

Middle School Visit Questionnaire

School Visited: Oyster River Middle School, September 28, 2018

RES Attendees: Marie Soucy, Celeste Christo, Sarah Harrington, and Andrea Papoutsy

1. How do they structure the 5th grade classes/teams/teachers? How many 5th grade classes and total students?

- 8 teachers, 2 person teams for 5th grade; ELA / Math, and Social Studies and Science
 - 4 teams; 2 teachers for each team; one teaches ELA and SS or Science; other teaches Math and SS or Science (they decide independently)
 - Approx 160 students; 8 classes, Approx 20-25 students per class
- 6th/7th/8th grade = 4 person teams
- See Master Schedule for 5th grade (photos attached)
- No self-contained classrooms
- The school transitioned the 5th grade into their middle school years ago due to space issues (neither school rep we spoke to was there at the time of that transition)
- Students get off the bus together (all grades) and wait together with a staff member before entering the building. Students can go inside or go to the cafeteria
- One Team (½ of the 5th grade) is in one wing together (separate from the other grades)
- Second Team (½ of 5th grade) is upstairs with the rest of the school (their rooms are clustered together but they are not on a separate floor of the building from the other grades)
- 5th graders have a homeroom teacher (“home base”). Morning meeting every day with that teacher.
- Students move from class to class – usually across the hall except for UA
- Teams communicate weekly.
- They use Power School
- Core Subjects x5, each is a 40 min class + “Bobcat Time” = RTI block
- NO World Language for 5th Grade (only 6th/7th and 8th)
- 5th graders have chrome books.
- 5th graders use lockers for belongings.

Advantages of this Model: Their perspective of the advantage of 2-person team for 5th grade

- Greater opportunities for kids to be in class with different groups of students
- Allows teachers to specialize with a specific subject they may be more well versed in (team decides who will teach which subject)
- Makes the transition to 6th grade easier because a 2 person team helps students transition from being in self-contained classrooms as a 4th grader and moving on to 4 person teams for 6-7-8.

- Continuity with what is being taught (self-contained teachers who can do their own thing vs. 2-person team where they collaborate more)

2. What have they tried in the past that hasn't worked well?

- The principal reported that they believe the transition for the 5th graders into the Middle School goes very smoothly. They did not share any concerns
- They discouraged the use of self-contained classrooms which would separate the kids; Good to introduce 2 person teams as they transition from self-contained in grade 4 and move on to 4 person teams in grades 6-7-8.
- Suggested that the 5th grade kids sit at the front of the bus – not because they have had any safety concerns but because it reduces anxiety for the kids to know that they are getting out of the bus first; Students riding the bus to ORMS are in grades 5-12.

3. What do they do to prepare incoming 5th grade for the transition?

- 8th grade students go to visit the elementary school and meet with 4th graders in the Spring (Community Service Day) – Slide show and Q&A from students, answered by 8th graders and teacher
- Middle School has a Parent Night at the School in the Spring – Describe the 5th grade program and Q&A
- In Grade 4, students with IEPs have the IEP meetings at the Middle School so the parents and students can get familiar with the building
- Middle School Principal visits the 4th Grade Students at the Elementary School and has Q&A
- Step-Up Day on the last day of school; 1.5 hour visit and tour; Grade 4 learn who their teachers are, meet teachers and get T-Shirt that says “Oyster River Middle School – Bobcats”
- Summer – Principal welcomes parents and students to come visit (nothing formal)
- Email to all 5th grade parents over the summer with FAQ (see handout)
- Teacher Workshop Day – Opening Day; Teachers stay late that day to meet 5th Grade Students and Parents before the first day of school; 5-6:00pm; usually 80-90% of parents attend

4. How much interaction do the 5th grade students have with the other grades?

- Not much contact between 5th grade and other grades
- Contact at arrival and dismissal outside but they are supervised (they do not experience any issues between the grades); older kids do not hang out with the 5th grade

- Incidental contact in the hallway but there have been no issues
- Lunch – all grades eat alone (ie. with their own grade); Individual recess time; Lunch/Recess period = 30 minutes (combined)
- NO snow play at recess (no snow pants, etc)

Social Events

- No school dances (new this year due to lack of interest from students)
- 5th and 6th grade = “Socials”
 - 2 hour block of time to come to the school and hang out, shoot hoops, etc.
- Celebration at end of the year for 8th grade only
- ASE – different activities and some are mixed grades although due to skill levels, the grades tend to be in different groups (ie. chess club); grades are usually mixed during ASE and it is not a problem because students are selecting activities with a common interest.
- Outing Club that hosts O/N activities is done by grade

5. What benefits do they see in having 5th grade housed in the middle school?

See Question #1

- 5th grade gets to participate in band and chorus which they do not have at the elementary school; Once at ORMS students must select either Band, Chorus, or Strings. General Music is not offered. These classes meet everyday and students rotate back and forth between music & PE. It should be noted that 5th grade band students also received group lessons by the instrument they have selected since they have never played an instrument before. A team of music majors from UNH come in and provide lessons to all the different instrument groups at the same time but in different rooms.
- Laptops available for all 5th graders (they can take them home)

6. How do you handle self-contained classrooms and what are the criteria used to place kids in a self-contained class? Or, if self-contained classrooms are not being utilized, what is the reasoning behind that?

N/A – No self-contained classrooms

7. How do the self-contained kids get to be part of the larger team projects?

N/A – No self-contained classrooms

8. How are Sports handled for 5th graders?

- Cross Country and Track – all grades can join
- PE for 5th graders is every other day to give kids ample movement time
- Teachers also give movement breaks for 5th graders during the day

9. What type of playground equipment do you have and is 5th grade at recess with other grades?

- 5th grade is not at recess with the other grades
- Playground equipment is very basic – a group of parents got involved and built their structure which consists of a climbing wall and monkey bars; also have a volleyball net set up that they said the kids use a lot
- They have 2 basketball hoops and a paved area where most of the kids play
- They had swings in the past but the principal found that the kids were fighting over the swings / not using the swings appropriately so they removed them.

Other:

- UA Programs: 45 days per quarter of each
 - 21st Century Life Skills Class (using laptops in library)
 - Health
 - Art
 - STEM (woodworking)
- Music is mandatory for all grades
 - Strings OR Band OR Chorus – must choose one; General music is not offered
 - 40 minutes
 - 3 full-time music teachers and a team of music majors from UNH to support 5th grade instrument lessons.
 - Collaborate with UNH to have small group instruction during class time with UNH students
 - Parents were very supportive of an increased music program

Action items, if any: