

# **YADKIN COUNTY SCHOOLS**

## **Tier Reorganization Facts and Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Decision Timeline:**

**1. When will sixth grade move to middle school?**

Sixth grade will move to middle school beginning in the 2020-21 school year.

**2. When did the board of education begin this process?**

The board has been discussing this publicly since October, 2018. However, this was not a decision that the board of education needed to make quickly. The board considered moving sixth grade to middle schools beginning in August, 2019. However, the board decided to wait. A reorganization such as this takes a great deal of study and discussion and the board of education has been doing its due diligence in looking at the reorganization.

### **Benefits:**

**3. Why reorganize to a K-5 tier and a 6-8 tier and what are the benefits?**

There are several benefits to this type of structure. Sixth grade students are more like seventh and eighth grade students developmentally. Sixth grade academic standards, especially in math, align more closely with middle school standards.

Allowing students adequate time to develop a sense of community and to deepen relationships are just two of the social-emotional advantages for moving 6th grade to the middle school. Creating a 6th-8th grade middle school community will provide our students ample time to "grow roots" in a community, to feel safe, and to develop a stronger sense of pride, while also allowing educators to provide an uninterrupted scaffolding of education.

For teachers, vertical alignment and collaboration automatically increase when more grade levels are in the same building because conversations naturally occur in formal and informal settings, thus benefiting all students: "Sustained teacher collaboration [...] is the primary vehicle for continuous improvement of teacher practice, for sharing accountability, and collective responsibility" (Killion, 2015).

## **Teachers:**

**4. If a teacher teaches sixth grade will that teacher automatically be moved to the middle school?**

No. Just because a teacher teaches sixth grade does not mean he or she will automatically be transferred to the middle school setting.

**5. How will teachers be selected to teach in middle schools?**

We want teachers who are curriculum experts. We also want teachers who know how to relate to middle school students and who will recognize that sixth grade students need to be carefully and strategically integrated into the middle school environment. To that end, several factors will be considered. Some of these factors include expressed teacher preferences, student academic and growth data, the ability and willingness to collaborate with colleagues, and administrator input. We also want teachers for sixth grade who are positive and energetic and who will work tirelessly to seamlessly integrate sixth grade students into our middle schools.

**6. Will teachers each teach one subject?**

The answer depends on the teacher team structure. In middle school, teachers are normally grouped into teams. On a four teacher team each teacher would teach one subject. On a two teacher team, each person would typically teach two subjects. Usually it is grouped by math/science and reading/social studies, but not always. At Forbush Middle, there are two teams of students per grade level and students attend classes with other students on their team. Additionally, students work on team projects and competitions and have a lot of fun with these types of activities. At Starmount Middle School a team format is also used, with the potential of sixth grade teachers working on two person teams.

**7. Will 6th grade teachers lose their jobs?** It is our intention to keep everyone employed. Some teachers would go to the middle schools while others would remain in the elementary setting. Those who remain would potentially fill vacancies created by retirements/resignations.

**8. Will there be an additional counselor at each middle school?**

Not at this time. There is a dedicated counselor at each middle school. Six of our eight elementary schools have to split a guidance counselor between two schools; therefore, most of our 6th grade students will have a counselor made available to them 100% of the time for the first time in their middle school career.

## **Classes:**

**9. What courses will be available to sixth grade students that they would not have access to in elementary school?**

Students will have to option to take band, chorus, art, and technology. Additionally, they will have physical education/health with a certified teacher. At Starmount Middle, students currently take physical education for at least one semester each year with the option to take strength and conditioning the other semester. At Forbush Middle School students have the same option.

**10. How will students be divided into teams? Into classes?** It is the principal's responsibility to schedule students. Principals work with guidance counselors and teachers to schedule students into courses. Many factors are considered when assigning students to teams. These factors include, but are not limited to, previous student academic performance including grades and EOG results, how well students work with one another, and ensuring that teams are balanced in terms of numbers of students.

**11. Will Honors classes be offered?** We are going to institute an advanced math course (Math I) for eighth grade students who perform at Level V on the math end of grade test and who demonstrate a strong understanding of mathematical concepts. This is happening during the 2019-20 school year. However, prior to that we plan to identify students as early as sixth grade who are candidates for this course. If your student is identified, your child would have the opportunity to participate in accelerated math courses in sixth and seventh grades.

**12. My child has an IEP and is pulled out during the day with an Exceptional Children teacher for research based instruction. How will this be handled at the middle school?**

We offer the full continuum of Exceptional Children services up to the resource setting at both middle schools. Individualized Education Plans will be honored as written by highly qualified staff.

## **Other Questions:**

**13. Will my sixth grade student be kept separate from seventh and eighth grade students during the school day?**

For the majority of each day, sixth grade students will be housed together in their own designated area of the school. However, they will need to travel to other areas of the building to participate in band, chorus, PE, technology and art. Sixth

grade students may interact with seventh and eighth grade students in the hallways before and after school and at other times.

**14. Will my sixth grade student be able to try out for athletic teams?**

In North Carolina, it is allowable for sixth grade students to participate in middle school athletics, with the exception of football. This will be a decision made by the board of education and superintendent based on tier reorganization. If sixth graders are allowed to participate, they have six semesters of eligibility. However, the rec league directors have also committed to continuing to allow sixth grade students to participate in football and basketball. Also, rec league baseball, softball and soccer participation is based on a student's age and birthday, so any student who is age eligible should be able to participate.

**15. Will the fees increase at the middle school?**

We do not anticipate increasing the fees at the middle school level. The current fees for middle school students are a \$20.00 Chromebook Fee and a \$25.00 Instructional Enrichment Fee.

**16. Will there be a "promotion" ceremony for 5th graders like there have been for 6th grade students who are moving to middle school?**

This will be a site based decision for each elementary school.

**17. I have heard that there are disciplinary issues at the middle schools. Are there serious problems?** While all schools have issues from time to time with student discipline, the middle schools are no worse than any others. When issues do arise, school administrators follow the district code of conduct when determining discipline. We always seek to address discipline concerns in a timely manner.

**18. Will parents and students have the opportunity to visit the school to meet administration and teachers prior to the first day of school?**

Yes. Fifth grade students will visit and tour the campus during the spring. Additionally, the school office will be open throughout the summer and parents and students can visit. If you do decide to visit during the summer, we ask that you call ahead and speak to someone in the front office to ensure school personnel are available.

**19. What are the expectations for dress code?**

The expectations for dress code will remain consistent with the Parent Handbook.

**20. Will 6th grade students have lockers?** More lockers will have to be installed but it is our intention for sixth grade students to have locker access.

**21. Will mobile units be needed at the middle schools to house the 6th grade?** No, the middle schools will accommodate all students. Each middle school has at least 14 classrooms not currently being used for students.