



# Beal Building Project Grade Configuration Recommendation

Presented to the Shrewsbury School Committee  
by Dr. Joseph M. Sawyer, Superintendent of Schools  
October 25, 2017

# Superintendent's Recommendation

That the School Committee vote to establish a Kindergarten through Grade 4 grade configuration for all elementary schools in the Shrewsbury Public Schools, to take effect if and when sufficient space is made available through construction of additional classrooms through the Beal building project.

# K & Grade 1 Configuration: Themes from Survey Feedback

Perceived Strengths	Perceived Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Focus on early childhood and developmentally appropriate practices</li><li>• Smaller range of ages (social aspect; school design)</li><li>• Most K-1 students in town together in one place (equity)</li><li>• Educators with similar focus/expertise</li><li>• Horizontal alignment of curriculum</li><li>• “Feel” of early childhood climate</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More transitions between schools</li><li>• Most/all students in town together in one place, then dispersed to neighborhood schools</li><li>• Less vertical curriculum alignment</li><li>• Less time for school personnel to get to know students and families, and vice versa</li><li>• Large population of young students (750 K &amp; 1 students)</li><li>• Logistics (siblings split across multiple schools; transportation; can't fit all K-1 students in new school; etc.)</li></ul>

# K through Grade 4 Configuration: Themes from Survey Feedback

Perceived Strengths	Perceived Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fewer transitions, more stability and consistency over five year period</li><li>• More time for school personnel to get to know students and families, and vice versa</li><li>• Greater ability to even out population across schools (equity)</li><li>• Vertical alignment of curriculum</li><li>• “Feel” of neighborhood school climate (older kids models for younger kids)</li><li>• Logistics for siblings, transportation, etc.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Less focus on early childhood developmental level</li><li>• Curriculum focused on a wider range of grades</li><li>• Students divided in separate schools across town rather than most at same grade levels in one place (equity)</li><li>• Design of school not entirely focused on early childhood</li><li>• Older kids could be intimidating to younger kids</li></ul>

# Rationale for Recommendation of a K-4 Configuration

1. Educational research literature indicates that no one grade configuration is better than another with regard to educational outcomes (other factors are more important)
2. Educational research literature indicates that transitions between schools can compromise student achievement; the K-4 configuration requires one fewer transition for students

# Rationale for Recommendation of a K-4 Configuration

3. Students remaining in one school for five years allows for more familiarity among students, families, and school staff
4. Vertical articulation of curriculum from grade to grade is stronger when educators in multiple grades are working in the same building
5. Knowledge of students' needs from year to year is more cohesive when the students remain in the same building for longer (especially important when students are having difficulties or have special learning needs)

# Rationale for Recommendation of a K-4 Configuration

6. The climate of the school will have a “neighborhood” feel, where older students serve as role models for younger students
7. Siblings within the K-4 grade range will attend the same school, facilitating getting students to and from school for families and avoiding significant cost increases for bus transportation
8. The district’s student population projection for K-1 is for ~900 students; if the “new” Beal were K-1, it would be designed for 750 students, so ~150 students in K-1 would need to go to school in another district school; this would create issues of equity and of logistics

# Important Considerations Based on Feedback that Supported a K-1 model

1. Having a critical mass of educators who are teaching the same grade and who have similar expertise is a positive aspect that exists at Beal; this can and will be preserved with a K-4 configuration (approximately 16 K and Grade 1 teachers would be at a “new” K-4 Beal and other K-4 schools would have 6 to 12 teachers in those grades)
2. A focus on having a proper early childhood environment for students in grades K and 1, including proper furniture, equipment, and instructional materials; a climate focused on developmental needs; etc. This is achievable in a K-4 configuration, and will be an important consideration in the district’s and architect’s planning

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**Questions?**