

## Whiteford Agricultural Schools

### Proposal to Relocate 5th Grade to the Middle/High School Building

#### Strategic Plan

The [Strategic Plan 22-27](#) was approved by the Board of Education at the May 9, 2022 meeting. It was created by a very broad and diverse group of 32 stakeholders and the survey results of over 400 people. Throughout the planning process, the community expressed high expectations for Whiteford Schools to become a world class school district and have all students graduate from high school. Although some of the goals are extremely high, they reflect the strong desire that has been expressed to embrace significant change and dramatically improve the school system for the next five years. The strategic plans progress is available to all stakeholders by accessing the [Whiteford Strategic Plan Dashboard 2022-2027](#) on the district website under the heading, "Strategic Plan."

As part of the Strategic Plan under the goal of facilities, objective 4, "Consider district enrollment projections and meet increased space demands or renovations," there are two strategies/activities to be developed:

1. Analyze and create a plan for enrollment numbers for district residents, child of employees, school of choice siblings, and school of choice new families.
2. Develop building space plans based upon the enrollment vision plan.

In June of 2023, at a State of the District presentation for Whiteford staff members, this enrollment vision plan was presented as a way to "right-size" and "control" new School of Choice Student enrollment. This enrollment plan was presented three (3) more times to interested stakeholders in October of 2023.

In October 2023, nearly 100 stakeholders attended the three (3) workshops. Feedback was gathered in the form of noticings, wonderings, pros, cons, questions, concerns, and considerations for the strategic plan and enrollment vision that would regulate enrollment growth. Feedback was posted on the district website. For those unable to attend, videos were created outlining the presented material as well as a survey to gather additional feedback that was also posted to the district website. Feedback shared by stakeholders suggested that we investigate the following solutions:

1. Portable Classrooms or Trailers - Temporary solution until bond project passes.
2. Elementary Art Room - Move to middle/high school building as a temporary solution until the bond project passes.
3. Elementary Library - Eliminated as a temporary solution until the bond project passes.
4. Capital Bond Campaign - Addition of 4 classrooms.

From the October 2023 stakeholder meetings, two (2) more stakeholder meetings were scheduled as a follow-up in December 2023 and January 2024. The goal of those meetings were to understand and evaluate next steps as we considered solutions to stabilize enrollment, lower class sizes, and address athletic complex needs. The solutions identified at the October 2023 workshops were presented with further cost estimates and considerations. Here are some notes regarding each of the solutions that were presented:

1. Portable Classrooms or Trailers

- a. Costs - \$226,565 per unit vs \$510,000 per new brick/mortar classroom
  - b. Site Work - Ground and utility work being lost money when installed and removed
  - c. Cheap Construction - Deferred maintenance and repair costs year after year
  - d. Higher Electric Utility Bills - Less efficient
  - e. Safety Concerns - No bathrooms with frequent travel between buildings
  - f. Accessibility - Separate ramp or deck structure
  - g. Building Codes - 30' within building will require fire rating considerations
  - h. Storage - No teacher storage units or casework as it is literally four (4) walls
  - i. Community Perception - Out of control growth and trailer may stay with failed bond
  - j. Segregated Classrooms - Students not feeling a part of the building culture
2. Elementary Art Room
- a. Move - Middle/High School Building
  - b. 2024-2025 School Year - Buys us one year of not having to move 5th graders
  - c. Costs - Middle/High classroom needs temporary sinks and storage added
  - d. Storage - Art materials take up large amounts of storage
  - e. Specials - Elementary students make an additional walk across parking lot
3. Elementary Library - Eliminated as a temporary solution until the bond project passes
- a. Eliminated or moved to trailer
  - b. 2025-2026 School Year - Buys us another year of not having to move 5th graders
  - c. Costs - Remove books
  - d. Literacy - Students have access to classroom libraries, but lose out on greater selection of books

In January of 2024, a Bond Steering Committee was created from those community and school members that had shown great interest in a potential Capital Bond Campaign focused on elementary and athletic upgrades. For the elementary, the committee agreed that we needed four (4) elementary classrooms, 2 single stall bathrooms, and a flex space with storage and bathroom. The idea was to utilize the flex space for elementary PE, indoor recess, extension of the lunchroom, student assemblies, K-3 recreation basketball with 8-9' adjustable rims and backboards, WPA events, community events, etc... If bids are good and money allows, the replacement of the roof and boiler pump should be considered. Overall, the committee generated a design scope to be proposed to the board at the February 12, 2024 BOE meeting. At the meeting, Superintendent Huard presented the design scope and updated financial budget numbers for both (elementary and athletic) projects.

A Board Ad Hoc Committee was formed to finalize scope and costs details associated with a Capital Bond Campaign at the February 12, 2024 meeting. The Board of Education voted on May 13, 2024 to authorize a Board resolution placing Whiteford Agricultural Schools Capital Bond Millage proposals on the August 6, 2024 ballot.

With the failure of the August 6, 2024 Capital Bond Proposals, we surveyed and sought feedback from community stakeholders to understand what adjustments needed to be made for the May 6, 2025 election. From this feedback, a greater focus was made for elementary school

improvements and only addressing essential athletic facility needs. On Tuesday, May 6, 2025, Whiteford Schools had two (2) proposals for a Capital Bond Project that would provide funding to enhance our elementary school facilities and athletic fields—two critical areas that impact student learning, safety, and overall well-being. Those two proposals failed.

### Enrollment Vision

As Whiteford Schools experience enrollment growth due to an influx of School of Choice (SOC) Siblings students, it has become essential to develop a thoughtful plan to "right-size" the district. A successful plan balances growth, ensuring that class sizes remain manageable, facilities are used effectively, and student learning environments stay high-quality. We have analyzed current and projected enrollment trends, and we have developed the 66/70 plan shown below. This plan establishes enrollment caps by grade-level with KG-6th grades at 66 students and 7th-12th grades 70 students. Because student enrollment is fluid with district resident move ins and outs, this plan represents desired enrollment caps. By establishing enrollment caps by grade level, it allows the district to preserve class size targets and prevent overcrowding. If necessary, the district might pause new SOC admissions at certain grade levels (blended growth) while continuing to honor currently enrolled SOC students and siblings. "Right-sizing" is not about limiting opportunity—it's about **protecting educational quality, strategic growth, and long-term sustainability**. By proactively managing enrollment through grade-level caps, space planning, and ongoing evaluation, the district can continue to welcome School of Choice (SOC) students while safeguarding the integrity of our programs and the success of all learners.

Grade-Level	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17	17-18	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25	25-26	26-27	27-28	28-29	29-30	30-31	31-32	32-33	33-34	34-35	35-36	36-37	37-38		
TK													0	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	
Kindergarten	46	32	45	49	36	61	41	45	53	61	53	70	66	47	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
1st Grade	52	49	40	44	51	42	58	46	44	55	64	52	68	65	47	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
2nd Grade	40	49	50	40	43	55	48	60	48	48	51	61	53	73	65	47	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
3rd Grade	47	38	52	55	41	46	57	51	57	48	50	54	63	56	73	65	47	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
4th Grade	42	50	40	55	55	51	53	63	54	62	49	49	52	65	56	73	65	47	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
5th Grade	50	47	49	39	59	61	51	56	69	56	61	51	55	56	65	56	73	65	47	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
6th Grade	60	48	46	54	44	62	65	53	59	69	65	65	53	57	56	65	56	73	65	47	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
7th Grade	52	66	47	44	57	45	66	69	52	62	69	68	74	57	57	56	65	56	73	65	47	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
8th Grade	59	52	69	51	49	62	53	71	77	54	59	69	67	76	57	57	56	65	56	73	65	47	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
9th Grade	69	58	56	73	54	47	68	68	71	80	56	66	70	68	75	57	57	56	65	56	73	65	47	70	70	70	70	70	70
10th Grade	54	68	59	59	78	55	52	66	63	70	76	57	67	70	68	75	57	57	56	65	56	73	65	47	70	70	70	70	70
11th Grade	64	56	62	53	63	77	54	52	59	60	65	74	60	66	70	68	75	57	57	56	65	56	73	65	47	70	70	70	70
12th Grade	68	62	53	63	52	62	76	52	50	51	62	64	70	59	66	70	68	75	57	57	56	65	56	73	65	47	70	70	70
Elementary	277	265	276	282	285	316	308	321	325	330	328	337	357	378	323	333	326	327	346	346	346	346	346	346	346	346	346	346	346
Middle School	171	166	162	149	150	169	184	193	188	185	193	202	194	190	235	234	250	259	241	251	244	249	272	272	272	272	272	272	
High School	255	244	230	248	247	241	250	238	243	261	259	261	267	263	279	270	257	245	235	234	250	259	241	255	252	257	280	280	
Total	703	675	668	679	682	726	742	752	756	776	780	800	818	831	837	837	833	831	822	831	840	854	859	873	870	875	898	898	

Updated 6/4/25

Note: School Years 2011-2025 are actual student enrollment numbers. School Years 2025-2038 are projections if the 66/70 students per class plan is executed without "blended growth." It also represents 5th grade being moved to the middle/high school building (represented in green).

## Enrollment

At Whiteford, students that are residents of the district, the child of an employee, or a SOC sibling get preference and approval. For SOC **new** students, we accept or deny based upon available grade-level space with the 66/70 enrollment plan. We are controlling our enrollment with regards to the number of school of choice (SOC) students we accept. As an example, if we have 58 students that are enrolled in Kindergarten that are district residents, a child of an employee, or a SOC sibling as they all get preference for enrollment. We would add no more than 5 **new** SOC students to get our total student count to 63. This would give us some wiggle room as we anticipate enrollment additions and subtractions between KG-6th grade. We would then have 21 students in each of three classrooms. If we did not accept the 5 SOC students, then we would have two classrooms with 29 students in each classroom for a total of 58.

The following table shows **actual** Transitional Kindergarten (TK)/Kindergarten (KG) enrollment figures from 2017-2025 and projected TK/KG enrollment for 2025-2026 for each category of student type. For 2025-2026, there are no **new** SOC students to show that we have 56 students without SOC **new** students, which creates higher class sizes. It is important to note that we anticipate more district resident KG students to enroll prior to September 2 and the start of the new school year. With more district resident KG, the fewer number of SOC **new** students are needed to balance classrooms due to financial considerations.

School Year	District Resident KG	School of Choice Siblings KG	Child of Employee KG	Retained KG	School of Choice New KG	Total KG	Teacher Sections KG	Class Size Per Section KG
2017-2018	30	1	2	2	6	41	2	20.50
2018-2019	34	2	1	1	6	44	2	22.00
2019-2020	45	8	0	3	6	62	3	20.67
2020-2021	47	5	0	3	7	62	3	20.67
2021-2022	29	11	3	3	8	54	2	27.00
2022-2023	44	11	2	3	10	70	3	23.33
2023-2024	40	12	2	3	8	65	3	21.67
2024-2025	31	8	1	4	4	48	2	24.00
2024-2025 TK	12	2	1	0	1	16	1	16.00
2025-2026	38	11	3	4		56	2	28.00
2025-2026 TK	10	3	3	0	0	16	1	16.00

Source: District Internal Data Sources

The following table shows actual TK/KG enrollment figures from 2017-2025 with the assumption that we did not accept any **new** SOC students, and we had just two (2) KG teachers. There are years where class size is favorable, while other years it is unfavorable.

School Year	District Resident KG	School of Choice Siblings KG	Child of Employee KG	Retained KG	School of Choice New KG	Total KG	Teacher Sections KG	Class Size Per Section KG
2017-2018	30	1	2	2	0	35	2	17.50
2018-2019	34	2	1	1	0	38	2	19.00
2019-2020	45	8	0	3	0	56	2	28.00
2020-2021	47	5	0	3	0	55	2	27.50
2021-2022	29	11	3	3	0	46	2	23.00
2022-2023	44	11	2	3	0	60	2	30.00
2023-2024	40	12	2	3	0	57	2	28.50
2024-2025	31	8	1	4	0	44	2	22.00
2024-2025 TK	12	2	1	0	0	15	1	15.00
2025-2026	38	11	3	4	0	56	2	28.00
2025-2026 TK	10	3	3	0	0	16	1	16.00

Source: District Internal Data Sources

### Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

Transitional Kindergarten (TK) is designed for children who may not yet be ready for the demands of a traditional kindergarten classroom. This can be due to various factors such as age, developmental progress, social skills, or academic readiness. In TK, the teacher provides students with a strong foundation in early literacy and math skills, while also helping them develop essential social skills.

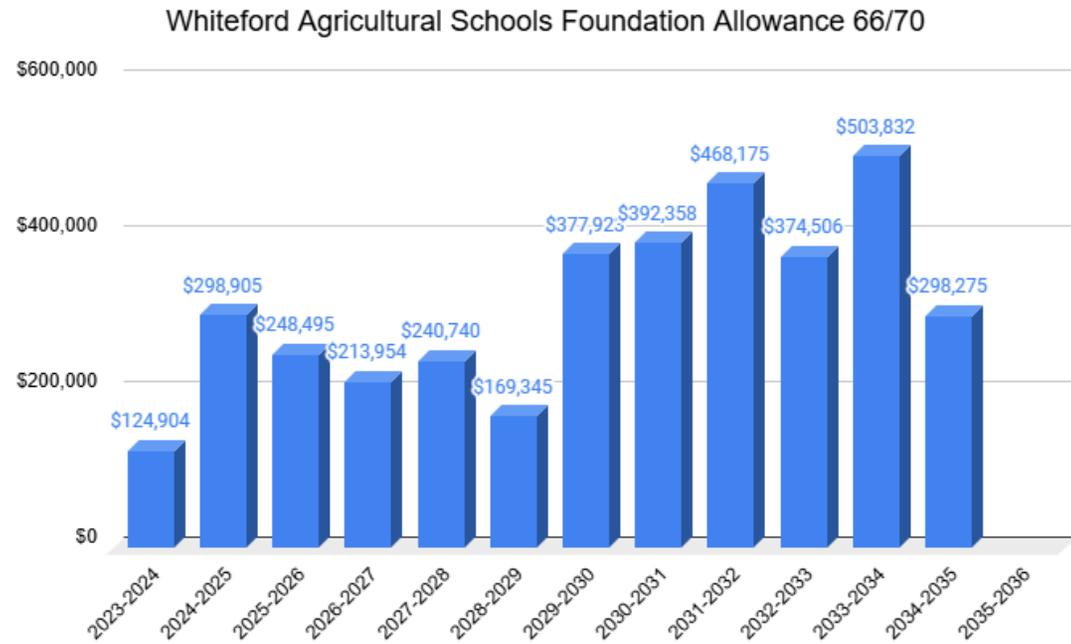
Students in TK learn to collaborate with their peers, build stamina for challenging activities, and foster a love for learning. TK bridges the gap between a child's current learning experiences and success in kindergarten. It does this by teaching kindergarten content at a pace and style that matches each child's developmental level. After completing the TK program, students will transition into a regular kindergarten classroom, resulting in two years of kindergarten experience.

It is imperative that the TK program be housed at the elementary building. Being in the same building as kindergarten and early elementary grades creates a seamless transition. TK students become familiar with the school layout, routines, and expectations, making their move to kindergarten smoother and less stressful for students and parents. TK students can interact with peers in kindergarten and first grade, promoting age-appropriate socialization. In short, placing TK in the elementary building ensures these youngest learners are safe, supported, and set up for long-term academic and social-emotional success.

### School of Choice

The following table represents the number of SOC students (siblings and new) in each grade-level from 2018-2025. These numbers do not include child of an employee. Source: District Pupil Accounting Documents

Grade-Level	18-19	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
TK	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Kindergarten	8	14	13	20	25	23	13
1st Grade	11	4	18	14	23	25	22
2nd Grade	22	11	8	16	15	23	26
3rd Grade	16	19	12	9	18	16	24
4th Grade	17	19	21	15	10	16	18
5th Grade	12	13	20	18	16	10	18
6th Grade	11	14	22	29	21	19	11
7th Grade	13	13	14	31	27	25	18
8th Grade	16	18	13	14	28	29	26
9th Grade	19	17	23	20	20	29	28
10th Grade	14	16	16	21	19	22	29
11th Grade	11	12	15	16	20	21	23
12th Grade	14	12	12	18	15	20	22
Elementary	86	80	92	92	107	113	124
Middle School	40	45	49	74	76	73	55
High School	58	57	66	75	74	92	102
Total	184	182	207	241	257	278	281



### State Foundation Allowance

The foundation allowance was created after Michigan voters approved Proposal A in 1994. Previously, most education dollars derived from local property taxes. But this produced large geographically based funding disparities: districts containing valuable property could raise significant amounts of money for their schools, while those with less valuable property could not. Proposal A changed all of this. Instead of letting local property values determine funding levels for districts, the foundation allowance is allocated based on the number of enrolled students, with districts receiving a set amount for each student. The foundation allowance is the minimum amount of money per student that the state legislature guarantees each district will receive. Two student counts — one in October and one in February — are used to determine the actual amount the state must pay each district through the foundation allowance. A district’s final enrollment is calculated by adding 90 percent of the October count to 10 percent of the previous year’s February count. The following bar graph above represents Whiteford School’s anticipated State Foundation allowance from 2016-2025 with a 3% annual increase based upon the projected 66/70 plan.

### Enrollment Financial Effects

The following bar graph represents projected student enrollment numbers without “blended growth”, and a state foundation allowance increase of 3% each year. With the maintaining and controlled growth with School of Choice (SOC) students, there will be stable financial growth and a reduction of programming and staffing could be avoided.

	Pupil FTE Count 66/70	Projected Foundation Allowance (3% Increase)	Foundation Allowance	Foundation Allowance Year-Year Loss/Gain
2023-2024	818	\$9,608	\$7,859,344	
2024-2025	831	\$9,608	\$7,984,248	\$124,904
2025-2026	837	\$9,896	\$8,283,153	\$298,905
2026-2027	837	\$10,193	\$8,531,647	\$248,495
2027-2028	833	\$10,499	\$8,745,601	\$213,954
2028-2029	831	\$10,814	\$8,986,341	\$240,740
2029-2030	822	\$11,138	\$9,155,687	\$169,345
2030-2031	831	\$11,472	\$9,533,610	\$377,923
2031-2032	840	\$11,817	\$9,925,968	\$392,358
2032-2033	854	\$12,171	\$10,394,142	\$468,175
2033-2034	859	\$12,536	\$10,768,648	\$374,506
2034-2035	873	\$12,912	\$11,272,480	\$503,832
2035-2036	870	\$13,300	\$11,570,756	\$298,275

### Smaller Class Sizes

Research consistently shows that smaller class sizes in elementary school—especially in the early grades (K–3)—can lead to **significant benefits** for students, particularly in terms of academic achievement, individual attention, and long-term outcomes. Generally, elementary school teachers strongly advocate for smaller class sizes because they experience the direct impact on both **student learning** and **classroom management**. Here’s what teachers commonly say are the **benefits** of smaller class sizes:

1. More Individualized Instruction
2. Stronger Student-Teacher Relationships
3. Fewer Behavioral Issues
4. More Student Engagement
5. Less, Stress, More Satisfaction
6. Better Academic Outcomes

### Space Utilization

By creating smaller class sizes, we will eventually work toward having three (3) sections of classes per grade level in grades KG-6 with a TK class of 15-17 students. Our elementary school has sixteen (16) classrooms, and in order to keep 5th grade at the elementary school, we need 19 classrooms with the 66/70 plan. We have available space at the middle/high school building to accommodate three (3) sections of 5th and 6th grades. 6th grade is currently at the middle/high school building. Projected space configurations below will be utilized based upon needs until we reach the three (3) classroom sections per grade-level.

The following graph represents the **current** 2024-2025 school year, where our TK students were temporarily housed in our elementary library.



The following graph represents the **projected** 2025-2026 school year configuration.



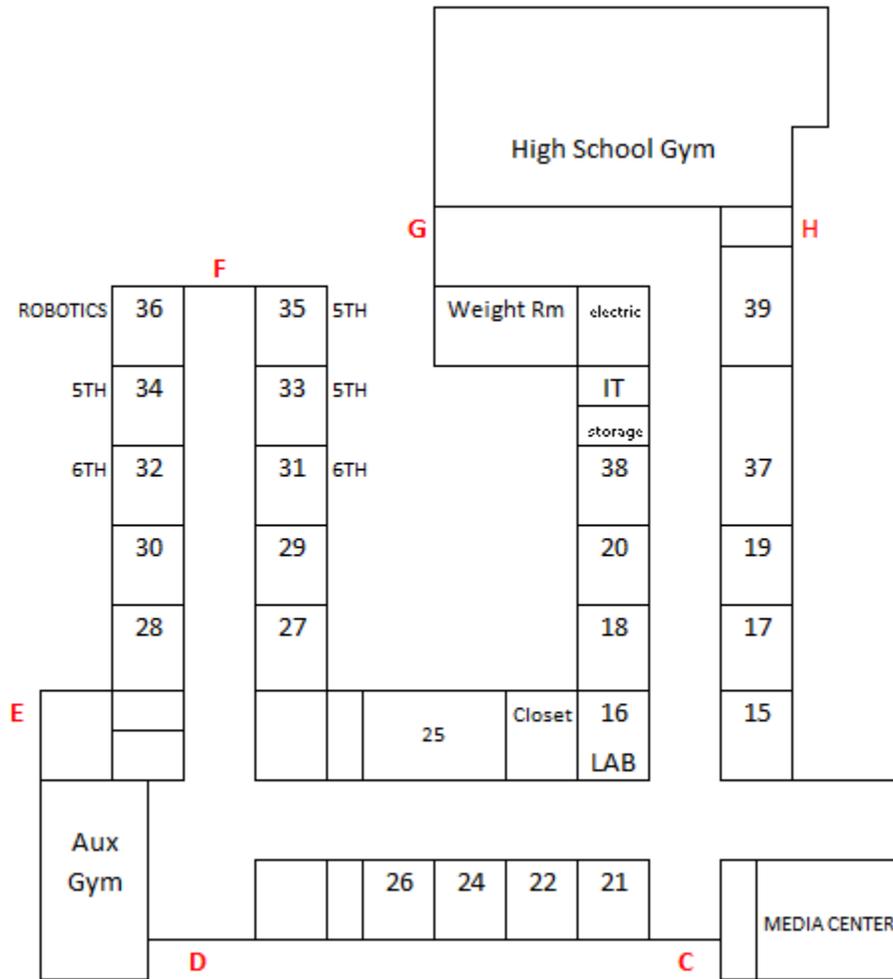
The following graph represents the **projected** 2026-2027 school year configuration.



The following graph represents the **projected** configuration when we have reached three (3) sections at each grade-level.



The diagram below represents the **projected** location of the 5th grade classrooms at the middle/high school.



**Rationale**

Based upon enrollment trends and space utilization at both the elementary and middle/high school, we need to consider how best to move forward. The middle/high school building has sufficient space to accommodate 5th grade, which will free up valuable classroom space at the elementary. Many schools across the U.S. have successfully implemented a 5th–12th building structure when there is separation by grade level in design and function. Regarding design, while the middle/high school building would not allow for full separation from high school students, we are able to continue to separate our younger learners as we have traditionally been doing with our 6th graders. With a 5th grade move to the middle/high school building, we can house both 5th and 6th grade classrooms in the middle school wing of the building. This location in the building sets our 5th and 6th grades students as far away as possible from the high school wings of the building. The only exceptions to this separation are for specials (art, vocal music, band) that already occur due to the size of Whiteford having shared special staff.

For function, we will create a 5th-8th grade office space that is currently being utilized as the high school athletic offices. Students and families will use this office for signing in/out for appointments, and it offers a space closer in proximity to the middle school wing of the building for student support services. Our Principals and Dean of Students will have a satellite office space for regular support as needed. We will designate the bathrooms in this wing as middle school only. With the 5th graders being housed in this dedicated wing for the majority of the school day, we can keep them physically and developmentally separated from older students. This will provide safety and separation from older students as a priority of the transition.

### **Supports**

1. Counseling - Our elementary counselor will be expected to provide the same services and programming as they provide to other elementary students. A full-time middle school counselor will be considered as budgetary numbers allow.
2. Special Education - Our elementary and middle school personnel will support any special education needs.
3. Administration - Our elementary principal will continue to provide primary support to our 5th grade students and staff. Our middle/high school principal will provide secondary support as needed. A full-time 5th-8th grade principal will be considered in the future.
4. Behavior Intervention - Our middle/high school Dean of Students will manage behavior issues with support from building principals.
5. Administrative Assistant - Will be available in the newly formed middle school office.

### **Benefits**

With this consideration, there also comes an opportunity for our 5th grade students to continue with the same elementary traditions as well as beginning new experiences at the middle/high school building. Students can gradually adjust to departmentalization, lockers, multiple teachers, and increased responsibility without the full academic and social demands of 7th and 8th grade. 5th and 6th graders are in a transitional stage. A shared building allows teachers to create a "school within a school" that addresses the social-emotional needs of adolescence while introducing more independence.

Here are things that will **stay the same**:

1. Schedule - 5th grade will continue to follow the elementary schedule, which will allow 5th graders to transition at separate times than middle/high school students.
2. Lunch - 5th grade will continue to eat lunch (25 minutes) at the elementary school with 4th grade.
3. Recess - 5th grade will continue to have lunch recess (20 minutes) on the elementary playground with 4th grade.
4. Camp Michindoh - 5th grade will continue to travel to camp in the fall.
5. Little Buddies - 5th grade will continue to meet with KG students as a way to mentor and build positive relationships.
6. Reading Month - 5th grade will continue to take part in reading activities.
7. Field Day - 5th grade will continue to participate with elementary activities.
8. Holiday Celebrations - 5th grade will continue to participate in Halloween Parade, etc.
9. D.A.R.E. - 5th grade will continue to participate in these lessons with a Monroe County Sheriff's Officer.
10. Mini Society, Fear Factor, and Survivor Day are all activities 5th graders can participate in according to teacher discretion.

Here are some opportunities for **change**:

1. Extra Recess - 5th grade will have the option of using the elementary playground or staying at middle/high school designated playground area where 6th grade has their daily recess. Students have access to kickballs, footballs, hoola hoops, jump ropes, kickball field, soccer goals, and green space.
2. Assemblies - 5th grades could join in middle school assemblies that are age-appropriate.
3. Start/End Times - 5th grade would begin school at 8:00am with dismissal at 3:00pm.

Anticipated **benefits of the move for 6th grade**:

1. Our 6th graders will have the opportunity to mentor 5th graders as they have experienced a year of middle school.
2. 5th and 6th grade students may be able to share in some common recess time.
3. Academic alignment between grades will be available due to proximity in the building.

### **Transition Plan and Timeline**

1. Phase 1 - Formal approval from the Board of Education (June 2025)
2. Phase 2 - Communication regarding decision (June 2025)
  - a. District-wide email from Superintendent
  - b. Website update (FAQ, concept overview)
3. Phase 3 - Staff Planning & Classroom Preparation (June-July 2025)
  - a. Facility adjustments (furniture, signage, supplies)
4. Phase 4 - Parent & Student Engagement (August 2025)
  - a. 5th grade orientation with building tour
  - b. Distribute transition handbook
5. Phase 5 - First Weeks of School (September)
  - a. Welcome assembly and staff introductions
  - b. Daily support staff assigned to 5th grade areas
  - c. Morning check-ins by counselor, Dean of Students, and/or principal
  - d. Feedback surveys for students and parents
6. Phase 6 - Mid-Year Check-In (January)
  - a. Feedback surveys for parents
  - b. Student Discussion Groups
  - c. Adjustments to routines and schedules if needed
7. Phase 7 - End-of-Year Review (May)
  - a. Review data
  - b. Gather final feedback from staff, parents, and students
  - c. Board report and recommendations for future improvements

**Recommendation**

The superintendent recommends the Board of Education approve the relocation of 5th grade to the middle/high school building beginning with the 2025-2026 school year based on considerations including space utilization, class size optimization, and enhanced opportunities for transitional support and academic programming; and the understanding the district will implement appropriate measures to ensure the developmental needs of 5th grade students are met, including designated learning spaces, dedicated staff, and age-appropriate scheduling and supervision.