for more time for children to be fully integrated into the regular educational program and reduces or eliminates the need for pull-out services. The RTI (Response to Intervention) model designed to catch problems early and remediate them before they make a major impact on learning or functioning in the school environment, can be implemented better in a full day model where there is more time for additional individual interventions.

Since Conway Elementary School is piloting a full day kindergarten this year, some members of the Committee suggested that the School Board evaluates that program to provide further input into the planning for full day kindergarten across the district. However, it was noted that Conway Elementary's program is targeted specifically at the children who are at risk or have special needs and does not represent the average, developmentally on target kindergarten student. Many of these children need more intensive interventions or specialized services so caution must be taken not to generalize the outcomes to the expected results of a full day program which would serve children of all skill levels.

The committee recommends that if the board chooses to move forward, then a full day kindergarten should be considered a *choice* and the option of a half-day program remain available for parents who want it.

Challenges

Financial impact:

The financial impact would include the cost of hiring one additional kindergarten Teacher and Aide for each elementary school plus materials and supplies. No other costs were identified by the subcommittees.

Space:

If the 6th grade moved to KMS, then there would be space in each school to accommodate additional kindergarten classrooms. However, if grade 6 remains in the elementary schools, then finding space for an additional classroom in each school would become more of a challenge.

Lunch:

Kindergarten students would need to be served by the school lunch program. This might present a challenge with scheduling lunch times.

Program Design:

The program design for the full day model would need to be fully planned before the district put full day kindergarten into practice. This would include the curriculum, activities, schedule, rest periods, specials, lunches, transportation etc..

Community:

Parents should be surveyed to find out the need and interest in having a full day kindergarten program. They should also be involved in the planning process. Public meetings should be held to explain the program and to get additional community input.

REVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made in this report and are repeated here for quick reference:

Keep 5th grade in the elementary schools.

The Committee recommends proceeding with further analysis and planning before making the decision to move the 6th grade into the middle school. The school board should proceed to review the program for 6th graders as if they were in the middle school.

It is recommended that a comprehensive approach to program planning for a 6th through 8th middle school grade configuration be completed before the school board takes steps to implement this new model.

In order for the 6-8 model to work, Freedom and Madison need to be on board and they should be heavily involved in the planning process. Invite remaining SAU boards to the table.

The Committee does NOT recommend closing an elementary school at this point in time.

- Update enrollment projections

- Set enrollment thresholds for reopening the elementary school closure discussion

- Set financial thresholds for reopening the school closure discussion (i.e. due to further state budget cuts)

- Continue exploring the option of full day kindergarten (consider the data from Conway El's program)

- Proceed with extensive opportunities for public input.

ATTACHMENTS

Conway Tuition Agreement grades 6-7

Enrollment Projections

Subgroups 1-4 Notes & Recommendations

CONWAY
TUITION AGREEMENT
Grades 7-8

XIV. CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL: This agreement shall become binding and effective if and only if:

- A. The long-term financing for a junior high school improvement plan as described in Section IV is passed by the Conway School District on or before June 30, 2004;
- B. Seven out of eight districts vote to give their boards the authority to enter into the high school contract, and four out of five into this agreement; and
- C. The agreement, once voted upon by the districts, receives approval of the State Board, pursuant to RSA 194:22, designating the junior high school as a junior high school maintained by each district.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED that at any time during the life of this agreement the parties, by mutual agreement, may pursue other educational arrangements that may be in the best educational and/or financial interest of the parties.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED that this agreement will take effect when it is signed by a majority of the members of both School Boards.

Enrollment projections

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	
K	95	105	105	
1	105	95	105	
2	105	105	95	
3	101	105	105	
4	109	101	105	
5	111	109	101	
6	122	111	109	
7	157	165	157	
8	158	157	165	
	1063	1053	1047	
				Avg Class size
keeping "as is"				
avg 3 elem. Schools	250	244	242	17.50
KMS	315	322	322	
Closing one elem. And moving Grade 6				
avg. 2 elem.schols	313	310	308	22.17
KMS	437	433	431	
3 elem/moving Grade 6				
Avg 3 elem. Schools	208	207	206	17.24
KMS	437	433	431	

Subcommittee findings

Move Grades 5&6 to KMS and Close one Elementary School

Recommendations:

1. Supports leaving Grades 5 and 6 in the Elementary Schools in their present configurations
2. The committee does not recommend closing an Elementary School at this time.
3. Recommends further consideration be given to moving only Grade 6 to KMS if it allows the elementary schools to better meet their goals (I.e. adding full day kindergarten)

Reasons:

1. Although the committee recognizes that although there might be some benefits to having a smaller K-4 school, they felt that the present configuration is already providing our students with a successful situation. They also had concern that a Grades 5-8 middle school might provide an age span that is inappropriate for one building.
2. At this point the present configuration is working and the cons outweigh the pros as for closing an elementary school.
3. If full day kindergarten is to be added, at that point it would make sense to again open the discussion about moving Grade 6 students to KMS because that would free up space in the elementary schools.

K-8 Educational Research Committee

Report from Subgroup; Moving 5-6 to Middle School and closing one of the elementary schools.
(Powers, Esmay, DeWitt, Zangari)

Positives of the change

- 1.** Financial Savings; It appears that the financial savings of closing an elementary school would be centered around core services, such as administration, custodial, library, nursing, guidance, and overall maintenance and utility costs of a building. Most of the instructional positions will likely transfer with the student load.
- 2.** There will like be some educational and social benefit to at least some of the sixth graders as they attend a school with older, more mature students.
- 3.** K-4 elementary schools would become much more of a primary school with less exposure for young learners to adolescent behavior. They would also have a more concentrated curriculum emphasis in the area of literacy with less need for specialization in content areas and technology.

Challenges of the Change

1. Impact on KMS

How does this affect the climate of KMS and the overall benefit of a Middle School approach when the age span increases to 10-15 years old? Appears to diminish the goals.
(less personal, wider range of ages, larger groups)

Can the facility accommodate another 240 students?

What is the need for expanding core services?

How does this impact extra-curricular?

What transportation issues arise from this change? Longer routes? Earlier routes?

- 2.** Will the community support having the 10-12 year old student population mix with the middle school with the negatives that go with that such as exposure to older behaviors, earlier days, longer routes, and PM supervision issues?
- 3.** Which elementary school gets closed?
- 4.** How does this affect the area agreement?

Financial Impact
General Numbers used to analyze the change.
 (For Discussion of the Concept)

Current Elementary School Numbers K-6 250 X 3 schools = 750
 Current 5-6 Numbers 75 X 3 schools = 225
 Projected Elementary Numbers With 5-6 Move 525/2 schools = 262 per school

<u>Current Staff</u>		Needed for 2 Elementary Schools	Reduces
Teachers	42	30	12
Special Ed	6-7	4-5	2
Administrators	3	2	1
Administrative Assistants	3	2	1
Office Aide	3	2	1
Guidance Counselors	3	2	1
PE	3	2	1
Art	2	2 (?)	0
Music	2	2 (?)	0
Librarian	3	2	1
Custodians	6	4	2
Support Center	3	2	1
Kitchen	3 Cooks	2	1
	3 Cashiers	2	1

Potential Savings Based on Unit 6 Budget for core services;

Assumes teaching Positions transfer to KMS

Office of principal	184,000
Guidance	56,000
Library	68,000
Nurse	56,000
SSC	45,000
<u>Maintenance</u>	<u>301,000</u>
Base Savings	526,000

These saving will need to be adjusted up or down contingent upon;

KMS needs for increased core services due to the gain of 225 students.(Guidance, nurse, administration etc.)

Additional savings to be computed will be tied to the savings of instructional personnel if any, realized at the middle school. (How many additional teachers and special educators are needed to accommodate the increase? (more than 14/less than 14)

This will also affect the tuition ratio for KMS and charges to outside towns.

Recommendations of the Sub-Committee

1. Keep the current structure as it is accomplishing the educational goals of the district.
2. The committee recommends that any consideration of a fifth grade move up be dropped.
3. No elementary school should be closed.
4. Further consideration be given to moving the sixth grades up if this allows the current elementary schools to further meet their goals.(kindergarten?)

Subcommittee findings

Move Grade 6 to KMS and Add Full Day Kindergarten

Recommendations:

1. Supports moving forward on considering full day kindergarten
2. Further study is recommended before making the decision to move Grade 6 to KMS.

Reasons:

1. The committee recognizes the benefit of piloting a full day kindergarten program to observe the benefits of the program.
2. The committee feels that there are some positive aspects of moving Grade 6 to KMS but feels that it is very important to have additional discussions as to the programmatic make-up of Grade 6 at KMS before a decision is made to move them out of the existing configuration.

K-8 EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE DATA SHEET

SUBGROUP: Move grade 6 to Middle School add full day kindergarten Full day kindergarten pros & cons		
Chairperson: Brian Hastings/Kelley Murphy		Date: August 2009
Members:		
Brian Hastings	Debbie Hill	Randy Davison
Kelley Murphy	Karen Umberger	

<p>POSTIVE REASONS FOR THE CHANGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ More time for academics, social, emotional development Service (Special Ed) could be provided outside of academic time ◆ Reach students earlier ◆ Enhance first grade readiness ◆ Might reduce coded population
<p>CHALLENGES OF THE CHANGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Some students may not be ready ◆ Staff development ◆ Possible space issue ◆ Parents buy in / education & communication ◆ Effect on local day care
<p>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Budget impact- staffing, materials/supplies
<p>OTHER DETAILS TO CONSIDER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Bus consideration- transportation ◆ Project Succeed impact ◆ Lunch program ◆ Education of parents and community ◆ State regulations/requirements ◆ Program evaluation
<p>SUBGROUP RECOMMENDATIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Monitor the success of Conway Elementary model to determine benefit of a longer day for students

K-8 EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH COMMITTEE DATA SHEET

SUBGROUP: Move grade 6 to Middle School/ add full day kindergarten 6th grade to Middle School Option		
Chairperson: Brian Hastings/Kelley Murphy		Date: August 2009
Members:		
Brian Hastings	Debbie Hill	Randy Davison
Kelley Murphy	Karen Umberger	

<p>POSTIVE REASONS FOR THE CHANGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Middle School becomes less of a transition time ◆ Some 6th graders are developmentally ready ◆ Improve the lot of 7th graders ◆ 6th graders might have more specials at Middle School, i.e. foreign language
<p>CHALLENGES OF THE CHANGE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Training- staff development ◆ Parents might check out earlier ◆ Structure of Teaming- 6th grade ◆ Some students not developmentally ready
<p>FINANCIAL IMPACT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Tuition impact- if Freedom and Madison join ◆ Other
<p>OTHER DETAILS TO CONSIDER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Sports ◆ Certification(s) of staff ◆ Enrollment trend(s) ◆ Bussing- 10 year old with seniors ◆ Support for students who are not ready ◆ Comfort level of parents in the community ◆ Space at Middle School ◆ Education of public
<p>SUBGROUP RECOMMENDATIONS: Committee was split</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Prior to any move of 6th graders to the Middle School we would need to study further the program for 6th grade (academic, social, and emotional).

Subcommittee findings

Move Grade 6 to KMS and Close an Elementary School

Recommendations:

1. Supports moving Grade 6 to KMS.
2. Does not support closing an Elementary School

Reasons:

1. The committee feels that educationally and developmentally, Grade 6 students would benefit from being in a Grades 6-8 middle school setting.
2. The committee feels that the drawbacks outweigh the benefits at this time for closing an Elementary School.

Move Grade 6 to KMS and Close an Elementary School

SUBGROUP: Move Gr. 6 to KMS-close 1 Elem.		
Chairperson:		Date: July 20, September 1st
Members:	Kevin Richard	Jim Lefebvre
Crystal Turner	Wendy Gresik	Peter Malkin

<p>POSITIVE REASONS FOR THE CHANGE: Students would have one more year in the same middle school building. Less transition over a shorter period of time. Access to more independence and freedom throughout the day (social development). Grouping and regrouping of students is more easily accommodated. Unified Arts and extracurricular opportunities are more accessible. Economy of scale, more efficient use of a bigger building. Infrastructure is in place to accommodate an additional 100 students without much change to the facility. Financial gain in closing an elementary school.</p>
<p>CHALLENGES OF THE CHANGE: Students have to adjust to five or six teachers a day instead of one or two. If Madison and Freedom do not send 6th grade students to KMS they would be negatively impacted in transition. Structuring a 6th grade team(s) to meet the needs of incoming students. Keeping the younger kids young (guarding against the older issues...). Should 11-12 year old students start school at 7:25 am, with bus pick up at 6:30am?</p>
<p>FINANCIAL IMPACT: 6th grade teachers would transfer with the students. Reduction in ancillary services (custodians, kitchen help). Possible addition of guidance counselor to KMS (transfer). Reduction of one school, maintenance and utility costs. Transference of teaching staff would be a wash. Start up costs for preparing KMS for additional students. See attached financial projections based upon cost savings of personnel, and operational costs (based upon 80% reduction of utilities).</p>
<p>OTHER DETAILS TO CONSIDER: Community input, support for backyard schools. transportation.</p>
<p>SUBGROUP RECOMMENDATIONS: Feeling from the committee (most members) as though educationally and developmentally students would benefit from spending their 6th grade year at KMS. Ideally it would be best to have Madison and Freedom on board.</p>