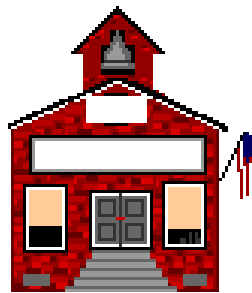


# Feasibility Study for

**Canton-Union School District #66**



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Midwest Consulting Group would like to thank the administrators, secretaries and other school personnel who provided information about and tours of each of the school buildings within the Canton School District. The Canton School District, through their superintendent, contacted the Midwest Consulting Group and requested an analysis of the Canton School District with emphasis on the feasibility of moving from a neighborhood school concept to that of attendance centers. This analysis was made based on input from the administrators, visitation of every school, analysis of the existing building conditions and a discussion regarding which buildings would best meet the student needs if attendance centers were adopted. Potential transportation cost increases were also reviewed. A literature review of schools that made this transition is provided as well as surveys of superintendents across the state who were part of this transition is provided in order to assist the school, the board and the community in making an informed decision.

## Curriculum & Demographic Considerations Canton Union School District #66

### *K-12 Organization*

#### Overview of grade configurations

The curricula of the elementary (Pk-4), Middle School (5-8) and High School (9-12) in the study will be discussed in this section. Canton Union #66 includes five schools with 2,397 students enrolled. Three Elementary schools are Eastview (K-4) (329 students), Lincoln (K-4) (233 students), and Westview (PK-4) (443 students). All three schools hold a Commendable designation from the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). Ingersoll Middle School (5-8) houses 772 students. Canton High School (9-12) houses 700 students. Both Ingersoll MS and the High School hold a Commendable designation from the ISBE.

#### Early Childhood, Pre-K through Grade 8 Demographics

Eastview Elementary offers a full day Kindergarten program for 62 students with 3 teachers. Lincoln Elementary offers a full day program for 44 students with 2 sections. Westview Elementary offers 3 sections of regular education Kindergarten and 2 sections of Pre-K programming for the district. The demographic data by school has been compiled through the ISBE Interactive Report Card system

Early Childhood, Pre-K through Grade 4 Demographics.

Canton Union	Eastview	Lincoln	Westview
Average Class Size	22	23	22
Pupil/Tchr. Ratio	19:1	19:1	19:1
Teachers FTE	162	162	162
Admin. Ratio	208:1	208:1	208:1
Certified Staff	10:1	10:1	10:1

Canton Union #66

	Eastview	Lincoln	Westview
Student Mobility	8%	12%	9%
Truancy	0%	0%	2%
Homeless	0%	2%	0%
Low Income	62%	54%	59%
English Lang. Learners	1%	1%	1%
Students with IEP's	17%	24%	23%
Student Attendance	95%	96%	95%

	Ingersoll MS	Canton HS
Student Mobility	9%	16%
Truancy	3%	5%
Homeless	3%	0%
Low Income	52%	40%
English Lang. Learners	0%	0%
Students with IEP's	19%	14%
Student Attendance	94%	95%

#### Racial/Ethnic Diversity

Canton	Eastview	Lincoln	Westview	MS	HS
White	92%	92%	94%	93%	94.6%
Black	.9%	1.7%	.7%	2.2%	1%
Hispanic	1.2%	.9%	1%	1.4%	1.7%
Asian	.9%	1.3%	0%	.3%	.3%
American Indian	.3%	0%	.5%	.6%	.6%
Two or more races	4.3%	3.9%	3.4%	2.5%	1.9%
Pacific Islander	0%	0%	.2%	0%	0%

Number of Teachers in Early Childhood, Pre K- 8 Grades (2018)  
(Excluding Specialty Teachers)

Canton	Eastview	Lincoln	Westview
Pre-K			4
KG	3	2	3
1	3	2	3
2	3	2	3
3	3	2	3
4	3	2	3

Ingersoll Middle School

Number of teachers	Teams	Enrollment
5- 11 teachers	2	196
6- 10 teachers	2	193
7- 9 teachers	2	165
8- 9 teachers	2	189

Another consideration in this matter is the special subjects. Because specialists are shared between levels and buildings, the distribution of specialty subjects across K-8 is depicted in the following tables:

### K-8 Specialty Subjects in the Curriculum

	Canton	Eastview	Lincoln	Westview	MS
ECE				4	
SP ED Resource		2 FT Resource 1 FT Behavior	1 FT Resource 3FT Instructional	2 FT	
Social Worker		.25 shared	.25 shared	.25 shared	
Speech		1 half-time	1 FT	2 FT	
Rtl/Title		2 FT 2 PT	1 FT 1 PT	2 FT 1 PT	
Technology					
Physical Education		1 (K-4)	1 (K-4 & HS)	1 (Pk-4)	3
Band/Jazz					1 shared
Music		.25 shared	.25 shared	.25 shared	.25 shared
Choral					1 shared
Art		.75 shared	.75 shared	.75 shared	1

The strengths of the Canton Union #66 curriculum include:

Eastview Elementary School (K-4):

- 1:1 Instruction
- All working with the same series/curriculum map district wide
- New Math Series
- Behavior Problem Solving Team
- iReady Math implementation 2018-2019
- SUCCESS/ Rtl Program
- LLI Intervention systems adopted 2018-2019 school yea
- “Makerspace” integrated into curriculum



- Lego Ed
- Ed Mark Reading Program for Special Education Students
- Orton Gillingham

Lincoln Elementary School (K-4):

- 1:1 Instruction
- iReady Math implementation 2018-2019
- SUCCESS/ Rtl Program
- LLI Intervention systems adopted 2018-2019 school yea
- “Makerspace” integrated into curriculum
- Lego Ed
- Ed Mark Reading Program for Special Education Students
- Orton Gillingham
- Reading Workshop approach to ELA instruction, Math Workshop approach to Math instruction (Several staff members at Lincoln are moving in this direction or are there).
- Centers Based Library @ Lincoln (Literacy and STEAM combined)

Westview Elementary School (PK-4):

- 1:1 Instruction
- All working with the same series/curriculum map district wide
- New Math Series
- Behavior Problem Solving Team
- iReady Math implementation 2018-2019
- SUCCESS/ Rtl Program
- LLI Intervention systems adopted 2018-2019 school yea
- “Makerspace” integrated into curriculum
- Lego Ed
- Ed Mark Reading Program for Special Education Students
- Orton Gillingham
- Reading instruction and Rtl structure
- Behavior Problem Solving Team

Ingersoll Middle School (5-8)

- Accelerated and Enriched program
- Qualified subject specific educators
- S.T.E.M Program\
- New math curriculum in IReady
- Middle School Concept

- Encore or exploratory classes
- Art, Band, and Chorus

### Special Education Programs, PK- 12

Canton provides:

#### Eastview Elementary (K-4)

- Sensory room and program
- Resource room and Behavior Program.
- Hearing, Speech, Occupational Therapy, Social Worker, School Psychologist, and Physical Therapy services are available.

#### Lincoln Elementary (K-4)

- Sensory room and program
- Functional/ Instructional Spec Ed programs
- Adaptive PE
- Hearing, Speech, Occupational Therapy, Social Worker, School Psychologist, and Physical Therapy services are available.

#### Westview Elementary (PK-4)

- Sensory room and program
- Early Childhood, , Resource Room.
- Little Learners program.
- Hearing, Speech, Occupational Therapy, Social Worker, School Psychologist, and Physical Therapy services are available.

#### Ingersoll Middle School (5-8)

- 5-8 Resource Room, 5-8 Emotional/Behavior classroom, and 5-6 & 7-8 functional program.
- Hearing, Speech, Occupational Therapy, Social Worker, School Psychologist, and Physical Therapy services are available.

### High School 9-12, Canton High School

Canton High School has a curriculum with traditional programs in grade 9 through 12 for 700 students. Examples of these include:

- Several course options at various levels in Mathematics with 3 options: Option 1-Algebra 1 A, Algebra 1 B, Geometry, and Algebra II. Option 2- Modern Algebra 1, Geometry, Algebra II, and Advanced Algebra or Pre-

Calculus. Option 3- Modern Geometry, Algebra II or Modern Alg II, Advanced Algebra or Pre-Calculus, and Calculus.

- Science courses are offered in: Earth Science, Physical Science, Honors Physical Science, Biology I & II, Honors Biology I, Principles of Biomedical Science, Human Body Systems, Chemistry, Advanced Placement Chemistry, Principles of Engineering, and Physics.
- English courses are offered in: English I (A & B), English II (A & B), English III (Composition and American Literature (A & B), Senior year-a choice from the following courses: Public Speaking, College Composition 101, College Composition 102, College Speech 103, Creative Writing, Adv Placement Literature and Composition, and Technical Writing.
- Social Studies courses are arranged in: Freshman - electives: World Geography, World History (A), and/or World History (B). Sophomores - electives: World Geography, World History (A), World History (B), or Sociology. Juniors - American History (required) and any of the following electives if needed: World Geography, World History (A), World History (B), Sociology, Psychology or Modern World. Senior - Civics (required) and any of the following electives if needed: American History to 1865 (Dual Credit), World
- Foreign Language is offered in German I-V and Spanish I-V.
- Business courses are offered in Orientation to Technology, Digital Multi-media, Business Computer Systems (ICC CMPSC 120), Intro to Business, Accounting I& II, College & Career Readiness, and Consumer Education.
- Visual Arts-offers courses in Careers in Art & Design-Art I, 2 Dimensional Art, Painting, 3 Dimensional Art, and Advanced Placement-Art Portfolio,
- Music-offers Color Guard, Concert Band, Concert Choir, Independent Study Band, Jazz Band, Marching Band, Music Appreciation, Music Theory, and Symphonic Band.
- Agriculture-is offered in Intro. to Agriculture, Ag Business Management, Ag Mechanics & Technology, Ag Science, and Biological Science Applications in Ag,
- Family & Consumer Science-Adult Living, Clothing and Textile & Design I-IV, Culinary Arts I, Foods & Nutrition I-II, Family & Consumer Science I, Parenting, and Resource Management.
- Industrial Technology courses are offered on site in: Construction I & II, Construction Technology, Engineering Drafting & Design I & II, Intro. to Engineering Design, Intro. to Graphic Design, Intro to Welding, Machine Tools Operation I & II, Machine Tools Operations II & IV, Mobile Makers, Production Technology, Small Engine Repairs I & II, Technology I, and Transportation Technology.

Dual Credit Courses in: Engineering Graphics & Safety,

- Consumer Education- Incubator, and Resource Management.
- Physical Education is offered in grades 9-12 in Physical Education, Strength & Conditioning, and Health.
- **Dual Credit Courses**-Advanced Placement English (3 college hours at SRC), College English 101 (3 college hours at SRC), College English 102 (3 college hours at SRC), College Calculus (5 college hours at SRC), College Chemistry (4 college hours at SRC), College Speech (3 college hours at SRC) and College Pre-Calculus (6 college hours at SRC).
- **Vocational Courses with Dual Credit:** Certified Nurse Assistant (CAN) (7 college hours at SRC), College Agriculture (available every other year - not available school year 2019-2020), College Welding (6 college hours at SRC), Engineering Graphics & Safety (3 college hours at SRC) and Machine Tools (6 college hours at SRC).

A high school student must complete 24 credits of the following to be eligible for graduation: 4 credits in English, 2 credits in social studies, 3 credits in mathematics, 2 credits in science, 4 credits in Physical Education. The remaining credits must be completed in elective courses.

Athletics offered at Canton High School include: Boys Football, Golf, Cross-Country, Soccer, Basketball, Baseball, Wrestling, Track and Field.

Girls' Sports in: Golf, Volleyball, Cross-Country, Soccer, Basketball, Softball, Track and Field, Wrestling

Activities and Clubs offered in Art, Building Trades, Cheerleading, Club Unify, Chess, FFA, German, Key, Math, National Honor Society, Dance, Prom, SADD/SWAT, Scholastic Bowl, Science Olympiad, Media Team, Spanish, Speech, Student Council, Thespian.

### Strengths of the Canton High School Curriculum

1. Variety of course offerings. We have something for everyone.
2. STEM offerings are strong. We are only in the early stages of developing STEM offerings, but we offer multiple options.
3. Technology and support are strong.
5. Articulation is improving.
6. The Freshmen Academy is building a stronger base for success. Students will be able to experience more of the CHS curriculum as a result of early success.
7. Dual Credit options, including early college, are growing. This receives strong support from the Board and district office.

8. Strong partnership with Spoon River College. This partnership continues to provide a growing list of cost effective options for our students.
9. Rigor is improving. We are currently reviewing course offerings and course rigor as a part of our current SIP plan.

### *Student Achievement, Common Core, and PARCC*

The performance of students on standardized achievement tests has long been held to be an important indicator of the quality and impact of a district's curriculum on learning, although certainly not the only or single most crucial source of data that a school can consider. In Illinois, there was a set of state tests that have been given over the past decade which specifically allow comparison between districts and within a district from year to year. The Illinois Student Achievement Test (ISAT) measured student performance on state goals for learning in reading and math at grade 3, 5, 6, and 8th grades, reading, math, and science at grades 4, and 7. The use of ISAT to compare districts is appropriate, although not politically popular, because it is statistically sound and professionally developed. Also, ISAT was designed to measure student achievement on knowledge and skills related to Illinois state goals for learning, while the ACT is a standardized test designed to assess student performance on basic skills as interpreted by national norms. In other words, the ISAT describes how local students are performing on Illinois priorities for learning. The following describes ISAT interpretation:

ISAT data from the districts for the past one or two years, depending on the test, were examined to establish the degree of similarity and nature of differences in student performance. The percentages of district students who meet or exceed the state standards in specific subjects are recorded below. These data are presented in the

following tables and are the basis of conclusions about district achievement. The percentages displayed here represent the sum of all ratings of “meets” and “exceeds” state standards. It should be noted that the number of scores in the “academic warning” and “below” standards categories are not noted here, but can be found in the School Report Card data. As the ISAT phases out, the Common Core and PARCC is now the focus for state assessments.

In the last few years, Illinois joined more than 40 states in a collaborative effort to raise learning standards and improve college and career readiness for all students, regardless of where they live. The new Common Core State Standards establish clear expectations for what students should learn in English/language arts and mathematics at each grade level. The standards are high, clear, and uniform to ensure that students are prepared for success in college and the workforce (Illinois State Board of Education, retrieved, March 25, 2016).

By emphasizing depth over breadth, the Common Core ensures that students have comprehensive understanding of key concepts. Illinois adopted the Common Core in 2010 and teachers and administrators across the state fully implemented the new standards during the 2013-14 school year. Schools should have incorporated elements of the new learning standards into their curricula by now. The Common Core determines what educators should teach, not how they should teach. Teachers will continue to have the freedom to tailor lesson plans to the individual needs of their students. The Common Core’s higher standards and emphasis on applying knowledge

to real world situations will better prepare Illinois students for the challenges facing them after high school graduation.

Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC)

Illinois has adopted the new K-12 Common Core State Standards in English and math and are pooling their resources for an internationally benchmarked assessment system.

New standards in other subjects are being developed, too. Students who score proficient on the assessments will be on track for success in college and the workplace.

Younger elementary students will demonstrate they are on pace for high school.

The new online assessments, which were administered for the first time in the 2014-15 school year, will be better aligned with higher education demands. More than 200 higher education institutions across the 26 states have committed to participate in the partnership and will contribute to the design of the high school assessments (Illinois State Board of Education, retrieved, March 3, 2016).

Compared to traditional tests, the online assessments aim to engage students in more meaningful demonstrations of their knowledge and understanding. The intent of the New Learning Standards is to incorporate more real-world situations so students can learn important skills to utilize in the workplace and higher education.

The online assessments will also provide teachers and administrators more feedback on student progress from K-12, allowing for them to better target and adjust instruction.

Students and parents will also benefit from more information about performance compared to achievement standards, as well as state comparisons.

PARCC Performance  
Percent of students Meeting or Exceeding Standards  
By grade in ELA & Math

Grade 3	Eastview	Lincoln	Westview
ELA			
2016	30	30	34
2017	35	21	28
2018	33	42	21
Math			
2016	27	32	40
2017	36	19	26
2018	39	45	34

Grade 4	Eastview	Lincoln	Westview
ELA			
2016	40	26	30
2017	14	28	44
2018	29	26	30
Math			
2016	25	34	18
2017	23	24	33
2018	32	34	18

Grade 5	MS
ELA	
2016	31
2017	28
2018	31
Math	
2016	26
2017	18
2018	26



Grade 6	MS
ELA	
2016	28
2017	35
2018	28
Math	
2016	16
2017	21
2018	18

Grade 7	MS
ELA	
2016	38
2017	34
2018	50
Math	
2016	30
2017	29
2018	41

Grade 8	MS
ELA	
2016	42
2017	43
2018	47
Math	
2016	26
2017	37
2018	51

## **SCHOOL ENROLLMENT HISTORY AND FORECAST**

### ***Introduction***

School enrollment history and a forecast for future enrollment are important factors to calculate when two or more districts are considering the viability of reorganization. Projected increases or decreases in enrollment impact the number and types of buildings needed, the breadth of the curriculum and the level of financing that will be required. Transportation can also be impacted as the number of buses and routes required to meet the student needs is directly related to the sized of the student population. The building and transportation needs will be addressed in separate sections later. This study will review the capacity of each building and the impact on each building should the district elect to change the configuration from neighborhood schools to attendance centers by grade.

### ***Census Bureau Data***

In developing this study, data from the U.S. Census Bureau and student enrollment provided by each of the districts was used. While the census data is relatively accurate, it is compiled by counties and not by school districts and this requires analysis and manipulation of the data so it will be meaningful. Table 1 displays the Census Bureau population figures for Fulton County from April 1, 2010 to April 1, 2017.

The population in this county decreased by 1,304 during this time frame which is a reflected by the student enrollments of the district in this study with the five-year projection showing a decrease of 165 K-12 students by 2023-24.

TABLE 1  
 Census Bureau Population  
 Fulton County  
 2010 - 2017

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>Population Estimates</b>		
	<b>April 1, 2010</b>	<b>April 1, 2017</b>	<b>GAIN/LOSS</b>
<b>Fulton</b>	<b>30,094</b>	<b>28,790</b>	<b>1,304</b>

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

Table 2 provides a more focused picture of the population trends for the Canton. As shown in Table 2, from April 1, 2010 to April 1, 2017 the population decreased by 839. These numbers mirror the projected population decrease within the county which correlates to the trend of reduced student enrollment for the next five years.

TABLE 2  
 Census Bureau  
 Canton Population  
 2010 to 2017

<b>VILLAGE</b>	<b>Population Estimates</b>		
	<b>2010</b>	<b>April 1, 2017</b>	<b>GAIN/LOSS</b>
<b>Canton</b>	14,704	13,865	- 839

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/cantontcityillinois/PST045217#PST045217>

Using the number of live births in Fulton County provides a base from which to develop a percentage that helps predict the number of students who will enter Kindergarten and Pre-Kindergarten in both school districts. These live birth numbers,

shown in Table 3, are combined with other factors such as housing increases, industrial growth and the general economic status of the region to make Kindergarten projections.

**TABLE 3**  
**Live County Births**

	LIVE BIRTHS							
<b>County</b>	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Fulton	302	303	301	310	260	323	289	305

<http://www.idph.state.il.us/health/bdmd/birth2.htm>

The number of live births in Tables 3 were divided into the enrollments of the district at the corresponding K level six years later resulting in a ratio/percentage of births to Kindergarten population (Table 4). The three-year average was determined and these percentages were applied to the live-birth statistics provided by the Census Bureau to project enrollment projections for 2019-20 to 2023-24 Kindergarten students. The Pre-K numbers were kept at 80 based upon the five-year consistency of 80 students in this program.

**TABLE 4**  
**Ratio of Live Births to**  
**Kindergarten Population**

K PROJECTION PERCENTAGES FROM LIVE BIRTHS				
E'VIEW	LINCOLN	WVIEW		
28.48%	15.56%	24.17%		2016-17
19.14%	15.51%	16.50%		2017-18
20.27%	14.62%	18.94%		2018-19
<b>22.63%</b>	<b>15.23%</b>	<b>19.87%</b>		<b>AVERAGE</b>

## Enrollment

Enrollment history for Canton is provided in order to determine the patterns of growth that have occurred over the past five year (Table 6). This data shows the total K to 4 student population declined over the past five years by 102 students but this loss slows considerable with a projected reduction of 3 students over the next five years. The middle school lost 22 students over the past five years and is projected to lose an additional 115 over the next five years. This reduction reflects the loss of students at the elementary for the previous five years. The high school lost 70 students over the past five years and will see an additional reduction of 47 students in the coming five years.

Table 6  
Summary of Student Enrollment Differences  
2014-15 to 2018-19

Changes 2014-15 to 18-19	Total
All K-4	-102
Ingersoll M. S.	-22
Canton H. S.	-70

Table 7  
Student Enrollment Differences  
2018-19 to 2023-24

Changes 2018-19 to 23-24	Total
All K-4	-3
Ingersoll M. S.	-115
Canton H. S.	-47

The methodology by which these projections were made will be discussed in the following section with data sheets and graphs provided for further clarification.

**Cohort Survival Projection Methodology**

A projection for future enrollments was made using the cohort survival method which has been shown to be the most reliable projection method and is the method used by the Census Bureau. This method uses the historical records for a cohort (e.g. first grade) and determines what percentage of this cohort survives (moves on) to the next cohort (e.g. second grade). Kindergarten projections were made using live birth data from five years earlier and comparing this to the number of children who registered for kindergarten five years later. The percentage factors used for each grade were determined by looking at the five-year growth percentages and are shown in Table 6. A percentage below 100% indicates the classes got smaller over the period of time the cohort was measured. Likewise, a percentage over 100% indicates that cohort (grade) increase in numbers as they moved to the next grade.

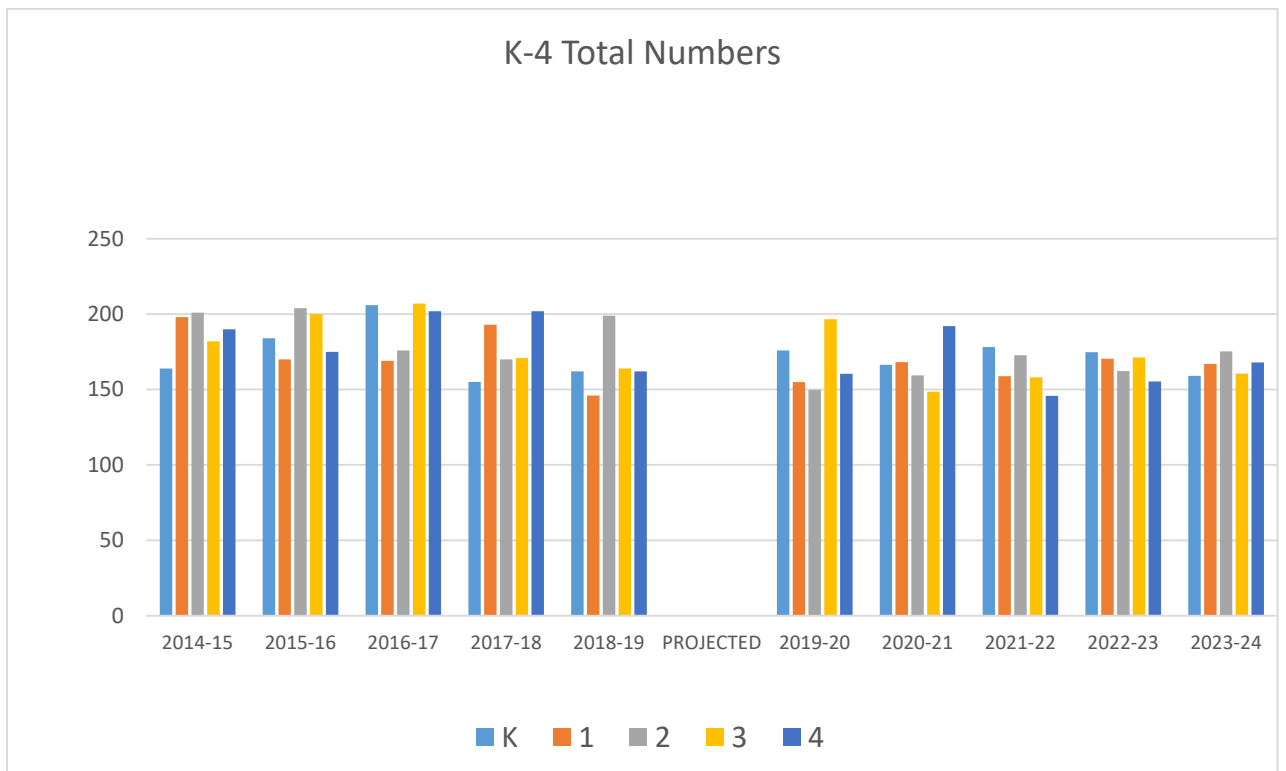
**TABLES 8  
PERCENTAGE FACTORS FOR GROWTH PROJECTIONS**

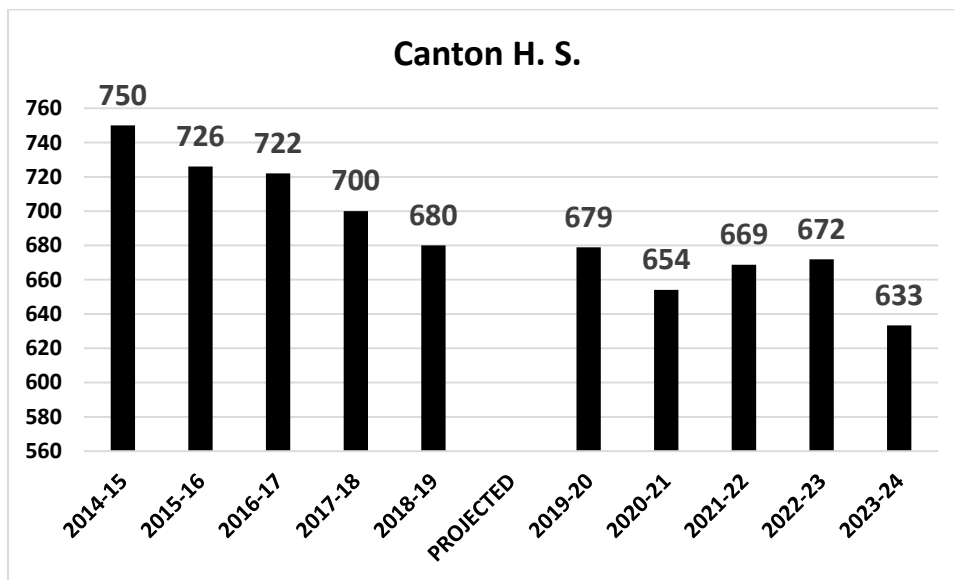
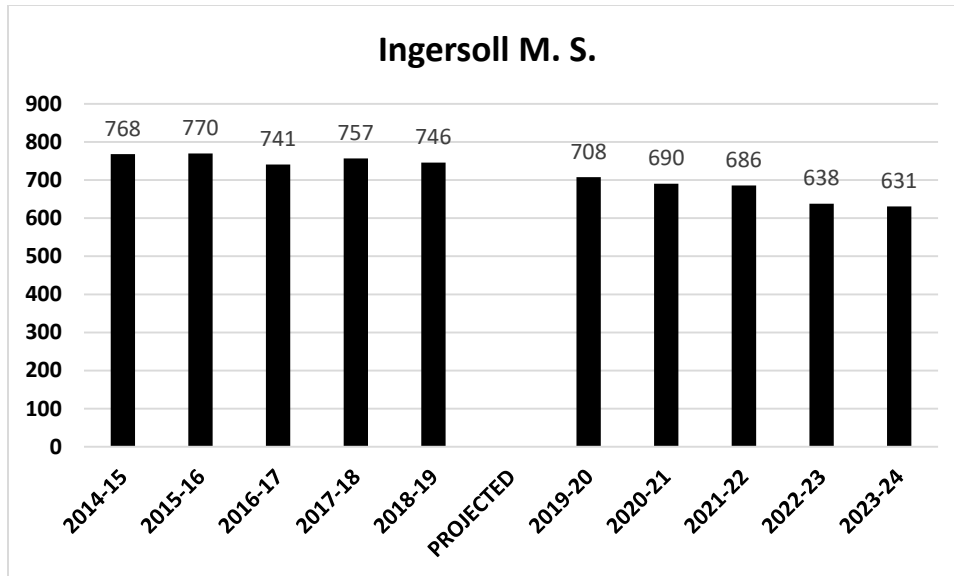
ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE PROJECTIONS EASTVIEW					
K	K TO 1	1 to 2	2 to 3	3 to 4	
22.63%	92.86%	93.01%	94.46%	92.00%	
ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE PROJECTIONS LINCOLN					
K	K TO 1	1 to 2	2 to 3	3 to 4	
15.23%	96.00%	103.95%	102.15%	103.14%	
ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE PROJECTIONS WESTVIEW					
K	K TO 1	1 to 2	2 to 3	3 to 4	
19.87%	98.43%	111.99%	101.09%	99.63%	

ENROLLMENT PERCENTAGE PROJECTIONS INGERSOLL/HIGH SCHOOL								
4 to 5	5 to 6	6 to 7	7 to 8	8 to 9	9 to 10	10 to 11	11 to 12	Average
99.61%	98.08%	96.82%	100.13%	113.33%	82.43%	89.92%	91.39%	96.46%

Once the growth percentage factors were determined, they were applied to the individual schools within the districts and the results of these projections are on the following pages. Table 11 shows the current and projected numbers for the grade levels in this study.

TABLE 9  
CURRENT AND PROJECTED STUDENT POPULATIONS





## Enrollment Summary

Enrollment is a critical factor in determining if going to attendance centers is feasible for the Canton Community. This feasibility would be determined by the capacity of each elementary building and the capabilities of that building to meet the educational needs of the group of students (grades they are in) for that building. The results of these projections show that the student population for the high school and



middle school will continue to decrease. There is no proposal for this study to change the age/grade level of the students who attend classes in either of these buildings so the projected reduction of students will not be an issue as far as space in either building.

The elementary schools collectively lost 102 students from 2013-14 to 2018-19. The loss of students will level off for the next five years with a projected loss of 3 students during that time. The leveling of student numbers will be seen later, beyond the five year projections, at the middle and high school levels.

The review of the buildings and the transportation of the students will be addressed in the following sections with committee recommendations for what would be the best use of the facilities to maximize district funds while providing optimal educational opportunities.

## **DISTRICT FACILITIES**

The district requested that our team analyze each of the buildings, determine their current status and identify any needs that currently exist. The district also requested a recommendation regarding which buildings could most appropriately house the students should the district decide to move to attendance centers. This section will review and summarize these areas in order to provide this information to the boards and community.

### **CANTON SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Canton School District houses students in three elementary (K-4) buildings with a Middle School (5 – 8) and a High School, all of which are located within the community. The original high school building was built in 1955, currently houses 700 students and once held 1,000. The technology is adequate and it is a 1:1 building. Space for special education is an issue.

The district has a Freshmen Academy within the high school in an effort to assist these students in making a successful adjustment from the junior high school environment. A need for space for tutorials for the upper level classes was expressed. Likewise, a need for a larger gymnasium was expressed as seating all who wish to attend the events is difficult. The track needs to be resurfaced and the bleachers need some attention.

The district has committed \$2,086,193 to a variety of construction projects to include re-roofing, window replacement, science room improvements, locker remodeling, band abatement and general work in the ban room. The list was obtained from the Summary of 2018 Construction Projects provided by the district and compiled

by Phillips and Associates Architects, Inc. No evaluation of the capacity beyond what currently exists was made since the level of students in this building will remain the same no matter what decision the district makes regarding the attendance centers.

The same capacity statement for the junior high school can be made because no changes to this building are recommended as far as the grade level of students who will attend here. It would remain a 5 – 8 center which currently houses 748 students. There are 48 classrooms plus a few small specialized rooms. Two classrooms are currently not used every class period. The desire for more space for self-contained behavior issues was expressed as was the desire for a second sensory room. The entire building has air conditioning. There are no electrical or plumbing needs at this time. The district spent \$386,595 for ceiling abatement and replacement for the 2018 school year. The gymnasium floor is new and is very impressive. A roofing total of \$803,470 was quoted in the 2017 analysis and this project has not yet been addressed.

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Each of the elementary schools is a K-4 neighborhood school facility. Westview also houses Pre-Kindergarten students and Early Childhood (EC) students. The number of rooms within each building, their capacity and their current needs, if any, will be noted individually.

#### Eastview Elementary

Eastview Elementary has three rooms per grade level and has five rooms currently available. It currently houses 306 students and has housed as many as 409 students. It is fully air conditioned, except for the gymnasium and has geothermal

heating. It is a 1:1 school, has no self-contained classrooms at this time. Because there are five (5) rooms available for use, space is not an issue.

### Lincoln Elementary

Lincoln Elementary houses 215 students and has had as many as 245 students in the past five years. There are 14 classrooms in the building and all are being used making the capacity 100%. There are two (2) sections per grade. The OT/PT classes are in the hallway. There are 15 paraprofessionals in the building. A unique feature of this building is the existence of an aviary. The outdoor space is very ample and there is a mileage track associated with this building.

There are no electrical or plumbing needs. The building is air conditioned. Half of the asbestos tile was removed recently with the remainder to be removed during the summer of 2019.

### Westview Elementary

Westview Elementary houses 424 students and has held as many as 462 in the past five years. It has 24 classrooms, all of which are in use. As noted previously, it also houses the Pre-K and EC students for the district. There is no sensory room at this time and the desire for one was expressed.

There are no electrical or plumbing issues to address. The entire building, other than the gym, is air conditioned. An OT/PT class is located here as well. The outdoor area is massive and would serve the needs of any group of students housed here.

### Summary

1. The life-safety issues as identified by the architects have been or are being addressed.

2. The high school and middle school have no space issues at this time.
3. Two or the three elementary buildings are at capacity.
4. All buildings are air conditioned.

### FUTURE BUILDING CONFIGURATIONS

The committee developed four possible scenarios for changing the current neighborhood school systems into attendance centers. Because each building currently houses K-4 students, each building was considered to be appropriate for any of these groups. The focus became which proposals could physically accommodate the number of students who would attend in that building and which proposal disrupted the movement of the least number of students. Two of the four potential arrangements met both criteria. The four possible ideas are:

### PROPOSAL A – WILL WORK – SECOND GRADE

School	Classrooms in school	Classrooms open	Current Grades	Grades proposed	Current number of students (highest number)	Proposed Number students	Current items to consider
Ingersoll M. S.	48+small specialized rooms	2	5,6,7,8	No change	746 (770)	746	No change here
Lincoln Elementary	14	0	K-4	2	215 (245)	199	<b>Having a single grade in the building is not the best use and results in moving after one year.</b>
Eastview Elementary	25	5	K-4	3,4	305 (409)	326	All AC/not gym; geothermal;
Westview Elementary	24	0	preK, EC, K-4	PreK, EC, K,1	424 (462)	363	Massive outdoor space; Pre school here; all AC except gym

**PROPOSAL B - WILL NOT WORK (EASTVIEW CANNOT HOLD)**

School	Classrooms in school	Classrooms open	Current Grades	Grades proposed	Current number of students (highest number)	Proposed Number students	Current items to consider
Ingersoll M. S.	48+small specialized rooms	2	5,6,7,8	No change	746 (770)	746	No change here
Lincoln Elementary	14	0	K-4	1	215 (245)	146	plenty of outdoor space; mileage track; small aviary; <b>some rooms being available; single grade not the best</b>
Eastview Elementary	25	5	K-4	2,3,4	305 (409)	472	All AC/not gym; geothermal; adds 199 second grade students; <b>not enough rooms for them</b>
Westview Elementary	24	0	preK, EC, K-4	PreK, EC, K	424 (462)	272	Massive outdoor space; Pre school here; all AC except gym; <b>some rooms NOW available.</b>

**PROPOSAL C – WILL NOT WORK (EASTVIEW CANNOT HOLD)**

School	Classrooms in school	Classrooms open	Current Grades	Grades proposed	Current number of students (highest number)	Proposed Number students	Current items to consider
Ingersoll M. S.	48+small specialized rooms	2	5,6,7,8	No change	746	746	No change here
Lincoln Elementary	14	0	K-4	4	215 (245)	162	plenty of outdoor space; mileage track; small aviary; would result in some rooms being available
Eastview Elementary	25	5	K-4	1,2,3	305 (409)	509	All AC/not gym; geothermal; <b>Won't work - too many students</b>
Westview Elementary	24	0	preK, EC, K-4	PreK, EC, K	424 (462)	227	Massive outdoor space; Pre school here; all AC except gym; Would likely result in some rooms being available.

PROPOSAL D – WILL WORK – NO SINGLETON GRADES

School	Classrooms in school	Classrooms open	Current Grades	Grades proposed	Current number of students (highest number)	Proposed Number students	Current items to consider
Ingersoll M. S.	48+small specialized rooms	2	5,6,7,8	No change	746 (770)	746	No change here
Lincoln Elementary	14	0	K-4	Pre-K, EC, K	215 (245)	227	<b>Numbers fit within building; keeps lower grades together</b>
Eastview Elementary	25	5	K-4	3,4	305 (409)	326	All AC/not gym; geothermal;
Westview Elementary	24	0	preK, EC, K-4	1,2	424 (462)	326	Massive outdoor space; Pre school here; all AC except gym <b>Fits easily with room to spare.</b>

Of the four possibilities, only Proposals A and D fit the space available and met the needs of the students. Proposal A places students in similar grades in the same building. The major issue with Proposal A is that the second grade students are alone and there is movement of all students three times as they progress through grades K to 4. **Proposal D is the preferred and recommended configuration** because it keeps the Pre K, EC, Kindergarten students together and removes the single grade issue for the second grade that Proposal A presents.

## TRANSPORTATION CONSIDERATIONS

This study will address any increases in transportation that might occur should the Canton District decide to adopt the Attendance Center concept. All data for this section was obtained from the transportation report provided by the district. The complete summary is found in Table 9 which immediately follows this section.

Table 1 shows the cost for the regular route transportation for the 2017-18 school year. This is the only fund that would be impacted by the change from a neighborhood to attendance center concept. The change will be addressed at the end of this chapter.

TABLE 1  
REGULAR ROUTE EXPENDITURES

Regular Route	
# Students Transported	1,311
Cost	\$403,942
Cost/student	\$308
Regular Route Miles	105372
Cost/mile	\$3.83

The cost of transportation for the Special Education Student (Table 2) and Vocational Students (Table 3) will not be impacted by the change from neighborhood schools to attendance centers.



TABLE 2  
SPECIAL EDUCATION TRANSPORTATION

Special Education	
<b># Students Transported</b>	313
<b>Cost</b>	\$485,901
<b>Total miles</b>	100747
<b>Cost/student</b>	\$1,552.40
<b>Cost/mile</b>	\$4.82

TABLE 3  
VOCATIONAL TRANSPORTATION COST

Vocational Transportation	
# Students	24
Total Miles	3178
Total Cost	\$11,611
Cost/mile	\$3.65
Cost/student	\$484

Table 4 shows the non-reimbursable costs for transportation. These costs include the cost for transporting students beyond the defined regulations provided by the state. This would include transporting students who live less than 1.5 miles from a school when there is no identified danger or hazard for those students who walk to school.

TABLE 4  
NONREIMBURSABLE TRANSPORTATION COST

Non-reimbursable Transportation	
Transportation costs	\$49,685
Transportation miles	24,113
Cost/mile	\$2.06

The transportation cost projections for the change to attendance centers was determined using the following process. The cost per student for regular transportation was based on the average cost shown in Table 5. The distance between each building is:

Eastview to Westview	2.6 miles
Eastview to Lincoln	2.3 miles
Westview to Lincoln	1.8 miles

TABLE 5  
REGULAR TRANSPORTATION COST

Regular Route	
# Students Transported	1311
Cost	\$403,942
Cost/student	\$308
Regular Route Miles	105372
Cost/mile	\$3.83

All students attending Westview will need to be transported due to the hazardous road that must be crossed. This would not result in a change in cost since the district already transports students to this building and the number of students is very similar to the number of student currently attending. There would be a need to transport those students who currently attend Westview and are in grades 2,3,4 and live in the subdivision near the school since they would need to cross the identified hazardous road.

The district currently does not transport students who live less than 1.5 miles from their school. For this report, it was not known specifically where every student

resides. As such, arcs representing the 1.5 mile radius from the school were drawn (Figure 1).

### **Proposal A**

For Eastview the arc covered almost half of the community. As such, it was projected that the district would need to transport half of the students to this building. There are 213 students who would attend this attendance center who do not currently go there. Half of this would be 106 resulting in 2 buses for this group. The additional projected cost would be 106 students times \$308/student or \$32,648. **Proposal D would be the same.**

Lincoln Elementary would have 156 second grade students in the building who do not currently go to school in this building. The arc covers approximately 35% of the area within 1.5 mile. Thus, 65% or the students new to this building would need to be transported which equates to 101 students. Two buses would be required to transport these students. The additional projected cost would be 101 students times \$308/student or \$31,108. **For Proposal D** the total number of new students would be 118 students and 65% of this equals 77 students. This number times \$308 equals \$23,716.

### **Summary**

Student transportation would see a projected increase of \$63,756 for Proposal A and Proposal D would be \$56,364. These reimbursable amounts are based on the current district average to transport students and could be greater or less than projected depending upon the final number of students who must be transported. If elementary students could ride buses currently picking up middle and high school students this

could reduce the total cost. The final cost, as noted, could be different but this projection provides additional information as the district and community weigh all options when making this decision. The cost per mile could not be used for this projection simply because there was no accurate way to determine how far each bus would have to travel each day in order to pick up the students within the community.

Increasing the number of students to be transported could make scheduling an issue and the schools might need to adjust their starting times if the arrival of buses becomes delayed because the district buses need to make two runs in order to pick up all students living in town.

**TABLE 9  
SUMMARY OF STUDENTS TO TRANSPORT BY BUILDING  
PROPOSAL A**

<b>School</b>	<b>Current Grades</b>	<b>Grades proposed</b>	<b># from other schools</b>	<b># to transport</b>
Lincoln Elementary 65%	K-4	2	156	110
Eastview Elementary 50%	K-4	3,4	third (107) fourth (106)	106
Westview Elementary	preK, EC, K-4	PreK, EC, K,1	Pre- K and EC - No change K (105) First (95)	-0-*

\*This says zero even though almost all will be transported. The zero equates to no additional cost for the district since all students are currently transported to this school.

**TABLE 9  
SUMMARY OF STUDENTS TO TRANSPORT BY BUILDING  
PROPOSAL D**

<b>School</b>	<b>Current Grades</b>	<b>Grades proposed</b>	<b># from other schools</b>	<b># to transport</b>
Lincoln Elementary	K-4	Pre-K, EC, K	Pre-K and EC no change K (118)	77
Eastview Elementary	K-4	3,4	third (107) fourth (106)	106
Westview Elementary	preK, EC, K-4	1,2	First (91) Second (123)	-0-*

TABLE 9  
TRANSPORTATION SUMMARY

Regular Route	
# Students Transported	1,311
Cost	\$403,942
Cost/student	\$308
Regular Route Miles	105,372
Cost/mile	\$3.83
Special Education	
# Students Transported	313
Cost	\$485,901
Total miles	100,747
Cost/student	\$1,552
Cost/mile	\$4.82
Vocational Transportation	
# Students	24
Total Miles	3178
Total Cost	\$11,611
Cost/mile	\$3.65
Cost/student	\$484
Non-reimbursable Transportation	
Transportation costs	\$49,685
Transportation miles	24,113
Cost/mile	\$2.06
<b>TOTAL COST - ALL AREAS</b>	<b>\$951,139</b>

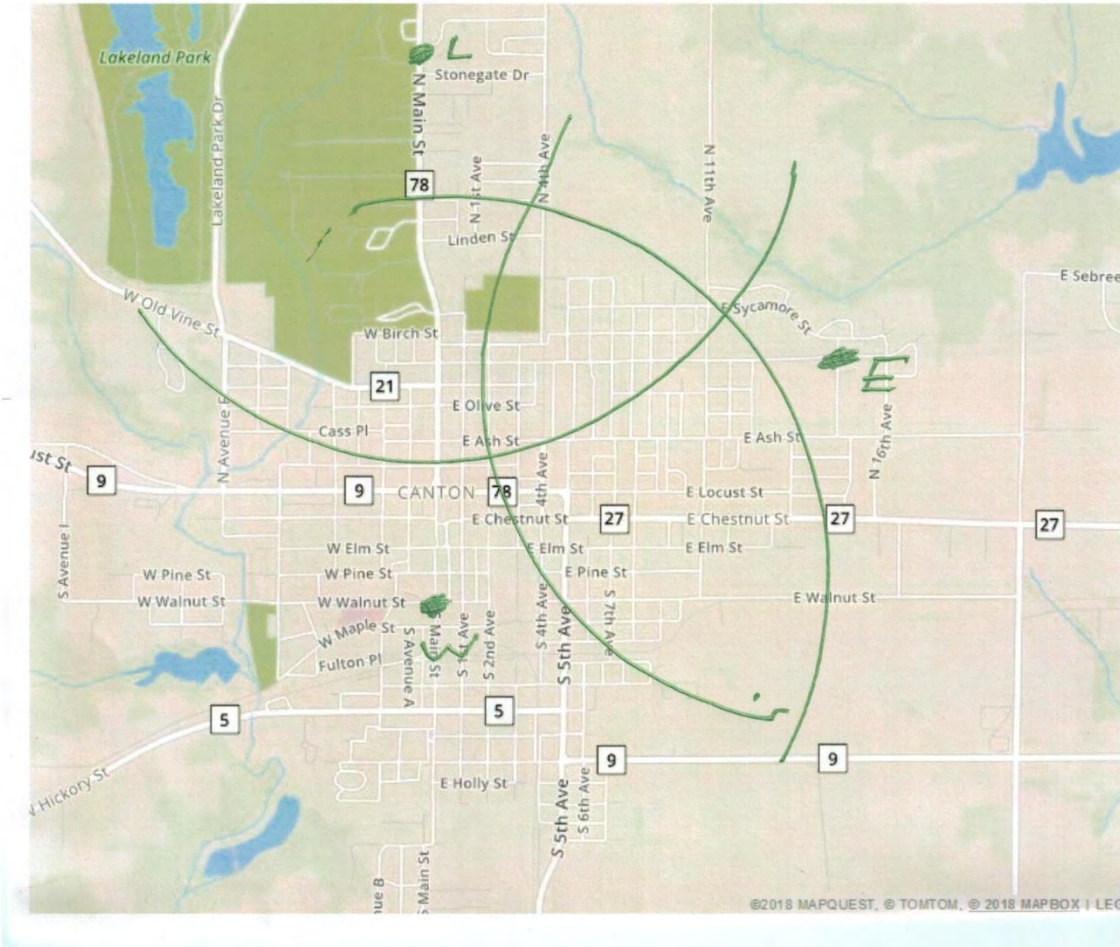


Figure 1. Canton elementary schools 1.5 radius markings

## **Review of Literature**

In this section, multiple examples of reconfiguration in school districts are examined based on available literature. The terms “attendance center” and “grade span configuration” are used interchangeably herein. These are schools in which student proximity to the school is not a factor in student attendance. Instead, student attendance is based on student grade level. An entire grade level of a school district can be housed in such a center. The smaller the grade level span within the building, the more closely the building resembles an attendance center. Conversely, “neighborhood schools” are those in which students attend based on geographic proximity. These schools usually span a large range of grade levels, usually a K-8 or K-12 configuration.

### **Configuration Relationship to Academic Achievement**

Coladarci and Hancock completed a review of studies with statistical controls concerning grade-span configurations in the middle grades. The 2,211 public school studies reviewed included 18 New York City Schools, 700 Louisiana schools, 1,000 Texas schools, 163 Maine schools, and 330 Pennsylvania schools. While the findings in each state will be further discussed, **the overall findings indicated an increase in student academic achievement in the middle grades for students enrolled in schools with elementary-wide configurations as opposed to middle-grades configurations.**

**Elementary-wide configurations include schools spanning K-6, K-7/8/9, 3-8, and K-12 grade levels.** Middle-grade configurations include schools spanning 4-8, 6-8 and 5-8. The studies in 18 New York City schools indicated higher achievement levels in reading for students in K-8 configured schools as opposed to 6-8 configured schools.

The study further indicated that socioeconomic status and ethnicity were similar in both configurations of these schools. This means socioeconomic status and ethnicity could not be deemed reasons for the discrepancy in student achievement.

The findings in the 700 Louisiana schools were consistent with those of the New York City schools. The state achievement test for Louisiana was used for the benchmark of 6th and 7th grade students. The students attending school in K-6/7 and K-12 configurations scored higher on the achievement test than those attending 6-8 and 7-9 configured schools. Additionally, 10th grade student data was analyzed to find students with higher achievement rates in K-12 configurations than those in 7/8/9-12 configurations. Mention is made that socioeconomic status and school size were statistically accounted for in this study as well.

In 1,000 Texas schools, the achievement of 10th graders on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills was examined. The students in the K-12 configurations scored slightly higher in mathematics, writing, and reading, when compared to any of the other high school configurations examined. These studies indicated demographics, expenditures, and school size to all be controlled variables.

Eighth grade student achievement on the Maine Educational Assessment was analyzed for 163 Maine schools. A significant achievement gap was noted with students in K-8/9 and 3-8 configurations scoring higher than those in 4/5/6-8 or 6/7/8-12 configurations. This study additionally indicated statistical control for socioeconomic status.

Finally, the study of 330 Pennsylvania schools analyzed 6th grade student achievement in science, social studies, mathematics, and reading. This study controlled



for factors of tracking, grouping, grade level enrollment, and instructional practices. However, it further examined the link to socioeconomic status and achievement as related to grade-span configurations. The highest achieving students did attend elementary configured schools (as opposed to middle-grade configured schools). However, the students with the lowest socioeconomic status, showed the greatest gains when attending an elementary configured school.

The compilation of all of these studies indicates that **student academic achievement in the middle grades is higher in schools with elementary-wide configurations as opposed to middle-grades configurations**. There is an additional reason as to why this may be the case. Transitions between schools is noted as one of the most negative effects on student achievement. **Such transitions bring with them a multitude of changes which include new friendships, new school expectations, new teachers, new administrators, new classmates, more challenging curriculum, unfamiliarity with a different school building, to name a few.** The argument for elementary configured schools prevents these transitional changes from needing addressed because they do not exist. Students can simply focus on learning in an environment in which they feel safe, familiar and secure. The reality is that schools exist for students to achieve...for students to be successful in the future. That should be the number one priority of all school districts. If larger grade-span configurations do increase such student achievement, are there benefits to moving to reduced grade-span configurations that are truly more important?

Conversely, examination of three years of 6th grade student scores on the Arkansas Benchmark Examination in mathematics and literacy, concluded there is no

relationship between academic achievement and grade-span configurations of school buildings in Arkansas (Dove 2010). The total number of schools examined in this study was 281 over a 3 year period from Fall of 2004 to Spring of 2007. Mathematics and literacy scores were examined for the 6th grade populations through this time frame.

There were three school configurations examined. The Level 1 configuration s included PK/K/1-6 schools where the students in the 6th grade were the oldest in the building. The Level 2 configurations included 6-7/8 schools where the 6th graders were the newest students in the building. The Level 3 configurations included 5-6/7/8 schools which were configured in a manner in which the 6th grade students were in their 2nd year in the same school.

Upon examination of the three years of 6th grade student scores on the Arkansas Benchmark Examination, the conclusion was drawn that there is no relationship between academic achievement and grade-span configurations of school buildings in Arkansas. The results showed a level-off effect of literacy achievement and a slight gain over time in mathematics. The slight gain in mathematics was attributed to possible other factors that may have been put in place to increase mathematics achievement. The conclusion was drawn that since grade-span configuration has no impact on student achievement in this case, school districts should focus more on facility arrangements that best support their community. Factors that should also be examined in depth include financial issues, geographical issues, transportation issues, projected enrollments, school and class sizes, politics of the community, and local school goals.

The most important factor to draw from this study is the fact that student achievement is not determined by only one factor, in this case, grade-span configurations. While schools exist to educate students, the primary goal of schools should be for all students to achieve. Finding ways in which student achievement can be increased should be, therefore, a priority for every school district. Based on this study, grade-span configurations are not clearly defined as able to ensure an increase in student achievement.

Therefore, classroom instruction and the teaching methods employed in a classroom are the factors a school district can control that will undoubtedly impact student achievement the most. While some may argue that configurations can lead to smaller class sizes, that does not necessarily mean better teaching and learning in a classroom with less students. Administrators need to be diligent to ensure the best instructional strategies be used in classrooms that they supervise if academic achievement is their priority. Therefore, grade-span configurations should not be a method school districts count on to increase student achievement.

Additionally, there is statistical research to indicate student achievement loss associated with transitions from early to middle school and middle to high school (Alspaugh, 1998). In this study, data from 16 school districts was examined. A loss in achievement among students moving to the 6th grade level was found for student entering a separate middle school that year as opposed to remaining in a K-8 setting.

**This research also indicated a greater loss in student achievement when students merged into a single middle school from multiple feeder schools at the sixth grade level.** Additionally, as students moved into high school at the 9th grade level,

those students moving from a middle school configuration showed a greater achievement loss than those moving from a K-8 configuration. The data in this study also detailed a higher drop-out rate in high school for students coming from a middle school configuration as opposed to students coming from a K-8 district.

Since transitions in general have been found to impact student achievement, the movement to an attendance center model, based on grade configurations, could potentially have a negative impact. A minimization of transitions should be a primary goal in re-configuring a district based on this information. However, depending on the current state of the district, a re-organization to attendance centers may not actually increase the number of transitions for students. It may only impact the place to which the students are physically transitioned.

#### **Considerations Unrelated to Academic Achievement**

In 2005, John Homan published an article for The Southern Illinoisan in which he examined the benefits of the attendance center model as indicated by administrators in 4 different Southern Illinois school districts. Carterville moved to the attendance center model in 1997. The Assistant Superintendent, Janice Brown, **accorded that the change has given teachers an opportunity for better planning. Teachers who were initially opposed to the change have now found the change to be beneficial because they can share ideas and materials within their grade level.** Janice added that a decrease in student behavioral issues has occurred due to class sizes no longer being at maximum capacity at some grade levels.

In the same article, Curriculum Director Helen Hamilton of Herrin schools also attributed an improved grade level curriculum to the re-configuration. She also pointed

out the **importance of having ample time, in this case 1 full year, to prepare for the change.** This allowed her to effectively sort and pool resources from the curriculums of each school. Within the Harrisburg school district, Principal Catharin Hammersley indicated that **with a grade-level configuration, now “all the children have the same opportunities. That consistency is invaluable in meeting state standards.”** While she realizes parents take issue with the scheduling, she pointed out that the re-configuration was ultimately the best options for students. *Administrators and teachers have a duty to do what is best for students.*

In 2016, the Board of Education in Murphysboro, IL, voted to move from the neighborhood school configuration to an attendance center configuration (Esters, 2018). This change only occurred after being revisited multiple times since 2000. While the decision was met with some aggravation on the part of parents, Murphysboro gives an example useful in terms of a classroom impact.

The **major concern of parents was transportation.** Parents were less concerned about educational impacts than the technicalities of having to drop off or pick up in more than one location. **School districts can adjust start and end times for different grade level facilities to account for the parent need to stagger child drop off and pick up.**

The classroom impact at Murphysboro could arguably be worth the transportation headache for parents. Buildings with a grade level configuration would mean all students in the same grade level for the entire district are housed together. With this configuration, **Murphysboro shows the ability for teachers to focus on instruction at a grade level while being afforded the opportunity to collaborate more**

**efficiently and effectively with grade-level peers.** Curriculum and instruction across a grade level could be truly aligned and any changes could be discussed easily among colleagues.

Additionally, the administrator of a grade level school serves as the educational leader for the building. In so, it is the duty of the administrator to evaluate the teachers and address curriculum alignment issues. If the teachers of an entire grade level are housed in one location, they can be evaluated by the same administrator. **This provides an opportunity for an administrator to have a more clear picture of the teaching capabilities, inadequacies, and areas of excellence at a grade level.**

Then, the administrator can devise learning opportunities among these colleagues in which they can professionally grow as educators within their own building. **It is an opportunity to improve the quality of teaching,** the compilation of teaching resources available, and the continuity of teaching across a grade level.

Unit School District 234 in Fort Scott, Kansas, was contemplating reconfiguring Winfield Scott Elementary School and Eugene Ware Elementary School into attendance centers. A committee, comprised of 14 members, created a report which included a list of pros and cons to grade-span configurations (attendance centers) as determined by the committee. The report, and its findings as follows, were reported by the Fort Scott Tribune.

**Transportation costs and revenues were a significant portion of the report.**

The initial estimate indicated the likelihood that transportation costs would increase. The increase would include a maximum of \$26,000 additionally paid in bus driver salaries. Also, another \$1,500 in additional fuel fees should be expected. Conversely, it was

estimated that a re-configuration would increase the number of qualified bus riders for which money is received from the state through reimbursement. This could equate to between \$8,333 and \$16,666 in additional revenue. However, it was also noted that multiple bus riders would likely experience a bus ride time increase of 10 to 15 minutes per trip.

It was also **noted that re-configuration would allow two teaching positions to go un-filled in the next school year.** This equated to an estimated savings of \$122,464. Re-configuration would allow complete grade levels in the district to be housed in a single building. **Single grade levels in one building would bring equity to class sizes at each grade level.** This could potentially lead to a savings in educational materials and supplies for a grade level. However, if students are below or above grade level, there may still be a need to purchase materials for additional levels not housed in the same building. Therefore, concern was raised as to whether or not actual savings would be reasonable to assume in terms of supplies and materials.

The committee also surveyed all teaching staff and administrators. There was no clear answer or consensus regarding how re-configuration would affect student achievement, if at all. Administrators indicated that student achievement is dictated mostly by classroom instruction methods and not other factors. **With a reduced number of grade levels in each building, a principal would be responsible for overseeing the appropriate delivery of curriculum to a smaller number of grade levels which could potentially improve the teaching and learning that occurs in the classrooms.**

Some teachers indicated that re-configuration would help ascertain consistency in grade level curriculum. It would also provide grade level teachers the ability to quickly access each other for curriculum discussions and classroom activity collaboration. **The professional development offered to the teachers would be more easily applied to the needs of specific grade levels instead of to a broad, general range of teachers.** This would cause teacher in-service days to become more productive. The teachers also felt students would transition more easily as a large group into the middle grades if they were already in classes together in the same building at younger grade levels.

**The committee also addressed the east-west biases that exist currently within the community. They believe attendance centers would decrease, and potentially eliminate, the stigma that goes with attending a particular building based on where the student lives.** In turn, a greater sense of community could be created across the district. This would promote diversity from the kindergarten level throughout all buildings. Additionally, an end would come to any competition the exists currently between the buildings or the faculty members of the buildings.

This east-west bias is something Carbondale Elementary School District Superintendent, Elizabeth Lewin, indicated had existed prior to her district re-configuring to attendance centers (Homan, 2005, p. 4). **Prior to reconfiguration, there was a perception that one school was better than the others due to class size differences.** After reconfiguration, the class sizes normalized giving every student the same opportunities.



Mobility within the community was also addressed in the Fort Scott, Kansas, report. In such large cities, there is often a population of the same students who move around frequently within the school year. Establishing attendance centers would mean these students would attend the same school, regardless of their in-district address changes throughout the year.

Inconvenience in transportation aspects for some parents was also addressed. It could become difficult for a parent to pick up children at different school at the same time. It could also be an issue if they end up needing to go across town to pick up a child when the child currently is capable of walking home. Additionally, the train tracks running through the center of town could cause additional time delays, often times without notice. **In this case, school start and end times could be adjusted district-wide to account for staggered time frames.**

Some individuals felt that by decreasing the number of grade levels in a building, the **younger students would miss out on opportunities afforded to them by having older students within the same building.** This includes mentoring programs, bus patrol officers, tutoring programs, and buddy programs. Furthermore, **a decrease in Parent Teacher Organization was feared by some respondents** by noting that if a parent has to go even further to help out, they may not help out at all. Another teacher indicated a concern that bullying of 4th grade students by 5th grade students may increase since the populations of those groups would double in a re-configured building.

**While this report is not an educational research study or achievement score analysis, it does provide several points a school district should consider before moving from the neighborhood school model to the grade-span**

**(attendance center) configuration model.** Making a decision that is best for students, taxpayers, and the budget, is a difficult one for board of education members in any community. Open and honest dialogue between administrators, board members, faculty, staff, community members, and parents is the best way to approach this decision-making process.

**The inclusion of the public, whether by hearing concerns and questions, or by a school board being transparent in their discussions, is a factor which cannot be ignored.** In 2016, the Granite City School Board voted unanimously, and without public discussion, to move from the neighborhood school model to an attendance center model. According to an article by Elizabeth Donald (2016), one school building would be completely closed. Two existing buildings would become grade 3-4 attendance centers and two other existing buildings would become grade 1-2 centers for the district. The District Superintendent, Jim Greenwald, cited a declining enrollment coupled with a lack of funding from the state as the reason for the conversion. Prior to the change, 45 classrooms sat empty among the existing structures. The re-configuration would make facility usage more cost effective.

**However, the public was not in favor of the decision. They felt as if they were not allowed input regarding the decision. Additionally, there was a feeling that the board was not forthright in their responses during the small amount of discussion that had occurred.** The public perception of the occurrence is in fact the public reality of the occurrence. A school board should be careful to clearly and thoroughly explain all justification for a re-configuration and also allow adequate time for

public opinion to be voiced regarding the matter. This will allow parents and taxpayers to be more receptive to any change that might occur if they are well informed.

**An example of proper inclusion of the public** (in a re-configuration decision) can be seen in the 2010 Santa Fe Trail School District USD 434 move to attendance centers (Wegner). The Superintendent and board members clearly explained to teachers, parents, and community members, what it would mean to move from a neighborhood school structure to an attendance center model. The Superintendent led meetings with different groups, including teachers, parents, community members and civic groups. Students and parents also participated in a spring orientation to help the transition be smooth for all involved.

The **Santa Fe Trail transition was smooth because the district administration and board members realized the importance of staff and community buy-in.** The way to achieve such buy-in is through clear communication. Post-configuration, the **only true remaining complaint among parent groups with children in multiple buildings was having to travel to more than one school.** The homeschool rate in the district decreased from 30-40 students to only 1-2 families after going to grade level configurations. Also, parents now appreciate the fact that school programs no longer fall on the same evenings (as they used to in a neighborhood school configuration). This allows families to more fully participate in events and stay involved in the schools.

However, **transitioning multiple times during an academic career is a factor that should not be ignored.** A report regarding the Prospect Heights Public School District highlights school to school transitions as having a negative impact on students

(Gregg, 2004). **If creating multiple grade level centers increases the number of transitions dramatically, a school district needs to weigh the consequences against the benefits. Increased stress and anxiety, among the students and their families are such consequences.** Ways in which such stresses can be reduced should be determined to alleviate this issue.

### **Conclusions**

Clearly, there are many factors to consider when determining the feasibility of re-configuring a school district from a “neighborhood school” model to an attendance center model. If these reviews show anything useful, it is at least the very fact that every school district is unique. The most important factors in one district may not be the most important factors in another. Allowing input in the decision-making process from all stake holders, addressing all valid concerns, and doing what is best for the education of the students impacted, should be priorities for any board of education considering such re-configuration.

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## **SUPERINTENDENT SURVEY RESPONSE:**

### **MOVING FROM NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS TO ATTENDANCE CENTERS**

As part of this study, the policy issue for school districts which would culminate in a district moving from neighborhood schools to attendance centers was addressed through a survey to districts that have made this adjustment. This issue has been longstanding for school districts and many districts in a host of states have discussed this issue with a final decision that culminated in this change of educational policy. As a means of seeing how this policy change has been implemented in several Illinois districts, the author asked a set of four questions on how this policy change was implemented, reasons thereof, results and future suggestions for districts contemplating such a policy change.

The districts will not be named; they were randomly selected based upon the relative size and complexity of the district and the comparability with the Canton school district. Each of the districts will be labeled as A, B, C, D. It is my hope that this summary of experiences will prove beneficial to the Canton school district as they discuss this policy change.

#### **Question one: What was the original intent or motivation for this policy change?**

District A: Unbalanced class sizes, having to make hiring decisions in August after registration, unaligned instruction related to curriculum.

District B: The original intent was to improve equitable opportunities for kids. We had three K-6 facilities and each provided different exposures and opportunities for art, band, music, athletics, and instructional time.

District C: District X is 152 square miles that has two k-5 buildings less than 2 miles apart with NO BOUNDARIES defining who went where. I inherited a district with two schools that were considered different among the community; one being a “prestigious” school and the other not so much. Anyway, due to our mobility rate hovering around 20% and a contract that says classes will be balanced, I was forced to call parents each summer to inform them that their child was being removed from the school that they knew to the other. This wasn’t good for kids. And I sold the community on that fact along with a one-time change would ensure all students moved together.

District D: Unhealthy competition between elementary schools. We had the image that one school was the better k-3 school than the other, and it created negative attitudes about the schools we also found it difficult for teachers in the same grade to collaborate and provide consistent instruction. This has been a non-issue now that we have Prek-1 and 2-3 buildings.

**Question 2: What issue or problems did you face during this process?**

District A: Tradition and perception, nobody likes change, busing changes.

District B: Problems included small communities giving up their neighborhood schools.

Still maintained an attendance center, but not the same as the k-7 facility.

Transportation; longer time on buses. Families with children attending different schools with starting and ending times. Teachers not wanting to teach in older facility when they were presently in a newer one. Same with parents.

District C: The largest issue was the nay sayers who wanted to know every specific detail of how the moves would occur and how we would be able to continue our “small



local schools.” I had to communicate and communicate and communicate that we don’t have small local schools and how exactly we would make the moves. People didn’t want to hear this and found fault with every suggestion. People tried to stop this on every side.

District D: Teachers strongly opposed the change. They like their school faculty and didn’t want to break it up. We had several people talk at a board meeting, but the decision was to move forward and we haven’t looked back. Now that the faculty have consistent instructional time, and formed a new family, they would never want to change back.

**Question 3: What advice would you give to districts considering this process?**

District A: Be transparent. We formed a community study group to look at the issue and develop a recommendation for the Board to consider. We had a public meeting at which anyone could speak before the Board.

District B: Take your time. Listen to concerns. Communicate, communicate, and communicate. Make sure full support of Board. Not all will be positive. Let people know that there will be some negative. Hopefully upside will outweigh downside.

District C: Don’t do it unless you can point very specifically to an issue that needs to be addressed. I was able to tell the story of families feeling we were tearing their child from the school they loved like the family was moving to a new district. I was able to tell very specific stories about what we were doing were bad for our students. I was able to share that in our local parade, the competition between the two elementary buildings on the float was worse than our football rivalries. We were not united as a district and I was

able to leverage that in the hopes of building community pride and doing what is best for our students.

District D: Proceed, but with caution.

**Question 4: What have been the result(s) of this change for your district?**

District A: No problems once bussing was hammered out.

District B: Very positive. After moving to attendance centers, it made it much easier to pass referendum for new elementary school. Less community ownership with attendance centers.

District C: A new Board of Education with individuals who were not fans of the change or who state that they are fans of change but now It was implemented it definitely occurred. I am living through this repercussion. However, the articulation between the teachers in instruction as well as what grade people go on what field trip have been worth it. In addition, the 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers who used to get the students from the two elementary buildings are seeing less bullying among the students. It used to be the girls from this school wouldn't let the girls from that school into their clique. The cliques are longer as we are one district. The pros have been far out weighted by the cons. I would do it again. BUT we were not small local schools as our district was in the past. I do not think that the new site-based reporting would be an adequate reason to go through the pain of the move. I am glad as attendance my Title Comparability report is easier. I am also glad that I will not need to face why this k-5 building has more special education teachers. But honestly the new site based reporting will even things out with

proper planning in districts with multiple elementary buildings. The move is painful and VERY difficult – you need the right reason.

District D: Very positive, consistent instruction, collaborative approach dealing with issues at the same grade. One negative issue from parents that was brought up during the process was they liked having the kids in the same building for a longer period of time. Possible with siblings, (less schools to work with) this hasn't been an issue with the new system. Ideally we would have kids at the same building for at least 3 years, but our buildings will not hold that number of kids. Better all 2<sup>nd</sup> graders together than to have 2<sup>nd</sup> graders with kindergarteners.