

SHAPING 4J'S FUTURE

Grade Configuration

FOCUS GROUP REPORT: DECEMBER 2006

INTRODUCTION

As a part of District 4J's strategic planning process, "Shaping the Future," eight focus groups composed primarily of district staff met the week of November 13, to begin to address several unanswered questions that will have an impact on future decisions about school size, grade configurations, programs, and location of schools.

The Grade Configuration focus group identified a number of implementation options that could be considered by the district and the implications associated with those options. We also reviewed demographic and enrollment information and instructional literature, and identified the key values and beliefs upon which we based our implementation options. Finally, we identified a number of issues and questions that we thought should be considered by the school board, a think tank that will be operated by the university, and the community.

Our group was facilitated by Sara Cramer and Sharon Tabor was our listener/writer. The listener/writer was responsible for recording what we said and for drafting this report.

The members of our committee were:

Member, title, school, Jane Carter, Elementary Principal, Spring Creek
Member, title, school, Suzy Price, Middle School Principal, Madison
Member, title, school, Cynthia Sainz, High School Administrator, Churchill
Member, title, school, Beth Westcott, Elementary School Teacher, Parker
Member, title, school, Merri Sue Clark, Middle School Teacher, Spencer Butte
Member, title, school, Al Villanueva, High School Teacher, Churchill
Member, title, school, Ellen Brunson-Newton, Classified Staff Member, South Eugene
Member, title, school, Yvonne Curtis, Director of Student Achievement, Instruction Dept.
Member, title, school, Marilyn Nersesian, Special Education Administrator, Ed.Support.Ser

We must make a disclaimer: our focus group was asked to focus on a specific topic area, knowing that all of the topics discussed during this process are interrelated and what the district does in one area has implications for the others. The focus group process allowed us to share our discussions with the other focus groups, but each group is submitting an individual report.

A broad based think tank will synthesize the work of our focus group and the other focus groups as it develops a set of integrated alternatives or possibilities for consideration by the school board later in the spring.

4J'S CURRENT PROGRAM MODEL Current 4J Grade Configuration

Yvonne Curtis provided the members of the focus group with a description of the district's current program model. In summary:

We currently have 20 neighborhood K-5 elementary schools, three language immersion schools, and five other alternative elementary schools that are either grades K-5 or 1-5. Eight middle schools serve grades 6-8. There are four high schools, which are grades 9-12. International High School is an alternative program housed on each of the four high school campuses. North Eugene High School now consists of three small schools, and Churchill High School has small learning communities within their school.

Following our review of the district's current program, we considered the implications it had for the following issues: (explain the implications you identified)

*See implications for the current 4J School District model on page 14.

- Equity
- Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools
- Program Staffing
- State and Federal Mandates
- Student Transportation
- High Schools
- Elementary Schools
- Middle Schools
- Regional Impact
- Other (Including impact on other focus group topics)

INSTRUCTIONAL LITERATURE

Prior to the meetings of our focus group, the district asked Mike Garling, retired principal, to review the literature dealing with grade configurations. He summarized recent research and writings in this area. In summary:

- 8th graders learning in elementary settings (K-8, K-9, 3-8) out perform 8th graders in schools with other grade configurations.
- In addition to grade configurations, the study suggests that "such considerations as instructional specialization, tracking, and within class ability grouping, as well as staff recruitment and training practices, expectations of student performance and sensitivity to individual differences among students should be considered as potential explanations for superior academic performance" of eighth graders learning in elementary settings.
- K-8 schools have higher attendance than traditional middle schools.
- K-8 schools appear to have better engagement than middle schools.
- Grade configurations are often dictated by geographic location of the student population.
- Critical factors that come into play for schools with broad grade spans include the nature of role modeling older students provide for younger students, the staff's training and experience, and building size.
- Schools with narrow grade spans experience frequent student turnover. Narrow grade spans also impose on students the stress of frequent school transitions.
- No particular sequence of grade spans is perfect or in itself guarantees student achievement and social adjustment.
- K-8 configurations are predicted to have higher achievement and attainment across all grades and subjects (What's Best in the Middle? Cook; research report #0501)

- Results of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District survey revealed significantly higher achievement in fourth and fifth grade students who had attended K-2 configured schools than those in other configurations (K-6, K-8, and K-12).
- High school configuration research was not made available.

There is a body of research in early childhood education that is large and well established. We recommend a more thorough look at the research for K-3 schools as well as K-8 schools.

Additional research articles used include:

Source: Priscilla Pardini, *Revival of the K-8 School*, The School Administrator Web Edition March 2002,

Source: H. Gary Cook, Ph.D., *What's Best in the Middle? Student Engagement, Achievement, Attainment, and Growth Differences*, Milwaukee Public Schools Research Report #0501.

A copy of that full report is attached.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS: Grade Configurations

We were asked to identify a number of implementation options for grade configurations based on a range of funding assumptions. First, we were asked to assume that no additional funds would be available, second that some additional funds would be available, and finally that the Quality Education Model (QEM) was fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.

We were also asked to comment on the implications for a number of key issues in the district.

We reviewed the current grade configuration model and proposed two additional models. *If no additional funds will be available, we suggest maintaining the current model. If additional funds are available, we recommend careful consideration of the two proposed models due to the equity implications identified in these two proposed models. One model we propose is a K-8 and 9-12 configuration. Additionally, we recommend a K-3 and 4-8 configuration.

Our proposed implementation options are described below, along with what we believe the implications to be. We have also summarized the values and beliefs that we, as a focus group, operated by.

TOPIC NAME Grade Configuration

Values & Beliefs * values and beliefs are not written in any particular hierarchy

We believe that grade configurations should:

- Ensure that transitions to new schools are positive for all students and families.
- Structure transitions to support and promote students' social and emotional growth.
- Be designed to promote curriculum articulation and alignment to ensure academic success.
- Consider developmental needs as well as multi-aged opportunities and benefits.
- Pay attention to multi-aged grouping so that role modeling and mentoring occur.
- Keep school size small, or structure schools, to create small communities that foster relationships.
- Provide opportunities and resources to ensure that every student is a competent reader.

We also regard resources as a critical component for any grade configuration formula.

IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS	IMPLICATIONS
<p>Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the District.</p> <p>Implementation Option:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Pre)K – 8, 9-12</p> <p style="text-align: center;">District Wide</p> <p style="text-align: center;">With a phase in over time.</p>	<p>This recommended grade configuration would not be cost neutral and significant reallocation of funds would be required if no new funds are added.</p> <p><u>Equity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This model reflects our values and beliefs, minimizes transitions, meets developmental needs, provides multi-aged opportunities and benefits, and includes role modeling and mentoring. • K-8 schools would require the district to create new school boundaries that could better take into consideration student demographic characteristics (i.e. poverty, minority, special education and ELL status). • K-8 school configurations have been found to produce higher achievement and attainment across all grades and all subjects. • There could be increased course offerings due to the larger size of K-8 schools. • K-8 provides stability for students as they spend more years in one school. This may

	<p>be beneficial for all students and especially beneficial to students in poverty and special needs.</p> <p><u>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-8 neighborhood schools will provide opportunities to attract and retain students and families. • Each K-8 could have a world language component. • The community’s reaction to the change is unknown. <p><u>Program Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a potential for more shared program staffing due to numbers of students in K-8 schools. (PE, Music, etc.) • Licensure for teachers may be a challenge as teachers are spread across K-8. <p><u>State and Federal Mandates (ELL/Title 1/ Special Education)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Larger enrollment facilitates programming for special populations. • Larger enrollment creates an opportunity to make a transition from regional special education programs to all buildings having support for their high needs students. • Adjustments would need to be made in the distribution of Title I students and Title I funds. <p><u>Student Transportation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There may be fewer bus routes due to smaller area to cover that could result in savings of time and money. This needs to be further explored. <p><u>High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research shows the K-8 model will have students better prepared for the transition to high school. • There would be an increased number of schools addressing transition to high school. <p><u>Elementary Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide age range of students available for modeling and mentoring. • Intermediate grades in a K-8 could expand use of letter grades for report cards for greater academic focus in grades 4 and 5, while the primary school K-3 could continue as is (no letter grades). • K-8 schools could offer electives earlier (in grades 4 and 5) to enrich learning experiences and expand opportunities: i.e.,
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	<p>clubs, orchestra, student government, advanced course offerings, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased opportunity for parent and school partnerships. • There may be a sense of loss of tradition with the elimination of grade schools. <p><u>Middle Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older students as mentors/leaders for younger students. • Elimination of fifth to sixth grade transition. • Proximity to younger children can improve behaviors of older students. • Loss of traditional middle school. <p><u>Regional Impact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept of regions will need to be re-examined. <p><u>Other (including impact on other focus group topics)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-8 will foster many more areas of efficiency such as fewer schools, less staff, energy reduction, fewer itinerant teachers and an approach to dealing with declining enrollment. • Articulation and curriculum alignment are more easily facilitated in a K-8 setting. • There will be significant one-time cost for planning and start up. • Configuration change will require focused public relations efforts. • Special attention should be paid to equity of demographic balance in configuring the new school boundaries of K-8. • “Phasing in” would be an important factor. • Phasing in can be configured in two ways: K-5 adding one year up at a time or 6-8 adding one year down at a time. • There will be an opportunity to revisit the staffing ratio at every level. • Research suggests that drug use and inappropriate sexual activity would be diminished in a K-8. • Attention needs to be paid to ensure a smooth transition to grade 9. • Reconfiguration would prompt the consideration of eliminating the terms “alternative” and “neighborhood” titles to “Great Schools” in 4J.
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<p>Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the District.</p> <p>Implementation Option:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Pre)K – 8, 9-12</p> <p style="text-align: center;">District Wide With a phase in over time.</p>	<p>Implications are assumed to stay the same with additional funding unless listed below.</p> <p><u>Equity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding could increase potential for course offerings, world languages, and the arts. <p><u>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding may facilitate the opportunity for schools to create completely new identities. <p><u>Program Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding provides the opportunity to meet the needs of a broader range of students (special education, for example), to increase PE, music, counseling, technology, etc., as well as more course offerings in the content areas. <p><u>High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices and high school reform. <p><u>Elementary Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Middle Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Regional Impact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding may provide assistance for closing of the achievement gap between regions.
<p>Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.</p> <p>Implementation Option:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Pre)K – 8, 9-12</p> <p style="text-align: center;">District Wide With a phase in over time.</p>	<p>Implications are assumed to stay the same with additional funding unless listed below.</p> <p><u>Equity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The QEM model would increase academic opportunities as well as specialists for music, reading, physical education, math, TAG, library / media, world languages, art, and full day Kindergarten.

	<p><u>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QEM funding would positively balance out what all schools are able to offer all students. <p><u>Program Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QEM funding would enable us to meet the best practice recommendations in terms of program staffing. <p><u>Student Transportation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation Funds freed up by K-8 configuration may provide transportation for extended opportunities - for example summer school and after school programs. <p><u>High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Elementary Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Middle Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Regional Impact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding enables a continued focus on closing the achievement gap between regions. • K-8 may provide an opportunity to reconfigure schools so that all are under 40% free and reduced lunch. <p>Other (Including implications for other focus group topics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Size – what would be the size of K-8 schools? • High schools – what would impact be? • ELL/Title1/Special Education – what would be the impact on program? • Pre K/K – what would the impact be? • Boundaries – how would enforcement of school boundaries help to control enrollment? • Transportation – how does this affect cost?
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IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS	IMPLICATIONS
<p data-bbox="293 226 743 281">Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the District.</p> <p data-bbox="302 310 813 428">Implementation Option: GRADE CONFIGURATION Primary (K-3) and Intermediate (grades 4-8) and High Schools (9-12)</p> <p data-bbox="313 457 805 632">This model implies that K-3 schools would be housed in stand-alone buildings with their own boundaries and transportation. An Intermediate school would also be a stand-alone building with it's own boundaries and transportation.</p>	<p data-bbox="846 226 1393 338">This recommended grade configuration would not be cost neutral and significant reallocation of funds would be required if no new funds are added.</p> <p data-bbox="846 367 948 394"><u>EQUITY</u></p> <ul data-bbox="846 401 1398 1478" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="846 401 1398 575">• This model may lead to increased parental involvement at the intermediate level by including younger students and their families earlier. A five-year experience in the intermediate school may positively affect parent commitment to their schools. <li data-bbox="846 575 1398 835">• Title I support could be targeted or allocated to K-3 students in the primary setting in order to emphasize early literacy skills. Title I reading support could continue into grades 4 and 5 (even though they are housed in two buildings) with the possibility of consultation and coordination of reading services at upper grades. <li data-bbox="846 835 1398 978">• This configuration may not require a change in technology support, e.g. hardware or software, which could continue at the existing level based on facilities. <li data-bbox="846 978 1398 1066">• The proposed configuration may allow for clustering of ELL students to increase efficiency of services. <li data-bbox="846 1066 1398 1209">• Intermediate schools could expand use of letter grades for report cards for greater academic focus in grades 4 and 5, while the primary school K-3 could continue as is (no letter grades). <li data-bbox="846 1209 1398 1383">• Intermediate schools could offer electives earlier (in grades 4 and 5) to enrich learning experiences and expand opportunities such as clubs, orchestra, student government, advanced course offerings, etc. <li data-bbox="846 1383 1398 1478">• This model allows greater primary school focus on early literacy and eliminates the achievement gap by grade 3. <p data-bbox="846 1507 1357 1562"><u>OPEN ENROLLMENT / NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS / ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS</u></p> <ul data-bbox="846 1568 1386 1881" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="846 1568 1386 1881">• Configuration of alternative schools and when/how their students transition to the next grade level would need to be discussed. For example, alternative schools, which remain K-5, would have students transition to neighborhood "intermediate" schools at the end of 5th grade. Or, alternative schools could be required to model the same grade configurations as the district at large. However, this could reduce the number of

	<p>students attending neighborhood intermediate schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighborhood schools will not stabilize enrollment year to year under this proposal due to impact of school choice. School choice results in significant movement of students throughout the regions. <p><u>PROGRAM STAFFING</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need additional staffing at 4-8 Intermediate schools for specialists to include course offerings such as PE, music, electives, etc. • Highly qualified staff requirements may limit flexibility of staffing and subsequently course offerings in grades 6-8. • May need additional staffing at the primary level to emphasize literacy. For example: reading support staff, reading coaches, Title 1, and literacy teachers. <p><u>STATE & FEDERAL MANDATES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed configuration may allow for clustering of ELL students to increase efficiency of services. <p><u>STUDENT TRANSPORTATION</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assumes that grades K-3 and grades 4-8 students share buses as they currently do in K-5 schools. • This proposal may increase busing distances to schools and could increase time on the bus. <p><u>HIGH SCHOOL</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications regarding student achievement at high school from this grade configuration are not known. • Research indicates that 8th graders transitioning from a K-8 model perform better in high school than their K-5 counterparts. • Research indicates that 8th graders transitioning from a 3-8 model perform better in high school than their K-5 counterparts. <p><u>ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary schools (K-3) would lose older student mentors and role models. • Change in configuration may reduce communication and articulation between grade 3 and 4. • With the reduction of grade spans from six to four, primary schools would have a shorter time to develop relationships with students and families.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will need to carefully plan positive transitions from K-3- to 4-8 schools. • Primary schools will be able to concentrate resources, expertise and program staffing on fostering competent readers. <p><u>MIDDLE SCHOOL</u> (Intermediate schools grades 4-8)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger students (grades 4/5) may be concerned about relationships with older students in an intermediate setting. • Intermediate schools will have more years to develop relationships with students/families than current 6-8 models. • Increased opportunities for more specialists and extra-curricular activities, e.g., band, clubs, art, language, and orchestras at grade 4-8 schools. • Increased communication and curriculum articulation and alignment in grades 4-8 for improved student achievement. <p><u>REGIONAL IMPACT</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open enrollment would continue to affect the number of students in each region. • Alternative schools would continue to be concentrated in South and Churchill regions. • Attendance boundaries within the four regions may need to be re-drawn to achieve the shift of students from one building to another. <p><u>Other needs identified with new model</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Development and release time for planning during transition and implementation of configuration is imperative. • Resources for community education and public relations during transition to new configurations are imperative. <p><u>Facilities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to add playground equipment at 4-8 buildings. • Primary schools could be located in existing elementary schools. Classroom space may be an issue for 4-8 schools located in existing middle schools. • May need to close some buildings and add portables to others to accommodate changes in enrollment. May also need to convert current elementary to intermediate schools.
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	<p><u>Other Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbooks and other curricular materials purchases may need to be purchased to promote curriculum alignment. • Existing technology may need to be reallocated with consideration of increased enrollment at some schools (gr. 4-8) and decreased enrollment at others (gr. K-3). • Additional pay for staff when contract requires compensation for moving buildings.
<p>Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the District.</p> <p>Implementation Option:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">GRADE CONFIGURATION Primary (K-3) and Intermediate (grades 4-8) and High Schools (9-12)</p> <p>This model implies that K-3 schools would be housed in stand-alone buildings with their own boundaries and transportation. An Intermediate school would also be a stand-alone building with it's own boundaries and transportation.</p>	<p>Implications are assumed to stay the same with additional funding unless listed below.</p> <p><u>Equity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding could increase potential for course offerings, world languages, and the arts. <p><u>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding may facilitate the opportunity for schools to create completely new identities. <p><u>Program Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding provides the opportunity to meet the needs of a broader range of students (special education, for example), to increase PE, music, counseling, technology, etc., as well as more course offerings in the content areas. <p><u>High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices and high school reform. <p><u>Elementary Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Middle Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Regional Impact</u> Additional funding may provide assistance for closing the achievement gap between regions.</p> <p><u>Other (Including implications for other focus group topics)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Size – what would be the size of K-3, 4-8 schools?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High schools – what would impact be? • ELL/ Title1/ Special Education- what would impact be? • Pre K/K – what would impact be? • Boundaries – how would enforcement of school boundaries help to control enrollment? • Transportation – how does this affect cost?
<p>Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.</p> <p>Implementation Option: GRADE CONFIGURATION Primary (K-3) and Intermediate (grades 4-8) and High Schools (9-12)</p> <p>This model implies that K-3 schools would be housed in stand-alone buildings with their own boundaries and transportation. An Intermediate school would also be a stand-alone building with it's own boundaries and transportation.</p>	<p>Implications are assumed to stay the same with additional funding unless listed below.</p> <p><u>Equity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QEM funding would increase academic opportunities as well as specialists for music, reading, physical education, math, TAG, library/ media, world languages, art, and full day Kindergarten. <p><u>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QEM funding would positively balances out what all schools are able to offer all students. <p><u>Program Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QEM funding would enable us to meet the best practice recommendations in terms of program staffing. <p><u>High Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Elementary Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Middle Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funds may further the implementation of best practices. <p><u>Regional Impact</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding enables a continued focus on closing the achievement gap between regions. • K-3, 4-8 may provide an opportunity to organize schools that all are under 40% free and reduced lunch. <p><u>Other (Including implications for other focus group topics)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Size – what would be the size of K-3, 4-8 schools?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High schools – what would impact be? • ELL/ Title1/ Special Education – what would impact be? • Pre K/K – what would impact be? • Boundaries – how would enforcement of school boundaries help to control enrollment? • Transportation – how does this affect cost?
IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS	IMPLICATIONS
<p>Funding Assumption 1: No additional funds will be available to the District.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Implementation Option:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Current 4J Grade Configuration</p> <p style="text-align: center;">K-5, 6-8, 9-12</p>	<p><u>Equity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students have access to special education learning centers in their schools. However, some students need programs that are located regionally and cannot access these programs in their schools. • Schools use site-based decision-making to determine service levels (PE, music, library, technology, counseling) deemed necessary for their specific student population. • Because of limited resources, site based decision making has led to inequities in program service levels from school to school. • Academic tracking (ability grouping) can increase the achievement gap for the low performer. • Facilities – there are inequities in new and old school buildings, e.g., Technology, HVAC, and plumbing, etc. • School choice creates inequities in student enrollment at buildings and in regions. • Neighborhood schools may have more students with special needs as a result of Special Education program locations being primarily in neighborhood schools. • International High School & alternative schools do not have many English Language Learner students or students with special needs. • Students in alternative programs can return to neighborhood schools at any time. Students may not join an alternative school without going through the school choice process. <p><u>Program Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate funding of programs requires schools to make difficult decisions regarding staffing thus creating inequities, animosity, political tension and competition between schools. • Class sizes may be increased to keep specialists.

- Because of limited resources, there is a lack of course offerings at Middle Schools, e.g., geometry is not offered at every Middle School.

Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools

- School choice may keep students and families in the 4J system rather than attending private schools.
- School choice enhances parent support by creating ownership.
- Unique school programs have been created in Eugene.
- Not all alternative schools have kindergartens. Students attend neighborhood kindergarten programs and then leave for alternative programs in 1st grade making it difficult for neighborhood schools to build stable enrollment.
- Neighborhood schools do not know the number of students who will be attending from year to year. This can make program planning and building staffing difficult.
- Staffing process and program planning can be more stable in alternative schools due to the predictable number of students attending alternative schools as a result of capped school enrollment.
- Open enrollment has led to socio-economic segregation.
- The alternative school label creates the perception that these schools are more desirable.
- It can be difficult to promote neighborhood schools as their programs may change from year to year due to unstable enrollment and staffing.
- Language immersion schools continue through middle and high school resulting in fewer students attending their neighborhood middle and high schools.

State and Federal Mandates (ELL/ Title 1/ Special Education)

- Programs attempt to be equitable across the district.
- Every building has some level of special education services.
- It is hard to have an ELL program without a critical number of students in the school.
- It is necessary to comply with the Highly Qualified Standards for staff. This creates difficulties for some grade configurations. It may also help provide schools with more qualified staff.

Student Transportation

- School starting and ending times depend on transportation schedules.

High Schools 9-12

- Current high schools are involved in reform efforts that will continue over time.
- Having 9th graders at high schools provides them with opportunities to access more advanced course work and extra curricular activities.
- 9th grade provides a wake up call for kids and parents to the realities of credits and grades.
- Some 9th graders struggle in high school and can get lost in the large system.
- 9th grade transition can be difficult – some students are not prepared for high school.
- Large high school size may contribute to a lack of school community and a lack of academic support for some students.

Elementary Schools K- 5

- K-5 offers a large range of ages for modeling & mentoring.
- There is time to develop parent/school partnerships in K-5 configuration.

Middle Schools

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- Three years is perceived as a short time to develop relationships.
- Some middle schools have homeroom/advisee/house, which supports a long-term relationship between staff and students.
- Middle school students can start exploring their interests through electives.
- Middle school provides a transition to the content focus of high school.
- There is strong national acceptance of the middle school configuration as seen through national organizations, conferences, journals, and licensure.
- Sixth graders may have a difficult time with the transition from elementary school.
- Some parents may have many concerns about the sixth grade transition.

Regional Impact

- School choice affects the number of students in the regions.
- Alternative schools are concentrated in the South and Churchill regions resulting in student movement to those regions.

	<p><u>Other</u> (Including impact on other focus group topics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Size – what is optimal? • School Choice - effects on enrollment? • Pre-K, K - what is the impact of this decision on grade level discussion? • Facilities – what do different grade configurations require? • Jefferson’s K-8 – what is the impact of this decision on grade level discussion?
<p>Funding Assumption 2: Some additional funds will be available to the District.</p> <p>Implementation Option:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Current 4J Grade Configuration</p> <p style="text-align: center;">K-5, 6-8, 9-12</p>	<p>Implications are assumed to stay the same with additional funding unless listed below.</p> <p><u>Equity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding could increase staffing for some neighborhood schools thus leading to greater program stability. <p><u>Program Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding could provide schools with increased staffing for PE, music, library, technology, and counseling thus providing more students with a well-rounded education. Schools could continue to decide what services their students need the most and provide staff accordingly. There would still be inequity in program offerings between schools. • Additional funding could increase the number of staff at some middle schools, thus providing more course offerings such as geometry. <p><u>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding could provide all schools, neighborhood and alternative, with Kindergartens thus allowing for more predictable and stable enrollment in first grades across the district. • Additional funding could provide neighborhood schools with more staffing to counteract the loss of staff which occurs, when enrollment decreases.

<p>Funding Assumption 3: The Quality Education Model is fully funded by the Oregon State Legislature.</p> <p>Implementation Option:</p> <p>Current 4J Grade Configuration</p> <p>K-5, 6-8, 9-12</p>	<p>Implications are assumed to stay the same with additional funding unless listed below.</p> <p><u>Equity</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All students would have access to PE, music, library, technology, and counseling which would lead to greater student engagement and higher academic achievement. • All students would have access to a full range of course offerings in middle school thus leading to greater student engagement and higher academic achievement. <p><u>Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools, and Alternative Schools</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools could have full time Kindergartens leading to greater academic achievement for all students. • QEM would provide all schools with adequate classroom and program staff alleviating inequities between buildings. <p><u>Program Staffing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All schools would have increased staff, which would lower class size, provide more course offerings, and increase the number of specialists. All these would result in an increase in student achievement.
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QUESTIONS AND ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD AND UNIVERSITY OPERATED THINK TANK

We have the following questions that we believe the school board and university operated think tank should consider as it synthesizes our work with the work of the other focus groups.

How do current grade configurations afford equal opportunities for all students?

How will suggested grade configurations afford equal opportunities for all students?

How will grade configurations work with alternative schools given current Access and Options recommendations?

Is it better to do pilot programs or phase in the whole district, one school or one region at a time with new grade level configurations?

How can the district ensure that no school falls below the 40% free and reduced rate?

How will school configurations affect current school boundaries?

How can boundaries be changed to achieve SES equalization?

How can the district plan effectively for any of these models, given open enrollment?

How is transportation affected by new grade configurations?

How will alternative schools be affected by new grade level configurations?

Would regulating school choice provide for more equitable schools?

We also believe that some stakeholder groups in the district may identify additional issues. We have listed what we believe those issues may be.

Staff: Why is the district reconfiguring and what is the research that supports this change? When and how will these changes happen? How will it affect my job security or assignment? Highly qualified teacher requirements - how do we support staff with these requirements? Will I have input and will my input affect the process? Will I have extra time or compensation for moving? Who is going to decide where I go?

Students: How will grade configuration changes affect me? Where will my friends go to school? Will I be able to take the courses that I want? What will happen to sports teams? What happens to traditional loyalty to schools? What will it be like with additional older or younger children in a school? Does this mean I am staying in elementary school?

Parents: Why is the district making this change? Will we have input? Who decides? Will we still have school choice? Will my child be safe? Is the curriculum/instruction rigorous? Will there be adequate transition activities?

Community: Will there be a loss of school identity and tradition? Is restructuring a good use of my tax dollars? Why is the district changing the grade level configurations?

ATTACHMENT
IMPLICATIONS DEFINED

- (a) **Equity:** 4J is committed to ensuring that each student receives full services without regard to disability, race, color, gender, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, religion, marital status, socio-economic status, cultural background familial status, physical characteristics, or linguistic characteristics of a national origin group.

4J is also committed to closing the achievement gap between students while ensuring that all students continue to make academic progress. Closing the achievement gap may require the allocation of additional resources to some schools where there are a high number of low achieving students.

What implications, positive or negative, do the implementation options your group identified have for the district as it continues to focus on equity?

- (b) **Open Enrollment, Neighborhood Schools and Alternative Schools:** 4J is committed to ensuring that all students have equal access to all options that are available within the district and that are appropriate to the student's interests and needs.

4J also wants to assure that both neighborhood schools and alternative schools provide an excellent education program and that neither has an unfair advantage over the other.

What implications, positive or negative, do the implementation options your group identified have on neighborhood schools, alternative schools, and the district's open enrollment program?

- (c) **Program Staffing:** Historically, 4J has given schools a great deal of flexibility in how it allocates the resources they receive as long as the schools meet district, state, and federal requirements. As funding becomes more limited and as mandates, especially those mandates dealing with student achievement, increase there is often more and more pressure to consider program staffing. Program staffing is where the district requires that a certain portion of a school's resources be allocated to a certain program whether it be physical education, counseling, or library services. Currently the district program staffs special education and Title 1, certain student support positions at some schools, a portion of elementary music and, through this year, services that qualify for City levy funding. From time-to-time the district will also make additional funds available to a school to focus on a particular need such as closing the achievement gap.

What implications, positive or negative, do the implementation options your group identified have on program staffing?

- (d) **State and Federal Mandates:** 4J assumes that it will continue to comply with state and federal mandates and that those mandates will influence the implementation options your focus groups will identify. The district also assumes that the result of this planning process will not require it to challenge major mandates such as special education and student assessment. There may, however, be questions about whether some of your implementation options are possible under state and federal law.

What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on the ability of the district to continue to comply with state and federal mandates? As you consider these implications you may want to consider if and how state and federal mandates limit your implementation options. Or you may want to consider if it may be reasonable to consider challenging some state mandates? For example, if the district

was to implement a full day kindergarten program, the state currently funds only half-day programs, and the district would be required to reallocate funds.

- (e) **Student Transportation:** Student transportation is mandated in certain circumstances: for example the state requires that students who live a certain distance from school be transported and the federal government requires that students with disabilities who are transferred to a school other than their neighborhood because of their disability receive transportation services.

What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on providing student transportation?

- (f) **High Schools:** What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on high schools?
- (g) **Elementary Schools:** What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on elementary schools?
- (h) **Middle Schools:** What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on middle schools?
- (i) **Regional Impact (Churchill, North, Sheldon, and South):** Each region in town has its own feeder system and the schools in that region work together to ensure that students transition between schools. Enrollment at elementary and middle schools affects high school enrollment within a region. The students and their families in each region also have differing expectations of their schools. Changing instructional models, limiting the size of schools, and other issues may have different impacts on different geographic regions of 4J.

What implications, positive or negative, do your implementation options have on each of the four regions?

- (j) **Other Implications (Including implications for other focus group topics):** Are there other implications that your group has identified?