

Educational Benefits of District Reorganization

Grade-Banding

The educational benefits regarding grade-banding presented below have been articulated by Dr. Ross Haber in the district study and/or during public discussion at the various Board of Education meetings in October and November of 2015.

- Increased flexibility in terms of educational programming and placement of students. When students are housed in five sections versus one or two sections, there are more opportunities for the principals and supervisors to group students into sections looking at factors such as educational needs, social interaction and development, and parent involvement.
- Bringing the grade levels together into one school also provides greater opportunities for grade level articulation and collaboration as well as opportunities for principals to provide educational leadership to a more focused band of grade level curricula. Rich articulation and collaboration require time and opportunity for principals and teachers to work together. If all the grade levels are together, five teachers have the ability to meet together in one school and under one time schedule rather than three schools and two time schedules. There has been interest for greater opportunities for collaboration and articulation expressed by the BOE, administration, staff, and parents.
- Research does suggest that when teachers and principals collaborate together at a higher level, student achievement rises.
- There also is more equity in terms of class size and composition. Greater balances are achieved when students at the same grade level are brought together in one school. In addition, by dividing by five, class sizes can be more equitable across the district.
- Increased sixth grade opportunities for middle school clubs and sports. One campus for grades 5-8 provides increased opportunities for athletics, band, chorus, and other extracurricular programs.
- The schools truly become “one community” which can help with the transition to middle school and the teaching staff truly becomes “one community” which provides greater investment and accountability. The district becomes one team working for the same goals rather than the potential of having slightly different goals at three different schools. Since students travel together throughout their educational career, the transition to Memorial School will be less drastic in 7th grade. In addition, 6th and 7th grade teachers would be on the same campus and on a similar time schedule providing both time and opportunity for articulation and collaboration. Student performance can benefit from this collaboration. Over the years, the district has seen a dip in test scores when students transition from 6th grade to 7th grade.
- Economies of scale in terms of supplies, resources, and curriculum materials can be attained. Rather than ordering three different sets of materials for three separate schools,

one order can be placed and delivered. Less extra materials can be ordered under the grade-banding model. The additional resources gained can be used to support other student programs or learning materials.

- There is more efficiency with scheduling professional development. Potentially, the district can operate on two time schedules rather than three. PK-4 and 5-8 can have similar times providing increased opportunities for scheduling professional development and meetings. Time for professional development and collaboration can impact student learning positively. In addition, the work of the English Language Arts and Math coaches can have more focus and impact.
- The possibility for more efficient use of special education resources. Student groupings and staff can be maximized. It is important to note that close to 25% of our district's students receive special education services.
- There is a provision for every kindergarten class to have a paraprofessional. This will not only help with bathroom use but also provide an additional resource in the classroom for instruction.
- There are two additional classrooms with bathroom facilities available at Vetter School for possible preschool expansion in the future.
- Grade banding has been implemented successfully in nearby districts such as Tinton Falls, Hazlet, and Howell. Our special education students in self-contained classes have followed a grade banding model for years.
- Opportunity for each school to specialize as grade level centers. Having all classes/teachers from the same grade level in one school increases the opportunity to have grade level meetings at any time and provides more opportunities for cross grade level projects and activities for the students. The principals also can focus primarily on the educational, curriculum, and social needs of the children at these grade levels as well as ensure curriculum, instruction, and programs are consistently delivered.
- With grade-banding, students receive similar educational experiences regardless of school or location. Eatontown truly becomes "one town- one education."
- With grade-banding, all students at a grade level are in one location allowing for richer program delivery and differentiated teaching models. Students also benefit from having more interaction with children from across the district throughout their elementary and middle school years.
- Currently, participation in middle school sports is challenging for 6th grade elementary students who make the Memorial sports teams. Sixth grade student athletes at Meadowbrook School are late for Memorial sports due to the later dismissal time. All schools are dismissed much later than Memorial School (Vetter and Woodmere Schools a half hour later and Meadowbrook School an hour later than Memorial). The students miss time with the team and Woodmere and Meadowbrook parents need to pick their child up and drop them off at Memorial School. Many students miss instruction as a consequence of being picked up before school ends when there is a game.
- Opportunities to provide more age relevant activities— assemblies, programs, and projects. Each grade level could have specific grade level projects which include parent involvement which would foster cohesiveness for the students and parents.
- At present there is little opportunity for articulation between teachers at the same grade level in the district. This condition changes under grade-banding where team meetings can be held when on any given day all of the teachers at the same grade level can be

brought together for discussion, team-building, collaboration, and/or professional development.

- Eliminates comparisons between schools (perceived and/or actual differences). It brings the community back to the concept of “One Eatontown” and “One Town, One Education, One Community”.