

Belmont Public Schools District Configuration Presentation and Discussion

1

SCHOOL COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 12, 2017

AGENDA

2

- Context of BHSBC and BPS Work
- Purpose of meeting
- Context of Building Project and Configuration Options
- Summary of District and Community Visioning Work
- Discussion of Pros and Cons of Configuration Options

Context

3

- The School Committee working in partnership with the Belmont High School Building Committee (BHSBC) will make the decision on the choice of three grade configurations for the MSBA project.
- The MSBA approved options are:
 - ✦ 9-12
 - ✦ 8-12
 - ✦ 7-12

Context

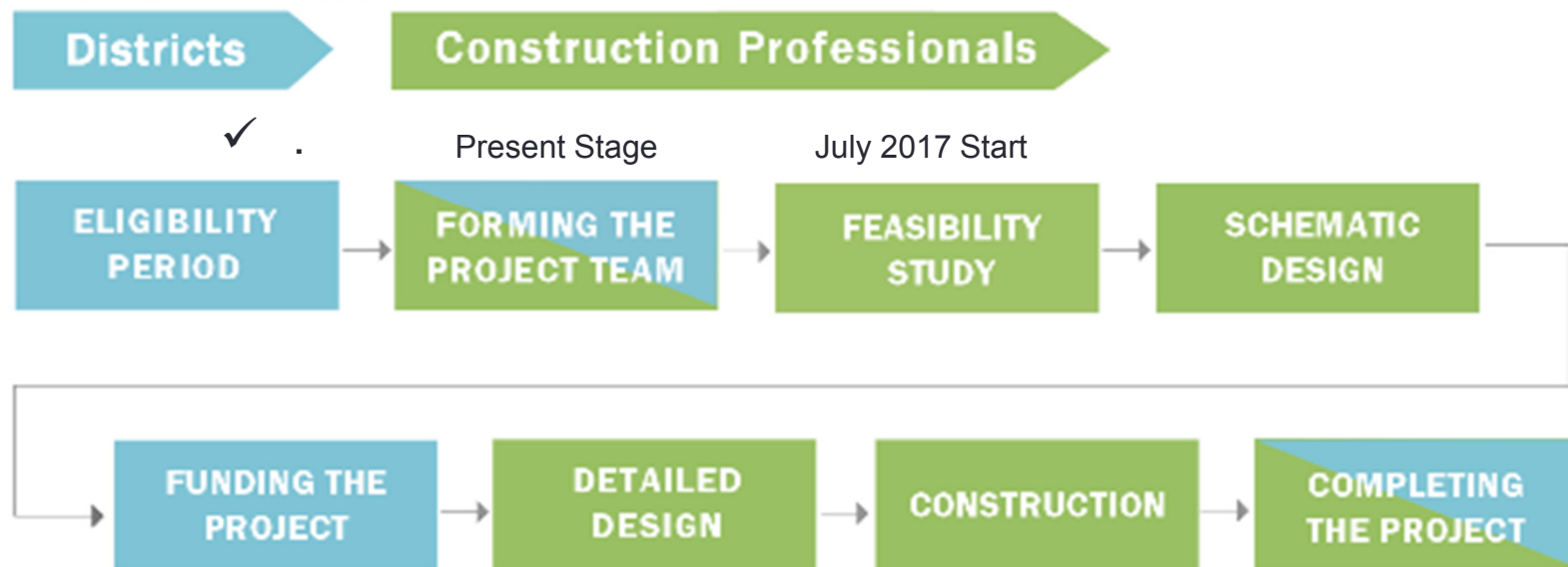
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- The BHSBC project could directly impact the grouping of grades 7-12 pending the final option chosen
- AND will *indirectly* impact the groupings for grades Pre K – 6.

MSBA Building Process

MSBA Building Process

Steps primarily for:



BHSBC/ MSBA: Grade Configurations



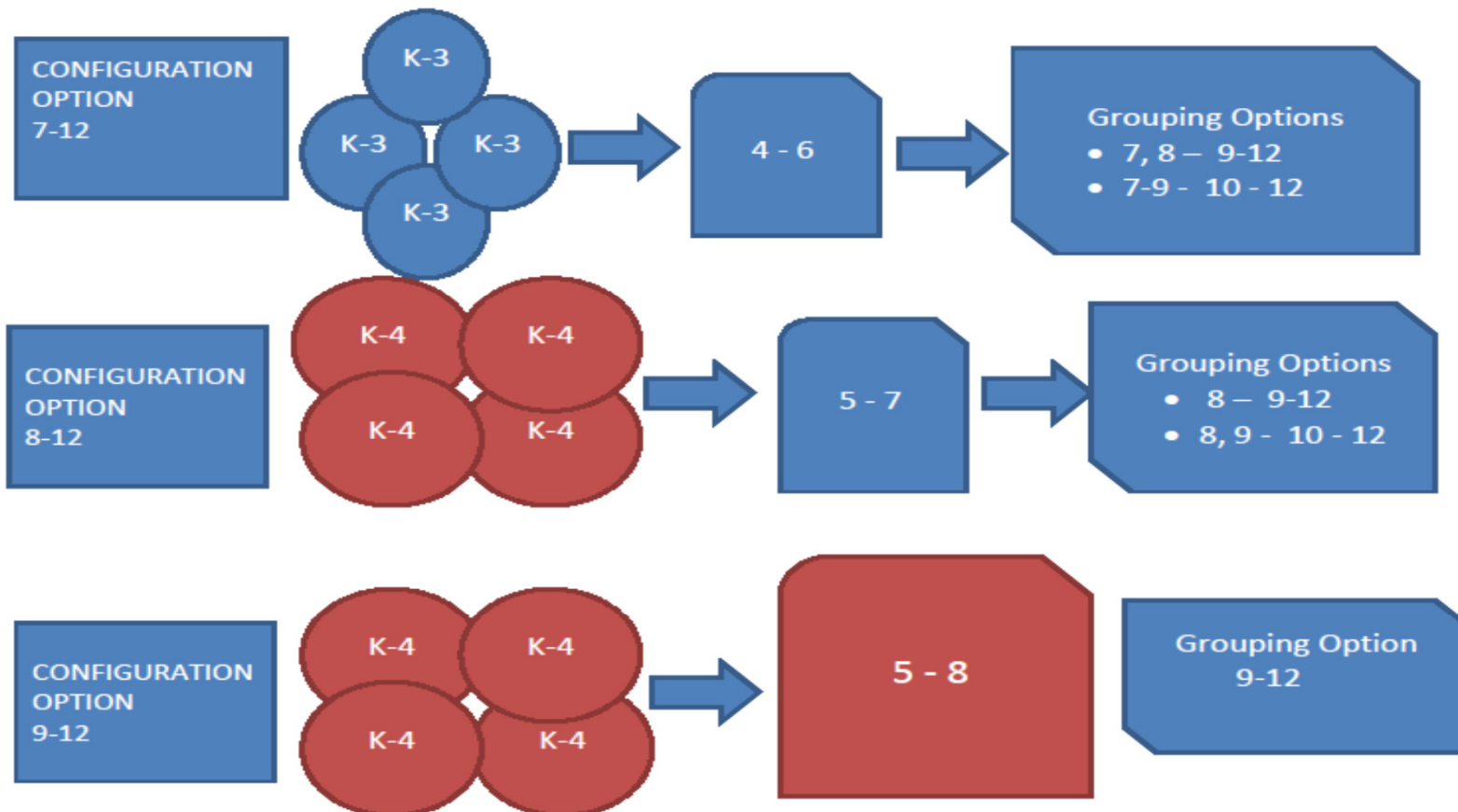
MSBA Configuration Options	Elementary	Middle School	Notes
<u>9-12</u> *	<input type="checkbox"/> K-4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5-8	MS and Elementary enrollment / space issues not addressed.
<u>8-12</u> * 8/9...10-12 8... 9-12	<input type="checkbox"/> K-4	✓ 5-7	HS and MS levels would have space – Elementary level issues not addressed.
<u>7-12</u> * 7/8...9-12 7-9 ... 10-12	✓ K-3	✓ 4-6	All levels would be provided space to accommodate increased enrollment.
* MSBA / BHSBC	<input type="checkbox"/> Space Issues Still to be Resolved by Town		

Context

7

- Each MSBA option is connected to the corresponding options with the remaining grades in our district.
- There has been discussion not only about what the choice of grade configurations will be for the BHSBC project;
- And what the corresponding configuration options remain.

Belmont Public Schools Configurations Flow Chart



Purpose of Process

9

- To inform the School Committee and Belmont Community of the pros and cons of the configuration options in preparation for a School Committee decision on January 23, 2018.

Grades by developmental grouping

10

- At what ages and grades do students have more in common?
 - Do 8th graders have more in common with 9th graders?
 - Do 9th graders have more in common with 10th graders?
 - Do 5th graders have more in common with 4th graders?

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Belmont Public Schools Visioning Work

11

December 19, 2016 and January 4, 2017 - Two days of Educator Planning

(20 BPS Educators)

April 3, 2017 - One day of Educator Visioning

(31 BPS Educators)

May 4-5, 2017 - Two days of Community Members, Students and Educator Visioning

(44 students, educators and parents)

September 2017 – Two days of Vision with Community

(68 students, educators and parents)

Grade Configuration Preferences

12

- **Visioning Workshop, May 4-5**
 - 7-12 → 26 votes
 - 8-12 → 4 votes
 - 9-12 → 0 votes
 - *3 abstentions*
- **Visioning Workshop, September 19-20**
 - 7-12 → 58 votes
 - 8-12 → 2 votes
 - 9-12 → 6 votes
- **Leadership Council, November 9**
 - 7-12 → 20 votes
 - 8-12 → 1 vote
 - 9-12 → 0 votes

Summary of Pros and Cons – Option 1

K-4, 5-8, 9-12

13

Pros:

- Maintains our current grade configurations for all schools, and no teachers have to move to a different school.
- Systems and structures in place at each school do not need to change.
- There is potential to create a different structure/experience for 9th graders (e.g., 9th grade academy) within the traditional high school grade configuration.
- With limited/few changes at other grade levels, we can keep our focus on teaching and learning.

Cons:

- Does not address the enrollment issues for the elementary schools or the middle school.
- Some students face challenges as they transition 8th→9th grade; this option does not provide an opportunity to address this transition through the construction of a new building.

Summary of Pros and Cons – Option 2

K-4, 5-7, 8-12 (8, 9-12)

14

Pros:

- Removes one grade from Chenery, relieving the enrollment issues there.
- Transition challenges from 8th to 9th grade could be addressed by gradually releasing them to more independence and autonomy.
- Maintains teaching model for grades 5-7.
- Does not change K-4 schools/structures.
- 8th grade students would have opportunities to participate in different activities.

Cons:

- Does not address the enrollment issues for the elementary schools.
- Has 8th grade on its own, separate from other grades.
- Concerns regarding influence of older students on 8th graders.
- Adds a 4th transition for students, K-12.
- Requires some middle school teachers to move to a new building.

Summary of Pros and Cons – Option 3

K-4, 5-7, 8-12 (8-9, 10-12)

15

Pros:

- Removes one grade from Chenery, relieving the enrollment issues there.
- Less disruption to Chenery (taking out one grade and not adding 4th grade).
- Maintains teaching model for grades 5-7.
- Does not change K-4 schools/structures.
- Allows the opportunity to create an “academy” combining 8th and 9th grade, providing more support to 9th grade students and gradually giving more autonomy to 8th grade students.

Cons:

- Does not address the enrollment issues for the elementary schools.
- Concern that this grade grouping is not beneficial for 8th or 9th graders
- Adds a 4th transition for students, K-12.
- Requires some middle school teachers to move to a new building.
- Would require high school teachers of multiple grades (9 and 10, 11, 12) to move between sections of the building or teach only 9th grade.

Summary of Pros and Cons – Option 4

K-3, 4-6, 7-12 (7-8, 9-12)

16

Pros:

- Addresses enrollment issues at all levels (elementary, middle, high).
- Allows for a K-3 (primary) and 4-6 (elementary) model.
- Preserves current model for grades 7-8 (teams) and 9-12.
- Provides multiple opportunities for students to have leadership roles as the oldest in the school (grade 3, grade 6, grade 8, grade 12).
- Grouping grades 4-6 is more developmentally appropriate than grouping grades 5-8.
- Allows for continuity of curriculum and collaboration among teachers 7-12.

Summary of Pros and Cons – Option 4

K-3, 4-6, 7-12 (7-8, 9-12)

17

Cons:

- Adds a 4th transition for students, K-12.
- Requires more middle school teachers to move to a new building.
- Requires 4th grade teachers to move to a new building.
- May require more staff to travel between buildings.
- May make curriculum continuity 5-12 more challenging.
- Does not provide additional support to 9th grade students.
- Concern about having younger students (grades 7-8) on campus with high school students.
- Concern about moving 4th grade out of neighborhood schools to larger school.

Summary of Pros and Cons – Option 5

K-3, 4-6, 7-12 (7-9, 10-12)

18

Pros:

- Addresses enrollment issues at all levels (elementary, middle, high).
- Allows for a K-3 (primary) and 4-6 (elementary) model.
- Provides multiple opportunities for students to have leadership roles as the oldest in the school (grade 3, grade 6, grade 8, grade 12).
- Grouping grades 4-6 is more developmentally appropriate than grouping grades 5-8.
- Allows for continuity of curriculum and collaboration among teachers 7-12.
- Provides additional support for 9th grade students – ready for more autonomy in grades 10-12.
- Provides the opportunity for some changes to college prep/honors “tracking” for 9th graders.
- Creates two smaller schools under one roof (lower school - grades 7,8,9; upper school - grades 10,11,12).

Summary of Pros and Cons – Option 5

K-3, 4-6, 7-12 (7-9, 10-12)

19

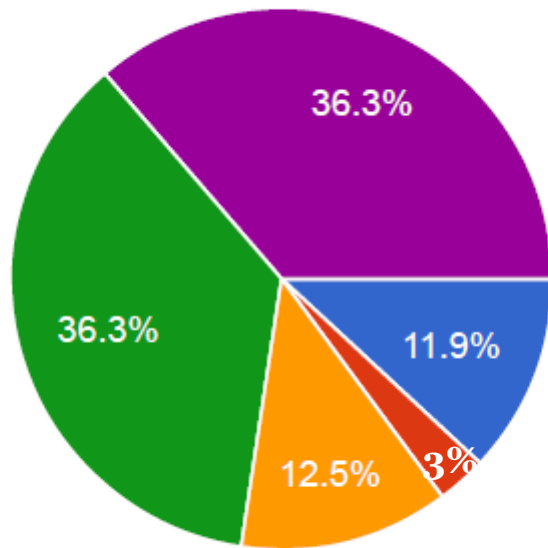
Cons:

- Adds a 4th transition for students, K-12.
- Requires more middle school teachers to move to a new building.
- Requires 4th grade teachers to move to a new building.
- May require more staff to travel between buildings.
- Will need to ensure grade 4 RtI structure remains (and extends to grades 5 and 6).
- May make curriculum continuity 5-12 more challenging.
- Will need to make sure the impact of this grade grouping is positive for 9th graders (not lowering expectations or eliminating some of their experiences).
- Would require high school teachers of multiple grades (9 and 10, 11, 12) to move between sections of the building or teach only 9th grade.

Educator Survey Results on Preferred Choice

168 Responses

20



- Option 1: K-4 – 5-8 – 9-12
- Option 2: K-4 – 5-7 – 8-12 (grade 8 in one section of the building, grades 9-12 in another)
- Option 3: K-4 – 5-7 – 8-12 (grades 8-9 in one section of the building, grades 10-12 in another)
- Option 4: K-3 – 4-6 – 7-12 (grades 7-8 in one section of the building, grades 9-12 in another)
- Option 5: K-3 – 4-6 – 7-12 (grades 7-9 in one section of the building, grades 10-12 in another)

Survey Results, disaggregated

21

	District	Elementary School	Middle School	High School	Total
Option 1 K-4, 5-8, 9-12	4	5	3	8	21
Option 2 K-4, 5-7, 8-12 (8 and 9-12)		5			5
Option 3 K-4, 5-7, 8-12 (8-9 and 10-12)		8	7	6	21
Option 4 K-3, 4-6, 7-12 (7-8, 9-12)	2	19	15	25	61
Option 5 K-3, 4-6, 7-12 (7-9, 10-12)	8	19	20	14	61

Grades

Totality of Options

22

Now what do you think given the totality of the project and the students we serve?

K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Grade Grouping Discussion

23

- How are your grade groupings the same (before and after the presentation of pros and cons)?
- How are they different?
- What impacted your thinking?

Grade-Span Configurations

District Administration, March 2005

24

“Effective programs and practices, not grade configurations, determine the quality of schools.” Wayne Seller’s recent review of the literature suggests that making wise decisions about grade configuration means “finding a balance between the needs of the students, the needs of the school system, and the expectations of the community.” *National Middle School Association*

A study by John Alspaugh also found that as the number of transitions increased, “there was an associated increase in the high school dropout rates.”

Student achievement is, of course, only one factor districts must consider in making decisions about school configurations. Fiscal constraints, projected enrollments, political tensions, school size, school and community goals, and geographic realities also come into play.

Grade Configuration: What the Research Says

Education Partnerships, Inc., February 2012

25

Grade configuration is not a predictor of student academic success (McKenzie et al., 2006).

Middle grades students located in the same building or on the same campus as high school students had greater access to specialized teachers and more opportunities for advanced classes (Wren, 2003).

More grade levels per building (i.e. fewer transitions to new schools) is related to higher achievement and improved behavior regardless of SES (Offenberg, 2001; Wren, 2003)

When 7th and 8th graders are part of a K-8 school some studies found more individualized student attention and more personal student-teacher relationships (Weis & Kipnes, 2006).

When middle grades students remain in an elementary setting there are fewer discipline problems (Cook, MacCoun, Muschkin & Vigdor, 2007).

How (and How Much) Do Schools Matter?

Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, Spring 2015 Conference

26

Given early adolescence as a potentially disruptive period in development and school transitions as a time of inherent potential for the promotion of academic achievement, **it is critical to identify the school structures and processes that maximize positive outcomes for youth.**

Importantly, once student and school characteristics are considered, **school grade configuration does not significantly contribute to students' academic achievement trajectories before or after the middle grade school transition.** This finding supports developmental mismatch theory (Eccles et al., 1989) and systems theories of social settings (Tseng & Seidman, 2007) in suggesting that it may be the attributes of the school context – rather than the presence of a school transition – that places youth at risk during the middle grade years. These results illuminate the need to attend to school composition and climate in policies and practices designed to improve academic achievement.

Next Meeting on Configurations

27

- **When** - January 9, 2018 at 7:00pm
- **Where** – Belmont High School Auditorium
- **What** - The School Committee will host a Community Forum on the topic of District Configuration.
- **Why** – To seek community feedback and to have the school department provide additional information on the corresponding space options for the lower grades as supported through our work with SMMA.