

# Coakley Middle School

Norwood Public Schools

## School Committee

April 28, 2021



Ai3 Architects, LLC  
Compass Project Management

# Agenda

April 28, 2021

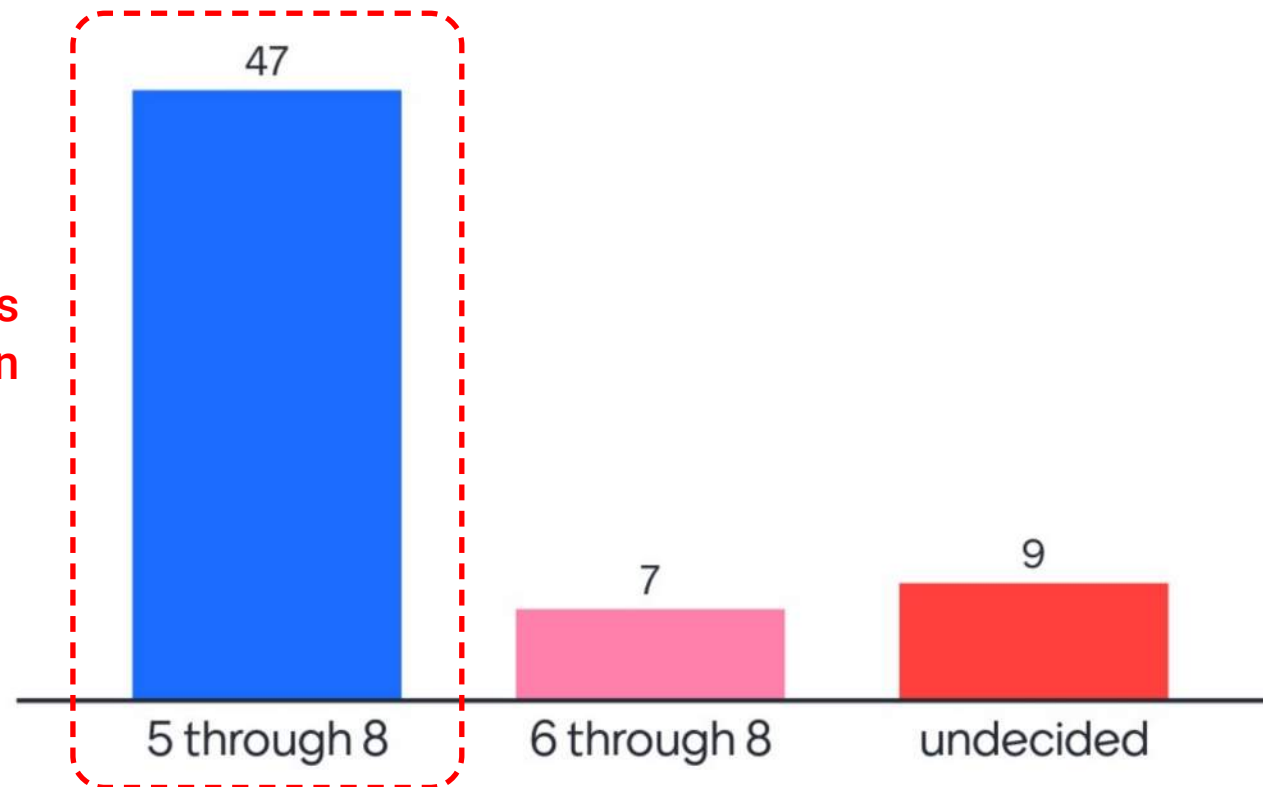
- ◆ **Community Forum #1 Poll Results**
- ◆ **Social / Emotional Learning**
- ◆ **Massachusetts Middle Schools**
- ◆ **Building Design to support SEL**
  - Building organization & adjacencies
  - Other District Interviews



Do you prefer a 5 through 8 grade configuration or a 6 through 8 grade configuration for the new Coakley Middle School?



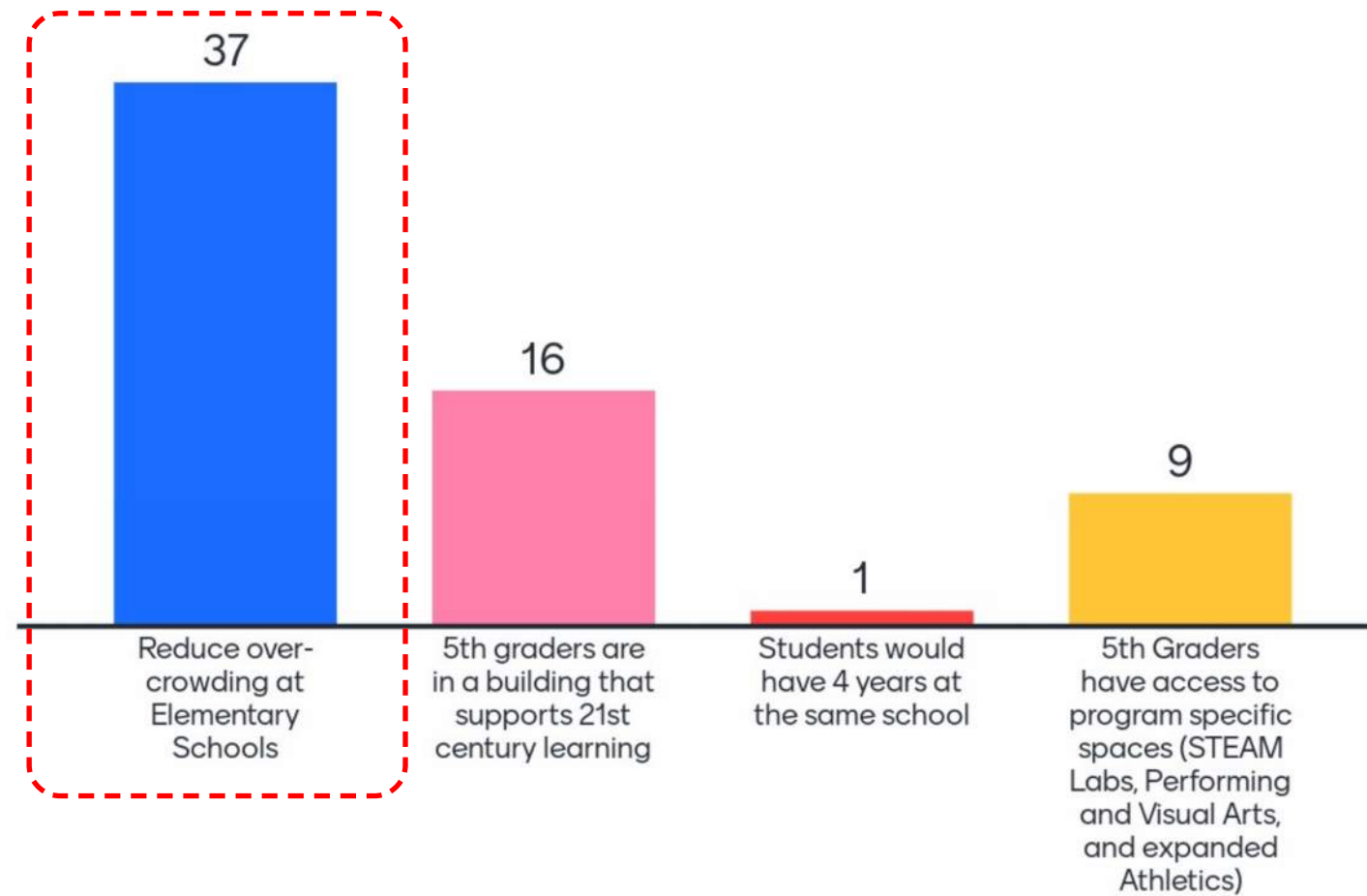
a majority of participants preferred a 5-8 configuration



## If 5th grade students were added to the Coakley Middle School, what do you see as the biggest ADVANTAGE?

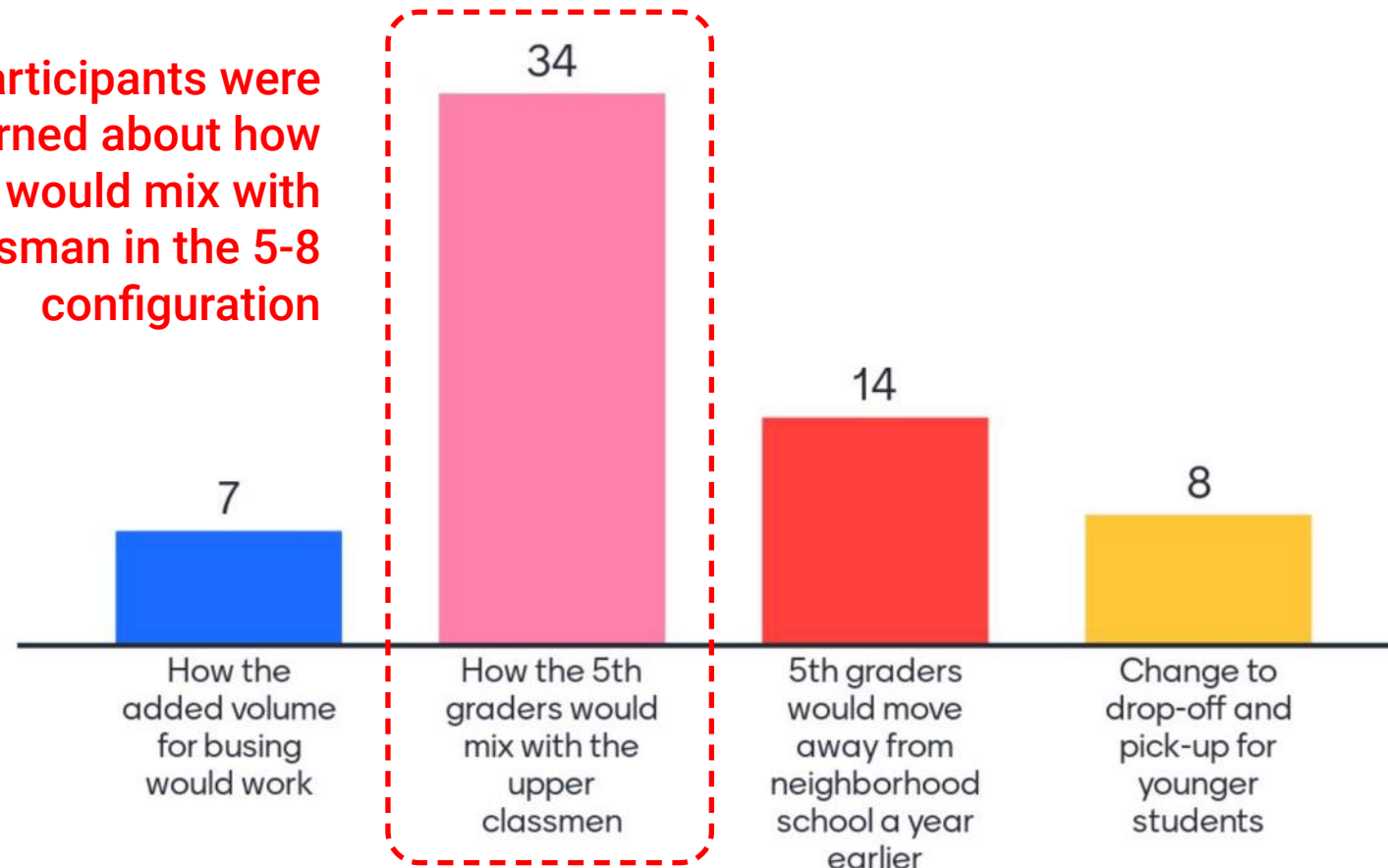
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

a majority of participants saw the reduction of pupils at the elementary schools as the biggest advantage of the 5-8 configuration

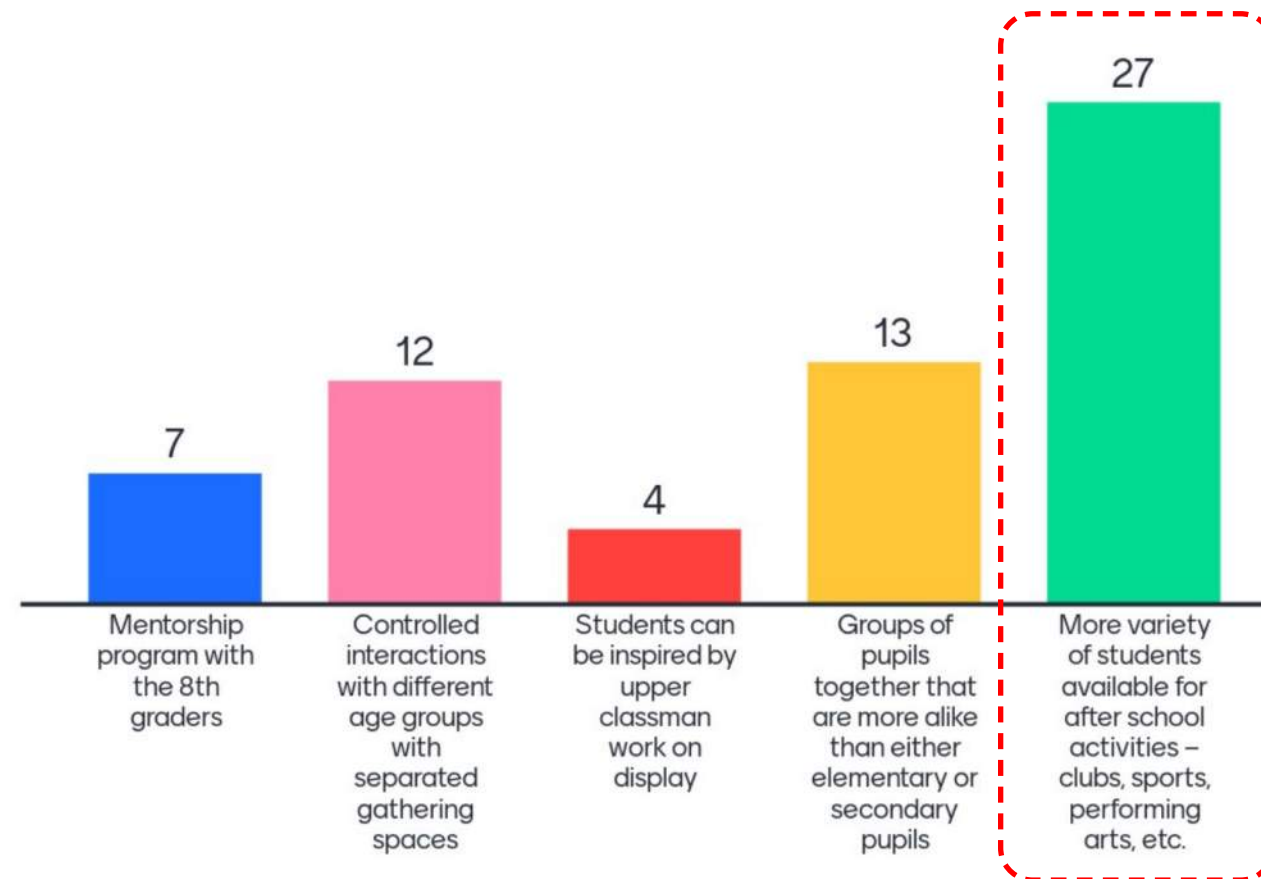


## If the 5th grade students were added to the Coakley Middle School, what is your biggest CONCERN?

a majority of participants were most concerned about how 5th graders would mix with upper classmen in the 5-8 configuration

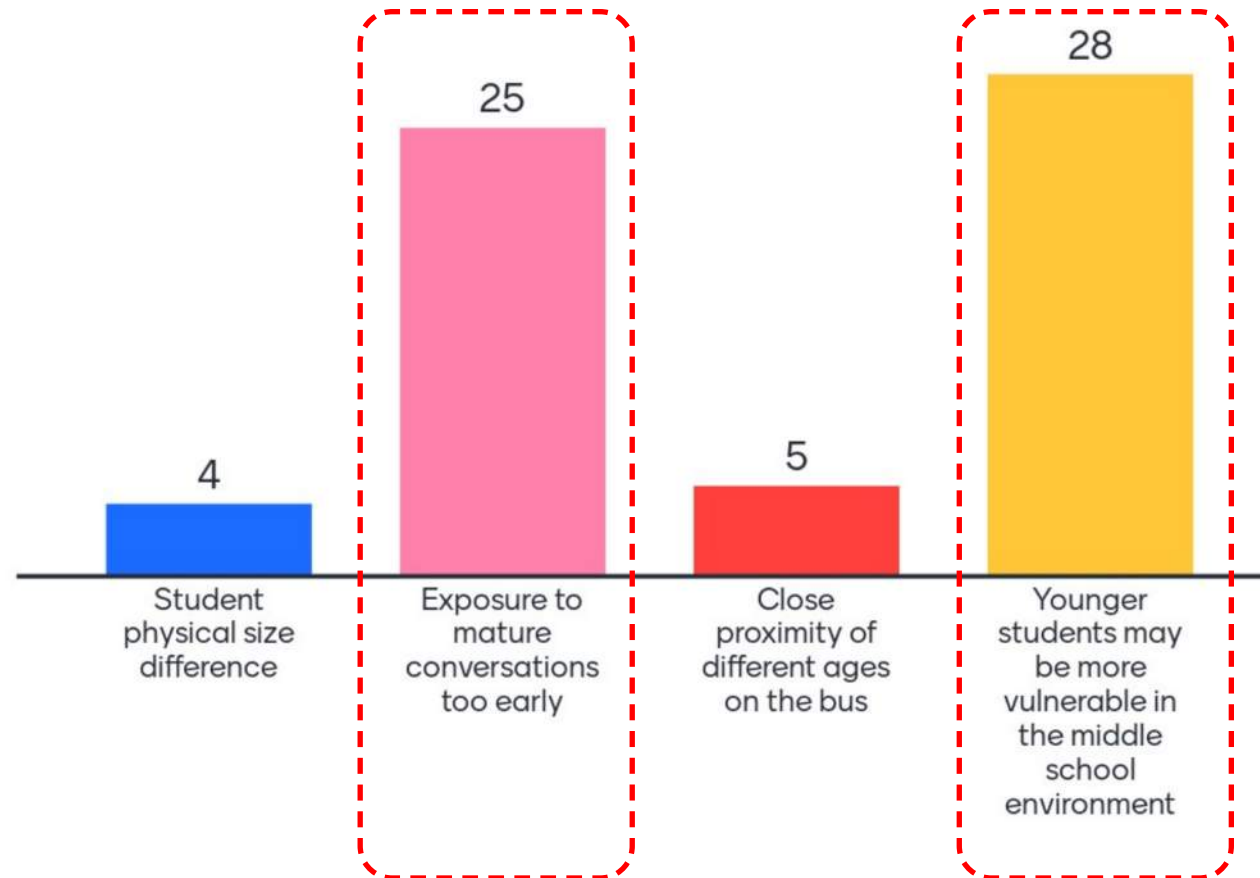


If the 5th grade students were added to the Coakley Middle School, what do you see as the biggest **ADVANTAGE** being part of the student population?



a majority of participants saw the availability of more students for after-school activities as the biggest advantage of the 5-8 configuration

If the 5th graders were added to the Coakley Middle School, what is your biggest CONCERN about the 5th grader as part of the student population?



a majority of participants were most concerned about the younger students exposure to mature conversations and vulnerability with the 5-8 configuration

STUDENT POPULATION

# Stipulations

- ◆ 5-8 is the more financially viable choice
- ◆ The building is being specifically designed for the ages that will attend in a model that benefits all 4 grades
- ◆ Educationally there are an equal amount of benefits and no substantial detractions to moving grade 5 to middle school
- ◆ Staffing increases will be between 2-3 staff with the transfer of roles to CMS



# Questions around SEL and Educational Planning for Grade 5

- ◆ **Is there a significant negative social emotional impact to moving grade 5 to middle school?**
  - Premature development and exposure to more mature ideas/concepts
  - Unstructured time with older grades
  - Middle School versus Elementary philosophy
  - Celebration of Grade 5 promotion
  
- ◆ **What supports for students social-emotional learning and environment can we put in place as we develop the 5-8 model to best support grade 5 at the middle school?**
  - Elementary focused Wellness Curriculum
  - 5th/6th specific SEL programming
  - Extended Open Circle to grade 6
  - Create a 5/6 school
  - Grade 5 Guidance Counselor
  - Grade 5 lunch/recess
  
- ◆ **What academic differences will occur in a 5-8 model?**
  - Added Sci
  - Added STEM
  - Access to facilities
  - Access to World Language
  - Two-teacher teams
  - Consistent grade 5 academic programming



# Social Emotional Learning Programs (explicit)

- ◆ Currently, middle school Wellness classes utilize the **CASEL** model (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) national power standards (SHAPE America) in Physical Education and Health, as well as **Massachusetts DESE Health Curriculum Frameworks**, to drive curriculum development and instruction.
- ◆ Other resources that teachers can draw upon to complement SEL lessons in Wellness classes include:
  - “Great Body Shop”
  - Michigan Model

# Social Emotional Learning Programs (explicit)

- ◆ Currently, 6-8th grade students do quarterly **explicit SEL lessons** designed by guidance counselors and implemented by homeroom teachers and partners.
- ◆ Within the next two years, we are scheduled to adopt a formal SEL program as a backbone for teachers and counselors to frame lessons around.
- ◆ We also have access to **“FUTURE READY”** an SEL program focused on helping students develop ideas and plans for life after middle and high school.

# Social Emotional Learning Programs (explicit)

- ◆ Adopt **OPEN CIRCLE** for grades 5 and 6 (currently in grade 5)
  - ◇ The Open Circle Curriculum's core lessons cover topics such as:
    - *LISTENING*
    - *CALMING DOWN*
    - *SPEAKING UP*
    - *DEALING WITH TEASING*
    - *RECOGNIZING DISCRIMINATION*
    - *EXPRESSING ANGER APPROPRIATELY*
    - *REACHING A CONSENSUS*
    - *SIX-STEP PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS*

Lessons are taught twice a week for 15 to 30 minutes throughout the school year in the context of a class meeting known as Open Circle -- a name that describes how the students and teacher arrange their chairs to include an extra seat for anyone who wishes to join.

- ◇ The Open Circle Curriculum presents a consistent set of concepts across all grades, and these essential concepts are explored in greater depth and reinforced as students proceed from year to year, building a common vocabulary that is shared by the entire school community.

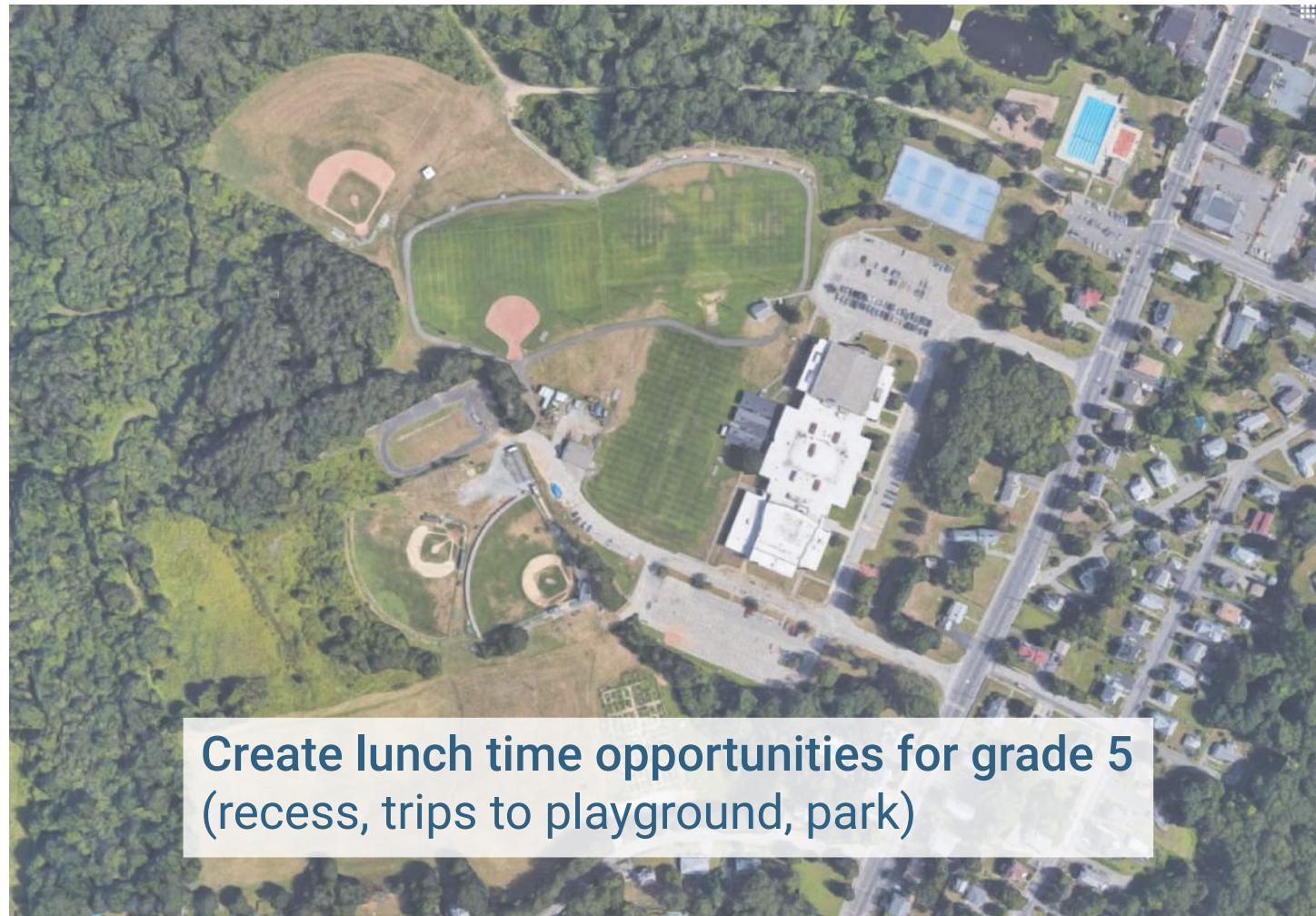


# Social Emotional supports for Grade 5 Students at the Middle School (implicit)

- ◆ **Develop a model that aligns grade 5 and grade 6**
  - ◇ Physical separation
  - ◇ Content differences
  - ◇ Teaching teams
- ◆ **Add a guidance counselor for grade 5**
  - ◇ ASCA standards recommend a Student/Counselor ratio of 250:1
  - ◇ Allowing for “future” planning at an earlier age
  - ◇ Access to small group counseling/lunch groups facilitated by school counselors and adjustment counselors
  - ◇ Access to SEL programming from school counselors such as Gratitude Lessons, Kindness Lessons
  - ◇ Role of Middle School Counselors
  - ◇ Role of Elementary School Counselors- by adding a school counselor, fifth grade students would benefit from the skills and training provided by a school counselor devoted to their development and needs

# Educational and SEL Gains

- ◆ Add a teacher for Wellness Department (total of 4 to allow for a greater amount of wellness time per year).



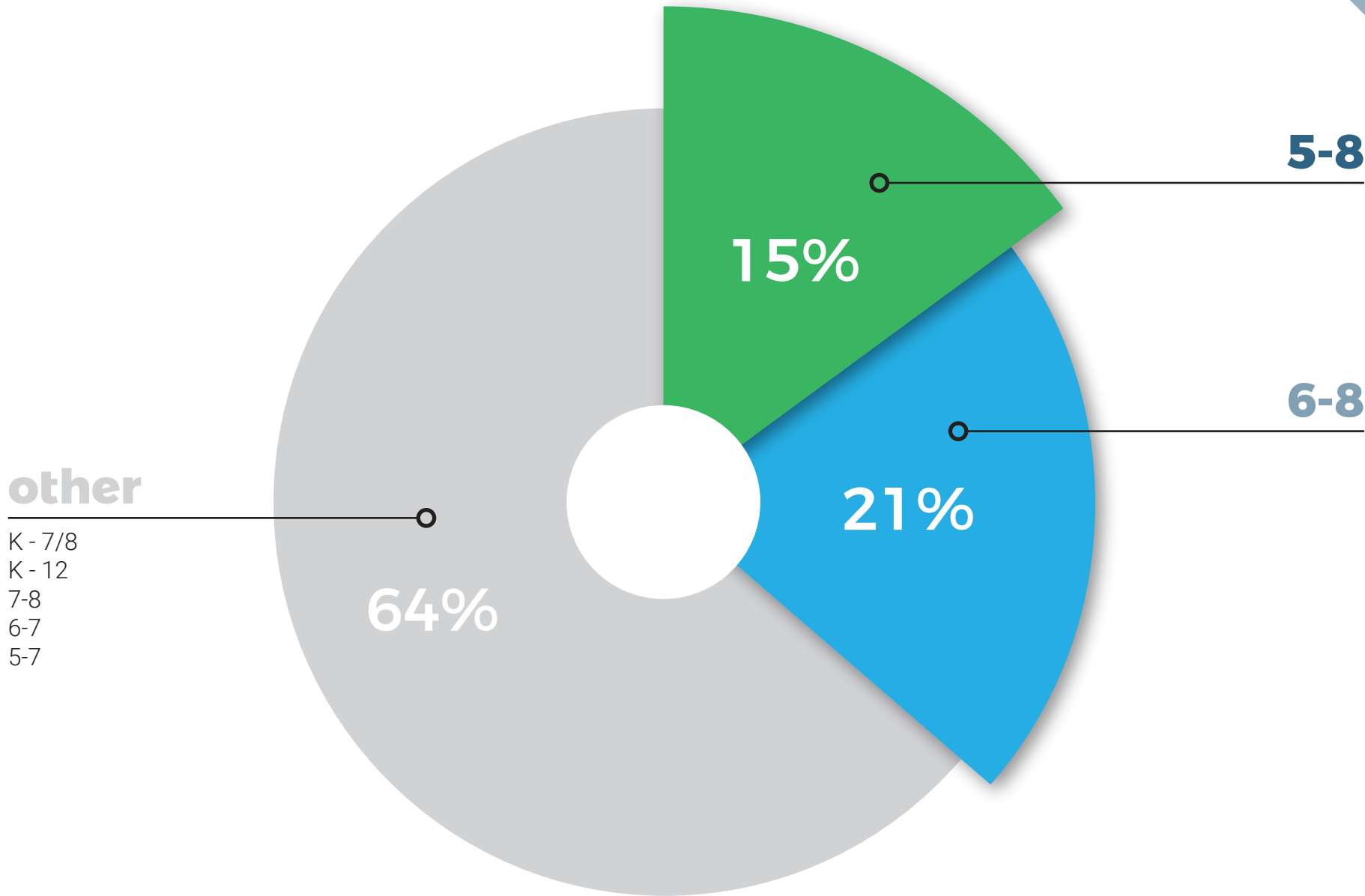
Create lunch time opportunities for grade 5 (recess, trips to playground, park)

Opportunities for grade 5 students to have access to lab spaces affording an earlier exposure to **STEM**



- ◆ Opportunities to interact with grade 6 peers (assemblies, recess)
- ◆ Opportunities for grade 8 to be peer models and partners for both 5th and 6th

Statewide percentages  
of public middle  
schools per grade  
configuration



other

- K - 7/8
- K - 12
- 7-8
- 6-7
- 5-7



## Interview with: Dr. DeCristofaro - Former Superintendent of Quincy Public Schools

### South~West Middle School, Quincy, MA

**CONCERN:** 5th grade children engaging with 7th and 8th graders during dining and outdoor recess. How have you addressed this concern in your school?

- What we have is a **separate lunch**
- The **5th graders** also **have their own play** when they are outside prior to coming back to class

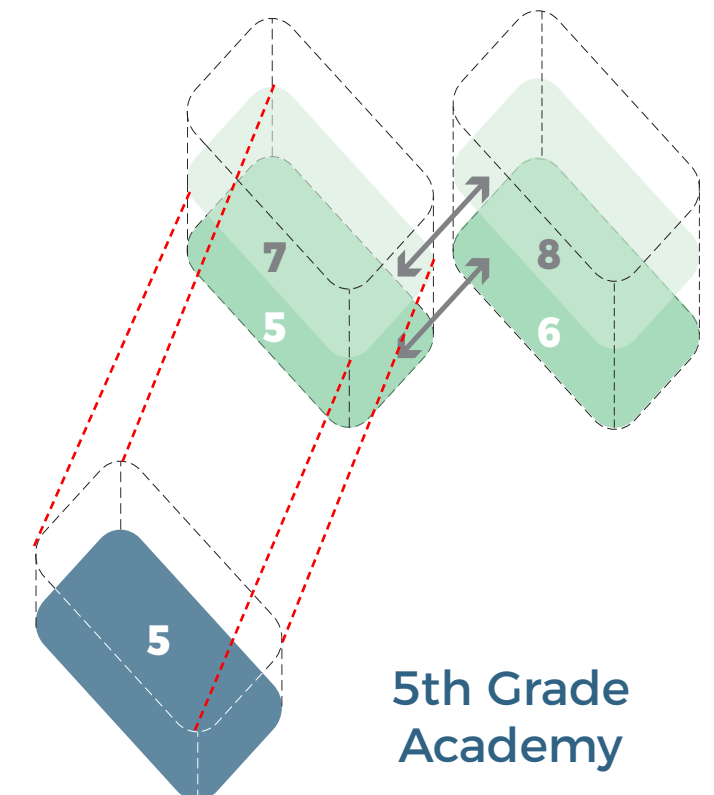
**EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS:** such as access to advanced placement programs, 5th graders have when they are included in a 6-8 middle school environment? Do 5th grade students have access to more specialized educational opportunities and support services at the middle school level than compared to an elementary school level?

- In the middle school the 5th graders receive **more art class, physical education class, additional health classes, additional use of the library and more band/choral** time in the music area.

Have you experienced more or less instances of **NEGATIVE INTERACTION WITH THE 5TH AND 8TH GRADERS** than you expected/braced for?

- Quincy constantly talked at the Building Committee level, and at the School Committee level, about how this design would service our students.
  - **Each grade would all have their own individual house/academic neighborhood**
  - There was very, **very limited interaction** with the 5th graders and the 8th graders.
    - Outside of some clubs/organizations, such as Drama, or Community service. These would be either all grades, or paired off as 5/6 and 7/8.
  - The interaction that was of largest concern was when they were leaving school - the 2:30 dismissal.
    - We felt very strongly that there would be teachers out there, the Assistant Principal would be out there, the Principal would be out there, the Guidance people out there every day, to make sure it all went smoothly
  - The great thing about the school was that the way it was designed with the field right outside, encouraged some students to stick around. The design made them feel very comfortable around their school.
  - The 8th grade was their own separate entity. **A lot of times the 8th graders really don't want to be around 5th graders.** Everything was planned or designed in a way that there was a lot of separation between the grades.

### Horizontal Connections





How has REMOVING 5TH GRADE FROM THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS  
IMPACTED THE CULTURE AND CLIMATE at the elementary schools?

- The changes were **less cultural and more attitudinal**. With the 5th graders in the middle school it allowed for more focus on the 4th graders that were still very much elementary students.
- For the most part, **there was not a tremendous change** to the elementary schools.

What was the DECIDING FACTOR to include 5th grade into the middle school?

- Ideally it would have been all pedagogical and what was the best thing in that regard, but the elementary schools were struggling with class size and something needed to be done. That drove Quincy to the 5-8 school, **class size and enrollment**.
- We're going to build a new school, let's make sure that we do what's best for our students and give them class size and give them beautiful space.

**INTERVIEW TOPICS**  
Busing interactions - 0:50  
Grade levels engaging during dining or recess - 1:50  
Educational benefits & opportunities for 5th Grade - 2:40  
5th Grader performance as they transition into adolescence - 6:31  
Negative interactions between 5th and 8th Graders - 12:10  
Deciding factor to include 5th Grade in the Middle School- 14:46  
Unexpected outcomes of moving 5th grade - 15:54  
Reconfiguration affect operations outside of education - 19:29  
How does the 5th/6th grade model look different than 7th/8th - 21:30  
Elementary School climate after removal of 5th grade - 25:50  
Connecting bridge as a design element - 27:14



## Interview with: Dr. Nolin - Superintendent of Natick Public Schools

John F. Kennedy Middle School,  
Natick, MA

### CONCERN: Busing

- Natick has **assigned seating**, they are organized by grade level; so 5th at the front, 6th directly behind, 7th behind them, 8th graders - of course, kings of the bus - rule the back.
- For all the angst that went into worrying about this, **8th graders could not be less interested in 5th grade people.**

### CONCERN: 5th grade children engaging with 7th and 8th graders during dining and outdoor recess:

- Natick **doesn't mix grade levels** for lunches.
- The new Kennedy school there are actually **two common spaces** that are used for lunches.

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS: such as access to advanced placement programs, 5th graders have when they are included in a 6-8 middle school environment? Do 5th grade students have access to more specialized educational opportunities and support services at the middle school level than compared to an elementary school level?

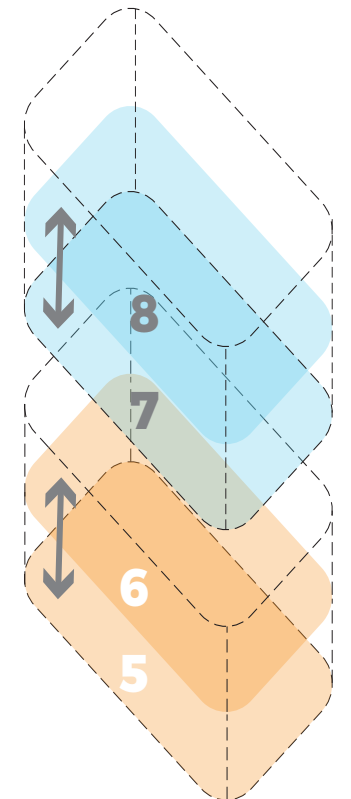
- Natick has, at various times in the last 20 years done acceleration programs for 5th graders. (advanced Math class, etc.) (different specials area classes)
- In terms of the total development of young people, we don't have a robust club offering scenario at the K-4 level. We also don't offer as much after-school music programs, dance, etc, but we do offer all of that at our middle school programs.
- **The number one benefit we feel is that very early on in their academic career, grade 5 students are able to taste a bunch of different life experiences and club experiences.**
- The 5th graders do engage with older students through mentorship programs and support. We do have a tutoring program where 8th graders help with the 5th graders, so there are a lot of nice relationships that come.

What was your COMMUNITY'S BIGGEST CONCERN in regards to adding 5th grade to the middle school? How have these issues changed over time?

- **how fast can we accelerate students** and move their skills along faster and faster.
- biggest amount of change that has happened is in the gifted and talented program.
- there aren't grading levels by 5th grade because the research on tracking and grouping at that age does not support it
- **The biggest focus has been on finding the balance to push students to the just right sweet spot** of "hard enough" but "not so hard that it creates desperation and loss of hope", while they're going through this massive developmental change in the brain, the spine, the size of their body, the hormones, all of those pieces.

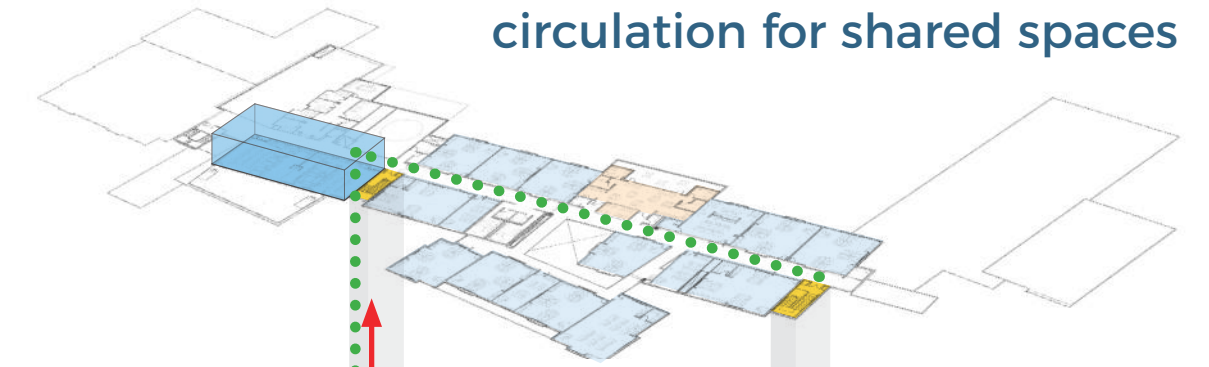


Upper School  
&  
Lower School

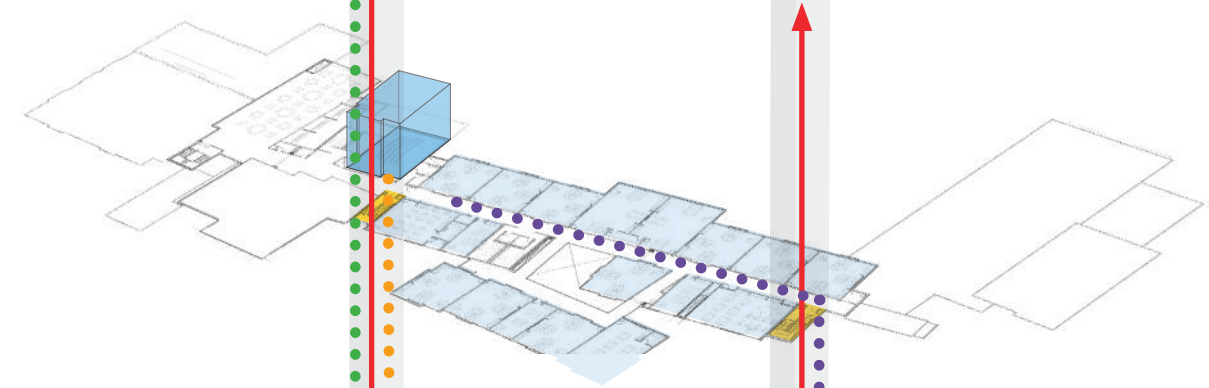


## circulation for shared spaces

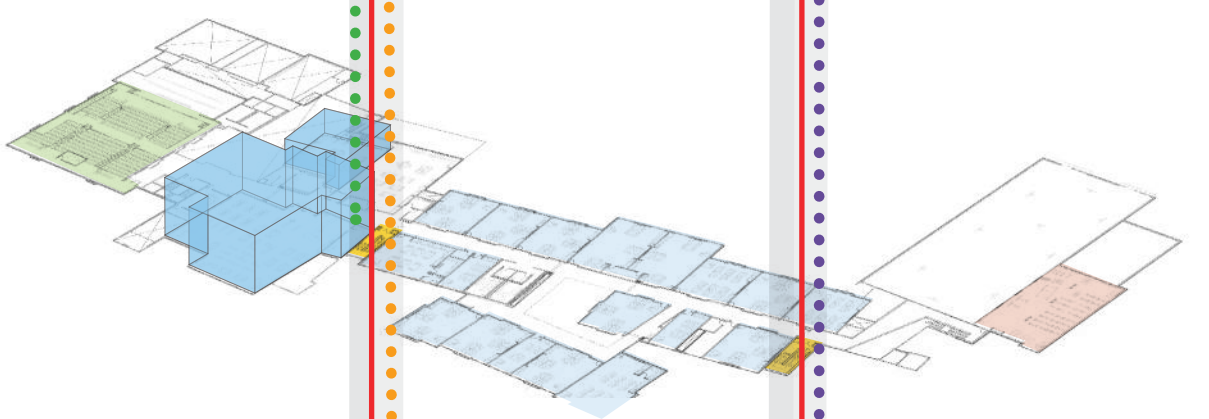
8th



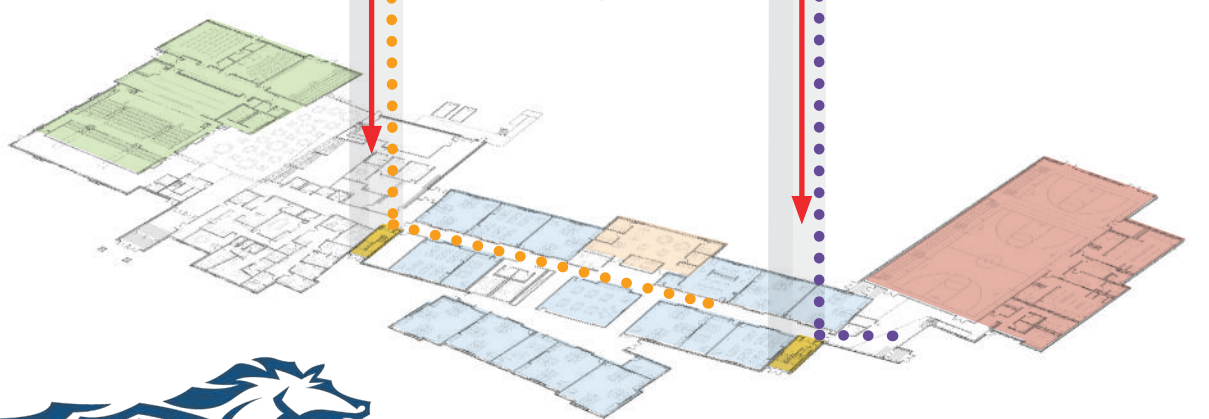
7th



6th



5th



What was the **DECIDING FACTOR** to include 5th grade into the middle school grade configuration standard?

- The process started in Natick in the late '90s, of putting the middle schools with the 5th grade, due to a resurgence of interest in middle school modeling and middle school teaming, and there was a pivotal report put out earlier called **"This We Believe"** about middle schools and what they should look like and what teams should look like. So, Natick undertook a long process to do exactly what it sounds like Norwood is doing, which is to study what would we like our schools to be, and ultimately decided to move the middle school to include 5th grade.
- Another desire was for a **longer time period with families within the middle school** model.
- The final factor was the reality around **enrollment and arrangements**.



Performing Arts

Academic Core

Athletics

### INTERVIEW TOPICS

District Middle School overview, reasons for a 5-8, scheduling, busing, & team configuration - 0:30

Grade levels engaging during dining or recess - 8:00

Educational benefits & opportunities for 5th Grade - 9:23

5th Grader performance as they transition into adolescence - 14:20

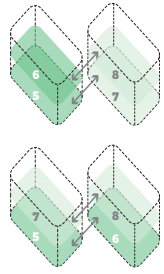
Negative interactions between 5th and 8th Graders - 16:59

Community concerns and child development - 18:42

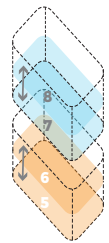
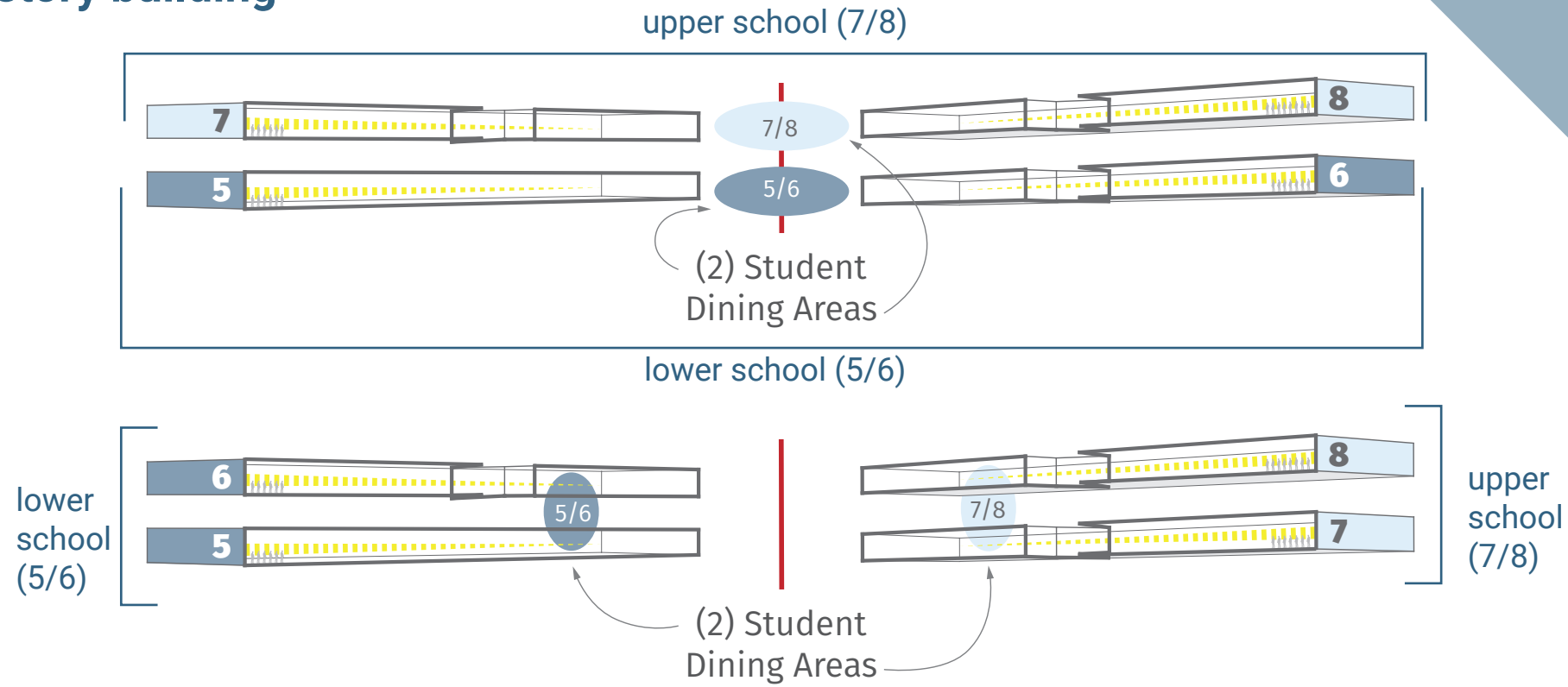
Daylight atrium building design - 22:00

# neighborhood adjacencies

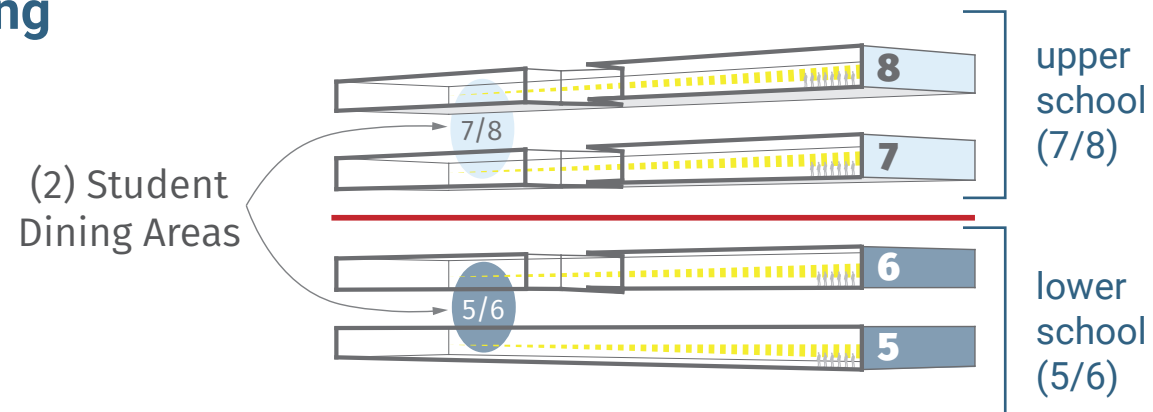
What does 5th grade in a middle school look like?



## 2-story building



## 4-story building



# Participant Polling

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## Grade Configuration

1. Do you prefer a 5 through 8 grade configuration or a 6 through 8 grade configuration for the Coakley Middle School?

## Physical Environment

2. If 5th grade students were added to the Coakley Middle School, what do you see as the biggest ADVANTAGE?

3. If the 5th grade students were added to the Coakley Middle School, what is your biggest CONCERN?

## Student Population

4. If the 5th grade students were added to the Coakley Middle School, what do you see as the biggest ADVANTAGE being part of the student population?

5. If the 5th graders were added to the Coakley Middle School, what is your biggest CONCERN about the 5th grader being part of the student population?

[www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com)

enter code

XXXX XXXX

and vote!



Polling open until 5:00pm on May 7th

Participant Polling

# Discussion

