

Freeport School District
Freeport, Illinois
Office of the Superintendent
“Making a Difference For Each Student”

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Peter Flynn, Superintendent
RE: Grade Structure

DATE: March 16, 2009

As we continue to respond to questions and investigate possibilities around the change in grade structure of our school district, we are convinced that this is the best way to go for getting us to the next level of student achievement. This is true both from an academic sense, as well as from an emotional growth perspective. Students going to the '5th and 6th Grade' school now get a false sense that they are ready for more independence.

Through our most recent forums, people are more aware of the issue of transitions and the impediment that they play in the progress of our students through their years of schooling. This new grade structure would eliminate two of the transitions so that students will experience their first transition after fifth grade, instead of experiencing two transitions before they complete fifth grade under our current system.

However, due to the dialogue and questions that have come up, we are thinking about modifying our current recommendation, so that they following will be taken into consideration:

- Place **pre-school children** in a pre-school classroom as close to their homes as possible taking into consideration the location of their Kindergarten classroom
- When looking at the **boundaries** and feeder pattern for the middle schools balance the need to have **diversity in race and income** levels with the need to have optimal opportunity for **parent/family involvement**.
- Leave the self-contained **HAPP program at Center School**, which will add to the diversity of that school.
- Move the **ELL/ESL program to Blackhawk School**, since more than 60% of the participating students in this program live in the Blackhawk School boundary.
- With our \$48,000,000 budget, **we can afford Grade Structure** changes if this becomes our priority.
- Remain flexible with the **non-teaching/administrative leadership team** at the middle level. The decision here should not be based upon who is in a certain position at this time, but rather what will work best for students in the environment that we are trying to establish. At the same time, we will look at **where the best return might come** as a result of an investment in leadership personnel. The sub-committee on middle level education is going to contact other middle schools of the size proposed to see what kind of structure that they have for administrators, counselors and deans.
- The **start time** issue was passed to the Grade Structure Committee after the Start Time Committee finished its work. We are looking at the number of early morning, before school programs and how many students are involved in those. We know that there are 135 students in the Freeport Family Y program. The other major programs are at Immanuel Lutheran, Amity, and Open Bible. After hearing parents expressing concerns, we are looking at the possibility of an 8:05 start time for High School and 9:15 for Elementary School.

I may have more to add to this by Wednesday evening.

Our Mission
In partnership with students, family and community,
we educate every student for the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow
through the continuous pursuit of excellence.