

## Crossroads Middle School Redesign FAQ Document July 2023

### Curriculum/Instruction/Assessment

- How is the curriculum managed for the 2023-24 school year? Is 8th grade repeating 7th or 7th skipping to 8th?
  - **In the State of New Jersey, the anchor standards are organized in grade-level bands. At the middle school level (6-8), there is no requirement that a student learns physical science in 8th grade and life science in 7th grade. When our middle school originally split into mono-grade classes, our Office of Curriculum and Instruction had autonomy to distribute the standards as they saw fit. With the shift to multi-age classrooms for 7th and 8th graders, we are delivering the standards in an “A YEAR” and “B YEAR” format. By the end of 8th grade, students will be instructed in all expected standards. Teachers will deliver the “A YEAR” course to both 7th & 8th grade students simultaneously. The following year, they will deliver the “B YEAR” course to all students. There is no splitting of content, no repeating, nor is there any skipping.**
- If in B year, 7th graders are studying 8th grade curriculum, then in A year, they will be studying 7th grade curriculum. In a way, they are going from a higher study level to lower. Is that correct?
  - **No, that is not correct. Please read the answer to the question above to understand how the curriculum will work for a multi-age classroom.**
- How will Math be integrated with other subjects?
  - **Math will be integrated with the other subjects in the same way that it has been. Math courses are leveled at the middle school. Students will continue to take the math courses in sequence at their present readiness levels. Please [visit this link](#) for more information about math in middle school.**
- How is this mixed learning not a demotion for the 8th graders?
  - **No students are being demoted for the upcoming school year. 8th grade students will move to 8th grade. All students will be learning new material in a multi-age classroom during the upcoming school year.**
- What plans to address NJSLA score impacts because of this model?

- **Each year, schools engage in data analysis to address our NJSLA scores and use the tools provided to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement. We will continue this work, as well as using our current student data as part of planning differentiated instruction for all students. Furthermore, we will continue to use our data to drive professional development, instructional practices, and curriculum review.**
- **What about encores? Will kids learn the same thing for health and language?**
  - **World Language is taught sequentially, so it will continue to be taught within grade levels. Health will also continue to be taught within grade levels to address developmentally appropriate topics. Other encore classes such as art, music and technology may have multi-age classrooms.**
- **What grade NJSLA will the kids take?**
  - **Students will take the NJSLA for their grade level, as prescribed by NJDOE. As the NJSLA is based upon the standards, and we will be teaching to the standards, we do not expect multi-age classrooms to have a negative impact on students' NJSLA performance.**
- **How will this change impact placement in high school?**
  - **It will have no impact on placement in high school. Placement will take place as it always has in the past.**

### **Social Emotional Learning**

- **What are the specific benefits for 8th graders (socially development wise)? Are they remaining with their core unit teachers from 7th grade?**
  - **In the book Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14, Author Chip Wood describes 8th Grade Students as being in the prime developmental stage to emerge as leaders. He states, "Thirteen-year-olds want more freedom and will thrive with a reasonably increased level of responsibility". With this in mind, our teachers are already preparing to meet the social and developmental needs of the adolescent child. 8th Graders will have the opportunity to be leaders, role models, exemplars, tutors, experts, and much more, all meeting that developmental needs described earlier.**
  - **In preparation for this shift, our schools have realigned the core teacher assignments so as to provide each team (unit) with a balance of current 7th and current 8th grade teachers. Thus, some students may have the same teacher(s) and some may not.**

- How will teachers deal with immature and not behaving younger students in the same unit?
  - **Every year we have students who struggle with regulating behaviors in various situations. Our schools will continue to meet the needs of each individual child, using positive teacher language and logical consequences so as to maintain a respectful and thriving classroom environment.**
- How do we ensure that our children are prepared to excel in this mixed unit?
  - **As parents, you can encourage your child to be ready to learn each and every day. During the summer months, you can support your child by working on the summer math assignment, as well as by reading at least one book of choice. [MATH READING](#)**

### **Bullying**

- How will bullying be handled with 8th being with younger 7th?
  - **Bullying issues will be handled as they always have been. NJ public schools are mandated to follow the HIB guidelines set forth by the NJDOE. Please [visit this link](#) for more information about HIB guidelines and the District HIB Policy**
- How will you address bullying issues?
  - **Please read the answer to the question above if you need information regarding how bullying issues are addressed in middle school.**

### **Structure**

- Will 7th graders have 8th grade teachers and units?
  - **For the upcoming school year, 7th and 8th grade units in both schools are composed of teachers who are coming from both grade levels. Teachers with experience from both grade levels will be in every unit.**
- Will there be different groups based on the ability of students or will it be a random distribution of students? How do we evaluate kids to group them? What is the criteria?
  - **Every unit is meant to be a reflection of the larger school environment. Units are an effective way to take a large school environment and make it smaller and more personalized for our students. Students of all abilities, math levels, World Language choices, music/non-music, gender, ethnicity, etc. comprise a unit. That is true now under our current structure and will continue to be true next school year.**
- Will rising 8th graders have one teacher per subject for the whole academic year?

- **Yes, they will, as they do this year. The only exception is if they are in a co-taught class, in which case they will have the same two teachers for that subject for the entire year. The same is true under our current structure.**
- What if students have to move out after 1 year to another district?
  - **The implications of moving to a new district are no different than they have ever been. Districts do not teach all topics in the same order. They teach to the standards.**
- How will the class size be impacted?
  - **We do not expect class size to be impacted by the restructuring of the units.**
- In the future, will 6th grade be merged as well?
  - **No, they will not.**

#### **Schedule**

- Will 6th and 7th be split for lunch?
  - **Yes, they will be, as they are now.**
- We heard that 3 units will have one schedule, and the other 3 different, does that mean we will have split lunch?
  - **Yes, the 7th - 8th grade units will operate on two different schedules, which will mean that there will be two different lunch times.**

#### **Making 8th Grade Special ~ Milestones**

- Will the rising 8th graders get all the extra special things like 8th grade formal or field trips like the previous year's 8th grade?
  - **We will still be celebrating milestone events with our 8th grade students to make them feel special and to celebrate their passage to high school. We will still plan a semi-formal for them, an 8th grade breakfast for them, unit celebrations, an 8th grade clap out and an 8th grade recognition for them. Field Trips are approved on a yearly basis.**
- Our rising 8th graders missed 5th grade graduation due to covid, they are going to miss being special in 8th grade. How will they feel special?
  - **Please read the answer to the question above to understand how we will continue to celebrate milestones with our 8th grade students.**

#### **Supporting Students Who Struggle**

- Are there strategies/stage gates to review student adaptation to mixed school grades to assist the students to excel academically/emotionally/socially?

- A great resource is the book referenced earlier, Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14 by Chip Wood.