

Partner School/K-2, 3 or 4 schools:

Local District Overview:

San Carlos:

K-4 Schools:

- 4 Schools
- Enrollment between 350-400
- 20:1 class size in K-3 and 25-1 in 4th grade

5-8 Schools:

- 2 Schools
- Enrollment between 600-700

Los Lomas:

K- Schools:

- 1 School
- Enrollment around 600
- 20:1 class size in K-3 and 25-1 in 4th grade

4-8 Schools:

- 1 School
- Enrollment between 600-700

Possible Alternatives for Belmont-Redwood Shores:

1. Create 4 K-3 Schools in the district and convert the other 2 schools into 4-5 Schools
 - Positives:
 - 800 4-5 graders in the district next year would fill up 2 schools and alleviate crowding in the other 2 schools
 - A study on an Alaska school district suggests that splitting out elementary school into 2 separate grade levels (K-2 or K-3 and a separate school for older kids) results in older kids (4th and 5th graders) doing better than if they had attended a more traditional K-5 or K-6 schools
 - Concerns/Negatives:
 - 4 schools instead of 3 by the time kids are out of HS
 - Multiple school drop offs for parents with kids in different age groups
 - Could be 3 if you have a younger kid, a fifth grader and a 7th grader
 - Could be traffic issues with parents going to multiple schools
 - Would probably be a great deal of resistance to plan as it would affect the entire district (although the effect would be equal for everyone) and not just the areas currently affected by the proposed boundary change

2. Create three K-2 Schools and three 3-5 schools in the district and partner up schools (Cipriani and Fox, Nesbit and Central and Sandpiper and Redwood Shores Elementary)
 - Positives:
 - Would solve short term crowding issue by partnering schools with crowding issues with schools that have space
 - A study on an Alaska school district suggest that splitting out elementary school into 2 separate grade levels (K-2 or K-3 and a separate school for older kids) results in older kids (4th and 5th graders) doing better than if they had attended a more traditional K-5 or K-6 schools
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3. Convert all the elementary schools into K-4 and convert Ralston to 5-8
 - Positives:
 - Studies have found that 5th graders do well in such an environment if done properly -- split up 5th and 6th graders and teach team in a more hybrid elementary/middle school setting (single core teacher similar to elementary school with a few outside classes) and teach the 7th and 8th graders in a more traditional middle school setting
 - Would alleviate crowding at all elementary schools
 - Concerns/Negatives:
 - Would severely lead to overcrowding at Ralston -- not sure if Ralston can accommodate an additional 400 kids -- Can some of the money for Ralston from the bonds be used for this purpose?
 - Would also require a curriculum adjustment at Ralston for both 5th and 6th grade to do it right
 - Would probably be a great deal of resistance to plan as it would affect the entire district. Although resistance might not be as much since it would only impact parents of 5th graders
4. Convert all the elementary schools into K-4, convert Ralston to 5-8 and open a new 5-8 school east of El Camino for kids currently attending Nesbit, Sandpiper and Redwood Shores Elementary
 - Positives:
 - Probably the best long term solution to overcrowding and kids education/performance
 - Would alleviate crowding at all elementary schools and Ralston
 - Concerns/Negatives:
 - Very costly and a non-started for the short term -- estimated land and construction cost probably 30 million plus

Summary of Research on this Topic:

A review of the literature and research on grade configuration suggest some key points for consideration. Following this summary of key points are links to various full studies on the topic of grade configuration.

- Rural schools are most likely to have unusual grade configurations.
- Very little research attempts to determine cause and effect on grade configuration.
- Some of the studies focus on the impact of transition on learning when students move from one school to another. These studies suggest that transitions may have a negative impact on students and should be minimized.
- No particular sequence of grade spans is perfect or guarantees student achievement and social adjustment.
- The largest percentage and most common forms of school grade span configurations include Pre K or K to grade 5, Pre K or K to grade 6, and grades 4, 5, or 6 to grade 7 or 8.
- There is no clear indication that any grade configuration is more successful than any other.
- Cluster schools are gaining in popularity. Cluster schools include grade groupings such as K-1, K-2, 2-3, 3-5, 4-5 in a single school or a single grade level in one school.

Factors that school districts may want to consider when making grade configuration decisions include:

- The cost and length of student travel
- A possible increase or decrease in parent involvement
- The number of students at each grade level in a school
- The impact of school setting on student learning and achievement
- The impact on neighborhood schools
- The number of school transitions (moving to a new school) for each student
- The opportunities for interaction among age groups
- The influence of older students on younger students
- The design of the school building

Again, research has provided no definitive answer on the most effective grade configuration. What is strongly implied by broader educational research is that the classroom teacher and the teaching and learning processes used in the classroom on a daily basis have the greatest impact on student learning and achievement.

Here is a chart prepared in a study for a Texas school district discussing the advantages of K-5 schools versus a K-2 and 3-5 split:

Advantages of K-5	Advantages of K-2 and 3-5 (or similar split)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More convenient for families for parental involvement, transportation, PTA participation, and parent volunteers • Grade level communication of curriculum alignment is easier to facilitate • Consistent communication with families since all children are at one campus • Less duplication of efforts by PTA in preparation of newsletters, officers, and activities • No transition between grade 2 and 3 • Reduces turnover in student population frequency • Staff/student/ parent relationships have more longevity due to the same students being at a campus for more years • More opportunities for cross-age activities such as older students helping out younger students and tutoring activities • Can increase the number of positive older role models for younger students • May be able to sustain more parent involvement • Avoid scheduling overlaps in family involvement activities from campus to campus • Increased opportunities for vertical alignment from grade to grade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More sections/classrooms per grade which may decrease personnel costs • More classrooms per grade means more opportunities to match students to teachers according to learning and teaching styles • Opportunities for teacher collaboration or mentoring at a specific grade level are increased with more teachers per grade level • Easier to maintain focus on improvements relevant to a particular grade level (such as grade 3 Reading, grade 4 Writing, and grade 5 Science) because less number of grade levels • Increase in the racial and socioeconomic diversity at schools • Increase in the flexibility of scheduling with more grade levels (With more sections per grade level, teachers could decrease the number of subjects taught by pairing classes and increase their knowledge of specific subjects to teach) • Decrease potential for negative role models and bullying of younger students by older students

The following are links to several full reports and studies on grade configuration:

- <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/digest98/d98t099.html>
- <http://www.nwrel.org/request/july97/article3.html>
- <http://peterli.com/archive/spm/1094.shtm>
- <http://ceep.crc.uiuc.edu/poptopics/gradeconfig.html>
- <http://www.nwrel.org/request/july97/textonly.html>
- <http://www.aasa.org/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?ItemNumber=2672>
- <http://www.ericdigests.org/2003-2/rural.html>
- <http://edfacilities.org>
- <http://www.newobserver.com/146/v-print/story/547649.html>