



Whiteford Agricultural School District

6655 Consear Rd, Ottawa, Lake, MI 49267

Scott L. Huard, Superintendent

June 11, 2025

Dear 4th Grade Parents and Guardians,

I hope this message finds you and your family well as we wrap up another successful school year.

I want to share an important update regarding a change that will impact your child next school year. At the June 9, 2025 meeting, the Board of Education officially approved the recommendation to relocate 5th grade students to the middle/high School building beginning with the 2025-2026 school year.

This decision was made after careful consideration based upon enrollment trends, space utilization, and class size optimization. With this decision, there is an 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. We have thoughtfully planned a unique experience for our 5th graders to allow them some of the same great experiences and traditions that our 5th graders so often enjoy at the elementary.

Location

With a 5th grade move to the middle/high school building, we will house both 5th and 6th grade classrooms in the middle school wing. This location in the building sets our 5th and 6th grade students in a separate wing of the building away from older high school students for the majority of the school day. The only exceptions to this separation are for specials (art, vocal music, band, stem) that already occur due to the size of Whiteford having shared specials staff.

Support Personnel

Regarding personnel support for 5th grade, we are planning for the following:

- 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.
- Special Education - Our elementary and middle school personnel will support any special education needs.
- 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.
- Behavior Intervention - Our elementary behavior interventionist and middle/high school Dean of Students will manage behavior issues with support from building principals.
- Administrative Assistant - Will be available in the newly formed middle school office.

Experiences & Traditions

With this change, 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.

Here are some of the things that will **stay the same** with many more not listed:

- 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.
- Lunch - 5th grade will continue to eat lunch (25 minutes) at the elementary school with 4th grade.
- Recess - 5th grade will continue to have lunch recess (20 minutes) on the elementary playground with 4th grade.
- Camp Michindoh - 5th grade will continue to travel to camp in the fall.
- Little Buddies - 5th grade will continue to meet with KG students as a way to mentor and build positive relationships.
- Reading Month - 5th grade will continue to take part in reading activities at elementary.
- Field Day - 5th grade will continue to participate with elementary activities.
- Holiday Celebrations - 5th grade will continue to participate in Halloween Parade, Santa's Workshop, etc.
- D.A.R.E. - 5th grade will continue to participate in these lessons with a Monroe County Sheriff's Officer.
- Mini Society, Fear Factor, and Survivor Day are all activities 5th graders can participate in according to teacher discretion.
- Graduation - With the unique model, 5th graders will still have leadership opportunities while being at the elementary building. We still want to recognize them as members of the elementary school and their leadership.

Here are some opportunities for **change**:

- 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.
- Assemblies - 5th grade could join in middle school assemblies that are age-appropriate.
- Start/End Times - 5th grade would begin school at 8:00am with dismissal at 3:00pm.
- Breakfast - 5th grade will have the opportunity to eat breakfast at middle/high school cafeteria

Transition Plan & Timeline

We recognize that a building transition brings questions and a mix of emotions. Please know that the safety, comfort, and success of your child remain our top priorities. Your child can expect the following over the next couple of months as the transition will begin this fall:

- Parent & Student Engagement (August 2025)
 - 5th grade orientation with building tour
 - Distribute transition handbook
- First Weeks of School (September)
 - Welcome assembly and staff introductions
 - Daily support staff assigned to 5th grade areas
 - Morning check-ins by counselor, Dean of Students, Behavior Interventionist, and principal
 - Feedback surveys for students and parents in what is/isn't working well
 - Appropriate adjustments made if needed
- Mid-Year Check-In (January)
 - Feedback surveys for parents

- Student Discussion Groups
 - Adjustments to routines and schedules if needed
- End-of-Year Review (May)
 - Review data
 - Gather final feedback from staff, parents, and students
 - Board report and recommendations for future improvements

Our goal is to make this a smooth and exciting next step in your child's educational journey. Mr. Marsh, our elementary principal, met briefly with the 4th graders today to make them aware, and he will be pushing out more communication to our 4th grade families very soon.

We value our partnership with parents/guardians, and we look forward to the coming school year. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Scott Huard".

Scott L. Huard, ED.S.

Superintendent

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