

5/6 Questions and Answers

1. What is the curriculum for the upper elementary schools?

The process of reconfiguration has not changed our curriculum. Our curriculum maps are available on the FPS website at <http://www.farmington.k12.mi.us/curriculum/guides.php>.

2. Differentiation for the Math - What does that mean?

Differentiation means meeting the needs of all learners, in the curriculum provided at their specific grade level. Often, this means adjusting the level of complexity presented to meet the current aptitude of the learners, which provides the “right” level of challenge.

3. Is Farmington exploring an Advanced Math Class?

FPS will employ a process by which all students are screened to see if they are in need to advance to the next grade level. Occasionally, there are students who have this need. For the vast majority of students, teachers can provide an appropriate level of challenge within their grade level curriculum.

4. Is there going to be a 6:30 a.m. bus to another school for advanced math? Why can't it be right at the school?

Arrangements for students who need out of grade level math classes are made during the summer. The decision to hold classes at Upper Elementary Schools or Middle Schools is largely dependent on the number of students who will be participating in these classes.

5. What is PBIS and how is it structured?

PBIS is a system of teaching students expected behaviors and then providing positive reinforcement when those behaviors are displayed. Each school is encouraged to construct a system that meets the needs of their school culture. Students are also given the chance to practice appropriate behavior and are given feedback.

6. What is a teaching team? Who serves on it?

Team teaching partners are usually 2 or 3 faculty members who together, teach their “team” of students. Teachers share responsibility for ensuring the entire required curriculum is learned.

7. What does recommendation #3 really mean?

Recommendation #3 speaks to creating a common culture of teaming at the district level. This work will help ensure consistency of teacher performance and student experience.

8. Would students get their schedule in advance? Pick-up prior?

Schedule pick-up will happen in mid to late August, and specific times/locations will be shared over the summer by each school.

9. Is there differentiation in other subjects? Any plans for this?

Differentiation should be applied to multiple content areas. Right now, our focus is in language arts and math. In the future, we will continue to train our teachers to be better at differentiation in all subjects.

10. Will this feedback be going everywhere?

Assuming that “feedback” means the information gathered during the four 5/6 parent forums, the answer is yes! In addition to completing this Q&A, information gathered will be shared with Upper Elementary Faculty and District Instructional Leadership.

11. How do we ensure that behavior doesn't impact instruction time?

Through the implementation of specific behavioral standards, which are taught and monitored consistently, our Upper Elementary schools will establish strong cultures of learning. A hallmark of a “culture of learning” is that the behavior of individuals doesn’t derail the learning of the group.

12. How do we address behavior immediately?

Our student code of conduct provides explicit guidelines on what school faculty should report to administration for intervention. Our administration has several tools available for helping those students that need additional support: school counseling services, referrals to community organizations, school-based mediation, etc.

13. How do we help 4th graders to prepare for 5th grade?

Thankfully, our current curriculum alignment helps to ensure that students have the content knowledge necessary to be successful at Upper Elementary. As students move from into our Upper Elementary Schools, both learning and social events are planned. These ongoing events help prepare students for the exciting world of our 5th/6th grade schools.

14. How can we ensure that foreign language is meaningful?

The goal of our current 5th/6th World Language program is to provide exposure and awareness. Language proficiency becomes part of the expectations once students participate in High School level coursework, which can happen in 7th grade. Our teachers are working to ensure that students gain understanding of the different types of language and culture that are around us everyday.

15. How do we ensure conference doesn't interfere with learning?

Assuming that “conference” refers to Parent/Teacher Conferences, these events are scheduled each year. The goal of Parent/Teacher Conferences is to provide families important information about the progress of their students.

16. How do we address bus issues? (behavior)

Working collaboratively with our transportation department, school administrators address behavior concerns related to transport to and from school. The best way to address any behavior concern is to teach the expected behaviors. This is the cornerstone of PBIS, a system of proactive behavior instruction which is being developed in all of our schools.

17. How do we move away from "speed conferences"?

Schools are often looking for ways to better serve their community, and a discussion of the "best" type of conferences would be part of our work. Please share your concerns related to conferences with both your student's teachers and school administration.

18. How do we ensure that everyone is on the same page in curriculum?

There are three ways that we work to ensure continuity of curriculum delivery. First, each teacher is provided a curriculum map for all content areas. The curriculum map outlines much of what is expected to be taught. Second, we have common assessments in many of our courses, which teachers use to monitor what students are learning. Finally, administrators should be conducting regular classroom walk-throughs where they get "dipstick" measures of what students are learning and the methods teachers are using to instruct.

19. How to transition 6th grade to 7th grade schedule? What is being done to transition to 7/8?

Much like the transition from 4th to 5th, the transition from 6th to 7th includes events such as building tours, visits from counselors and administrators, discussions about future expectations and social events.

20. Feeder elementary school - will where students went to elementary school impact their teaming in 6th grade (feeder school balance)?

It is a recommendation of the 5th/6th Work Group that efforts be made to schedule students with peers from Lower Elementary Schools. While this may also be a consideration in scheduling 6th grade, it will likely be more important which students they were scheduled with in 5th grade.

21. Is there going to be some consistency in teaching style? Teachers who were formerly secondary & elementary have different styles? Do teachers collaborate - different teachers = different projects and activities.

Maintaining consistency of instruction is important and we will continue to strive to see that all teachers provide high quality experiences for their learners. Having said that, there must also exist room for creativity in teaching. Each teacher team should consider the needs of their students, as well as their strengths as teachers, when deciding how to best provide instruction.

22. Gifted programs - Is the school district considering any form of gifted program?

At this time in the 5th/6th grades, FPS is not planning on providing a unique program designed for "gifted" students.

23. What does the day in the life of a homeroom teacher look like?

The answer to this question is likely determined by the needs of students and the type of collaboration within a teacher team. Please ask this question to your child's homeroom teacher as the year begins.

24. How does the schedule run? - What does the schedule look like? Will it be consistent? How and when will it change?

Individual teams will be largely responsible for constructing the daily schedule. With the exception of lunch/recess and specialist classes, teacher teams have the ability to construct a daily schedule that provides for the needs of students and the demands of the content. Our goal is to have teacher teams that have the capacity to change their schedule, as needed, to best serve their instructional practices.

25. Do we use Family Access? Do all teachers use it? What can parents expect?

In August, we will transition to Zangle which is new student data management software. Zangle does have “parent connect” which is much like Family Access, and we want to utilize this system to maintain communications between home and school.

26. How will a 4th grader move into 5th grade math? How will the selection be made as to which class is most appropriate for each student?

At the 5th grade level, students are scheduled into math classes in which the Bridges resources are used. “Tracking” or the election of different math classes isn’t available for students in Upper Elementary school.

27. What reference materials are there and would a website be available for math homework and parent help?

This is an excellent idea, and we’re going to work to increase our resources for parents. Currently, there are some math and science online available to families and many teachers provide specific resources for their classrooms.

28. Will there be accelerated classes offered for other classes? (science/reading)

At this time, there are no plans to create “accelerated” classes for any content areas at the 5th and 6th grades. We do have a process for acceleration in math and whole grade level acceleration (jumping a grade level).

29. Is 5th and 6th grade too young for dances?

This topic, what are appropriate events for Upper Elementary children, is likely a great PTA dialogue. Hopefully, our PTA’s and school faculty can work collaboratively to develop events that are fun and developmentally appropriate.

30. What about science books? Does every student have one?

At the 5th and 6th grade, we use Foss Science Kits and students are not issued textbooks. The emphasis in our science program is to provide hand-on, investigatory science experiences.

31. Is there a school code of conduct for parents/kids to reference? Expectations, consequences, etc.

The district provides a code of conduct, which can be accessed from the FPS website http://www.farmington.k12.mi.us/student_code/

32. How much parent support do you encourage? Would you be willing to consider parents on the school bus?

It has not been common practice for us to utilize parents as bus riders. However, there are many opportunities for families to volunteer for supervision duties: at school (before and after), during lunch/recess, at after school events, copy room help, etc. Please contact your school administration and teachers for more direction on how you can help.

33. Would it be possible to consider the option of more art during specials?

The specialist schedule is designed with the goal of providing learners several different types of experiences. The 5th/6th specialist schedule provides for one trimester of art, every other day. At this time, we are not considering increasing adding more art to a student's day.

34. What are the top 3 issues from last year that you don't want to talk about?

There are no issues that we "don't want to talk about." Rather, parent forums were conducted to uncover issues that may not have been considered in the work of the 5/6 work group.

35. If a child is already in advance level in all subjects will they be challenged in all levels?

If by "advance level" the idea refers to those students that have demonstrated strong achievement, then yes, we're going to provide challenges for those students. Depending on the content and the student, there are times when all students may exhibit "advanced level" understanding. Therefore, teacher teams are going to work to develop tasks that meet the needs of all students. This work by our teachers is ongoing and our faculty is always looking for ways to provide the "right" level of challenge to their learners.

36. How will you communicate progress to parents? How will you measure progress?

FPS utilizes several measures to communicate progress: report cards standardized testing results, parent/teacher conferences, phone calls/letters from the teacher, etc. If you have a question about your student's progress, please contact your child's teachers.

37. How will it be determined who will be on a 2 person team as oppose to a 3 person team?

Initially, teachers are asked for their preferences and then the administrators will finalize these assignments.

38. What replaces world language after 6 weeks?

World Languages is a 6 week block, with no "replacement" when the session is completed. Rather, additional time is allocated to the "core" content areas.

39. Have behavior problems increased? Is the Code of Conduct followed consistently?

We are closely tracking the frequency and type of behaviors that are being exhibited by our students. Because this is the first year of this configuration in these schools, comparisons between past years is difficult. To compound this problem, our previous elementary schools used a variety of methods to document and monitor student behavior. As we move forwards, one of the areas that we continue to improve is our consistency; across classrooms, across buildings and in fact, across levels.

40. How do you teach math to a wide variety of math levels?

Through differentiated instruction. In differentiated instruction students are placed at the center of teaching and learning. Because each learner comes to school with a different set of learning needs, examples of which include differing educational, personal, and communal contexts and varying degrees of academic skill development, differentiated instruction advocates that the educator proactively plans a variety of instruction methods so as to best facilitate effective learning experiences which are suited to the various learning needs within the classroom.

41. How to deal with the DELTA students? Are there offerings for those students like Wordmasters or DELTA math during the day?

The Bridges Math curriculum, Connected Math curriculum, Readers Workshop and Writers Workshop all are designed to challenge students at various levels and with various learning needs. These approaches to meeting the needs of our students will provide the challenges necessary for all types of learners.

42. Will Zangle allow parents to look at grades?

Yes. Zangle has a program called "Parent Connect" that enables parents to view student progress on-line. We are working with our teachers right now to establish what will expectations will be

43. How do you assign teams?

Teams are established based upon a number of variables including: subject matter expertise, compatibility of teaching style and the desire of teachers to work together.

44. How do specials work?

Students have two trimesters of physical education, one trimester of art, three trimesters of some form of music (general music, band or orchestra) and World Language for 50 minutes per day for approximately 7 weeks.

45. How does teaming work?

Two or three teachers share the same group of students for all core academic instruction (language arts, math, science & social studies). The team of two or three teachers work together to deliver and pace this curriculum in a manner that is beneficial to the students on that team.

46. What kind of time frame does Warner have for assessment?

Students are assessed using the MEAP and IOWA test. In addition, three times a year, students are assessed on their literacy acquisition using the Fountas & Pinnell assessment.

47. Can students exist on two class lists in Zangle?

Students will appear on a class list for each teacher they see during any school day.

48. Besides math is there other acceleration?

Through the use of differentiated instruction, acceleration is possible in all content areas. In differentiated instruction students are placed at the center of teaching and learning. Because each learner comes to school with a different set of learning needs, examples of which include differing educational, personal, and communal contexts and varying degrees of academic skill development, differentiated instruction advocates that the educator proactively plans a variety of instruction methods so as to best facilitate effective learning experiences which are suited to the various learning needs within the classroom.

49. Why not 2 bands - do we need 225 students in one band?

The bands are broken into instrumentation families for instructional purposes. On an annual basis, as we review the number of students signing up within our music programs and establish appropriate classes based upon instrumentation and numbers enrolled.

50. Should there be a standard for contacting families whose students are below "C"?

Both Warner and Power are in the process of perfecting the AIP (Academic Improvement Plan) process used within the school. An AIP is designated on the report card for any child achieving below a "C" in a particular content area. Parent communication is a part of this AIP process.

51. Why doesn't each student have the same schedule or close to the same number of teachers? (not considering specials)

In the future, depending upon whether a student is on a two person or three person team, the total number of teachers he/she sees during the day will change. A student on a three person team could see as many as 4 (not counting World Language) and a student on a two person team could see as many as 3 teachers on a daily basis.

52. Are you keeping recess next year?

Yes

53. What is the ratio of noon aides to students on the playground?

About 40-50 students to 1 adult.

54. Is Farmington going to separate students by academic performance?

Teams will not be separated by academic performance. Within the teams, teachers may do some ability grouping of students, at times, to meet the diverse needs of our students.

55. How many 5th grade classrooms will there be at each school?

Between 14 and 17 depending upon the enrollment at each school.

56. Are all the teams being taught the same curriculum?

Yes (grade specific)

57. How does a teacher or counselor identify a child that is ADD?

ADD is a medical diagnosis. Only a physician can diagnose ADD. Teachers and Counselors, when they see possible signs of any form of medical condition, notify parents.

58. What is the special ed referral process? Who can initiate it?

When school personnel suspect a student might be appropriate for special education referral, they would contact the family to seek permission to conduct special education testing. Parents can also initiate this process by contacting the school directly.

59. Intramurals? Will they be offered?

Currently, a number of before/after school programs are being offered through the PTA. Our 5/6 schools do not have athletic programs. Our district athletic programs begin at grade 7.

60. In the 5/6 instructional teams, can they keep those students together who are a similar group going to middle schools? (i.e. BV-WNR-EMS)

We will be keeping small groups of students, from each feeder school, together as we schedule classes in our 5/6 schools. In other words, a class of 28 students might be made up of 7 students from 4 different feeder schools

61. How do you transition 5th grade into schools; are you doing something in fall? (locker, rooms, etc.)

Both upper-elementary schools have a TIES program. The TIES program is an orientation and transition program developed to help students transition socially, emotionally, and academically between 4th and 5th grade. Watch the listserv for each school for other opportunities being offered for parents and students.

62. How can PBIS be implemented on the school bus?

PBIS can be implemented on the school bus by having common bus behavior language and expectations on all busses. Drivers will teach the students the expected behaviors at the beginning of each school year with follow-up lessons throughout the school year.

63. Will parents be able to be involved in the PBIS team?

Yes parents will be able to be involved in their child(ren)'s schools PBIS team starting the 2011-12 school year.

64. How is advanced math being delivered next year? Are 6th graders going to 7th grade middle schools?

The details on math are still being examined. Students who are more than 1 grade level above target (a 5th grader needing 7th grade math, for example) will continue to be traveling to a middle school for math instruction.

65. How will students be placed? (want students kept together so they have some friends)

We will be keeping small groups of students, from each feeder school, together as we schedule classes in our 5/6 schools. In other words, a class of 28 students might be made up of 7 students from 4 different feeder schools.

66. Will 4th grade bump up for 5th grade math?

The details on math are still being examined. Students who are more than 1 grade level above target (a 5th grader needing 7th grade math, for example) will continue to be traveling to a middle school for math instruction.

67. Will anyone be able to just teach alone?

All teachers, within the core academic areas (language arts, math, social studies & science) will be members of two or three person teaching teams. We will have no “self contained” classrooms at our 5/6 schools.

68. Where is technology and media staffing?

There has been no change in staffing for media or technology. All 5/6 media centers will have a ½ time media specialist and a ½ time media support person.

69. Can health be online?

Health is not a “stand alone” class at the 5/6 level. Health is taught as part of the core instruction from the homeroom teacher.

70. Are we doing team building among the teachers?

Each school is working to help staff get to know one another. With the closing of schools, many 5/6 staff are new to the schools. Helping staff to get to know one another continues to be a high priority in our 5/6 schools.

71. Can Book Parade or Battle of the books continue in 5/6? Is this tied to media?

There is no money budgeted for Book Parade for the 2011-12 school year. This would be a great project for PTA's to consider for funding.

72. Are the teams going to be 2's 3's or 4's? should be consistent?

There will be 2 and 3 person teams within our 5/6 schools.

73. Gifted and talented? Honors classes?

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74. Why are the recommendations so vague?

The recommendations were not intended to be vague. Hopefully, the totality of this Q&A document will provide some insights to address any unanswered questions.

75. Are homeroom teachers teaching ELA? Or will the team decide?

The teaching team and school administration will work together to put the most qualified and most comfortable teachers providing the ELA instruction.

76. Will a teacher address multiple levels in the math implementation?

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77. Seems to be so much focus on math - where is the focus on writing?

Farmington uses Readers and Writers workshop as our primary instructional method in the area of literacy. This approach provides students with books and writing prompts that are adjusted to meet both their instructional level and their interests. The research in education strongly supports this as a “best practice” within literacy instruction.

78. How are MEAP scores? Iowa scores?

The MEAP test was administered early in the school year and really measures the proficiency of students within the prior year. As a district, we are awaiting our IOWA results. IOWA and MEAP results will be made available to parents.

79. Why is the first meeting September 29th, can't we be involved sooner?

We have since found September 29th is Rosh Hosanna so the date will be changed. We can look at having the meeting sooner.

80. What has not been considered (were there low priorities that did not make the recommendations list)?

There were not any items that were not included in the recommendation list.

81. Why is travel time an issue? Is it a logistical problem or an academic problem? How does restructuring schedule impact travel time and/or class time?

If a “period” is 50 minutes, travel time to and from would take 5 minutes each way. That impacts the amount of instructional time and there impacts academics. The restructuring won't have periods and will thus limit the number of times a student transitions to a different class.

82. Were teachers and administrators part of the process?

Teachers, administrators and support staff were all a part of the process.

83. Do the recommendations apply to 5th and 6th grade students?

Yes, for both.

84. Is there enough room on playground? What are the plans to improve? Why are students allowed only in certain areas?

The designers created the playgrounds for the number of students enrolled in each school. At times, certain areas are not open to students due to weather or the conditions of the fields. Staff at each school are working to identify alternatives and more structured activities during recess.

85. Are there organized sports?

At the upper elementary level, there are no athletic teams that compete against other schools. Some club/intramural programs have begun with the help of parent volunteers, Proud Dads and PTA.

86. What are lockers used for, do students get to practice using them?

Every student is assigned his/her own locker to keep books, backpacks, coats, lunch boxes, etc. As part of the orientation process in August, students will be able to practice using them.

87. Do principals have final say in teacher team assignment?

Yes.

88. When will team membership be set for teachers/students?

Teaching teams will be announced to the staff by the last day of school.

89. Will teachers be paid for summer planning?

We do not have plans or funds available to do this, at this time.

90. What is the identity of a 5th/6th grade?

What the 5/6 Work Group determined was an upper elementary is unique. A school that houses 5th and 6th grade students is not an elementary nor is it a middle school. Rather, is a school that meets the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of the students of these grade levels.

91. What interventions do we offer for students who need support?

At the upper elementary level, there is support for students for which English is a second language, those who have an IEP, those that have 504 plans, those who are accelerated in math, those that need additional time in English and those that need emotional and social support.

92. How will teams help struggling learners on their team?

Teams of teachers will have more resources between them. For example, one teacher may connect better with a student. Teachers may also divide students depending on need. For example, one may take 20 students who need help with a skill and the other teacher will take the remainder of the class for a short period of time.

93. Do student need recess? Options for girls (e.g. clubs, choices)

Yes! Studies have shown the physical activity tremendously helps students of this age group. Similarly, giving students free choice time during the day is also important. Staff are looking at how to better structure this part of the day, including clubs or other activities.

94. Advanced ELA (English Language Arts) - what would be provided to students to challenge them?

Teachers have classroom libraries, which offer leveled books that support many themes. There are also book rooms that have additional resources for teachers. Differentiated instruction within ELA is something all 5th and 6th grade teachers will have been trained in by the end of next year.

95. Is the curriculum the same between 5th and 6th grade?

No. There are specific benchmarks for each grade level.

96. What is the difference in the studying style between 5th and 6th grade?

The goal is to increase student's independence and ability to effectively manage time. While each child learns these skills in a different way and at different times, teachers work with each child to constantly move him or her forward.

97. Will all students be taught by a 4 person team or will there be 2 and 1 teacher teams?

All students will be taught by 2 or 3 person teams.

98. Will each team of teachers use the same media for communication with parents (wiki, moodle, webpage, etc.)

This will be discussed with all the teams of teachers as no decision has been reached. We know communication is very important.

99. Is there a protocol to communicate with teachers ...should you speak with the homeroom teacher? The subject teacher? Who do you speak to when a teacher will not communicate or work with you to support your child's success.

It is best to contact the teacher to whom your child is assigned. He or she can then best direct your question. If you are having trouble connecting, the assistant principal can further assist you.

100. How will students be scheduled for their interventionist time?

Once the teams are announced, interventionists will meet with them to decide when the best time to provide support to students. This will likely look different for each team.

101. How will parent teacher conferences be scheduled?

We don't have an answer to this yet, but will communicate the answer once we do.

102. How much Media time will students have each week?

This will vary, depending on the topic being discussed. Media is not a scheduled special.

103. How much physical activity will students receive each day/week/trimester?

For two trimesters, students will have PE every other day for 50 minutes each.

104. Is the “specials” schedule set in stone?

Yes.

105. How will parents be notified about spelling bees, geography bees, and math competitions?

The most common form of communication used is via school list serv announcements. You can sign up for each school’s listserv by going to <http://www.farmington.k12.mi.us/subscribe.php>

106. Can we have a district grading scale that is the same for all levels?

This is currently being discussed but we are not far enough along in the process to have it ready by the fall.

107. Can we offer a home economics class at the 5/6?

As of right now, we do not have the space available to offer classes such as these. We are not looking at this as an option.

108. Is there a possibility for offering computers instead of World language?

For next year, the answer is no. However, this will be discussed as we evaluate the changes and what specials 5th and 6th grades students have the opportunity to experience.

109. Do we have to make the same changes for both 5th and 6th graders?

Yes.