



## GRADE RECONFIGURATION INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Wednesday, February 24, 2016  
6:30-7:30 p.m.

Skyline High School Auditorium (3251 E. 3760 South)

School Community Councils within the Skyline Network invite you to attend a grade reconfiguration meeting on Wednesday, February 24, 2016. Grade reconfiguration in the Skyline Network was brought forward by parents as a means of expanding/enhancing academic opportunities for students, and addressing decreased enrollment at Skyline High School. With other schools and districts in the Salt Lake Valley switching to a 9-12 model, Skyline has experienced a decrease in open enrollment permits. Enrollment deficits may eventually impact the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, athletics, and other educational programs for students in the network.

Granite School District does not take a position on reconfiguration, but remains supportive if communities wish to study and implement a grade reconfiguration change. If the Skyline Network continues to pursue the option of reconfiguration, specific data on enrollment and programs within the Skyline Network will be gathered and provided to the community in advance of a formal survey of network patrons on the topic. Data from other networks that have reconfigured will also be made available to help patrons make informed decisions regarding grade reconfiguration.

This meeting is intended to inform patrons regarding the reconfiguration process, and to answer other related questions that community members may have on the topic.

### GRADE RECONFIGURATION - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### Where does the decision for grade reconfiguration come from?

Several years ago, the Granite Board of Education and Administration opened the door for secondary school community councils to consider and request the opportunity to reconfigure secondary schools to a traditional 7-8 and 9-12 model. **Reconfiguration is a community decision.** All previous reconfigurations (Granger, Kearns, Hunter, Cyprus, Cottonwood) were approved by the board of education after the communities were able to demonstrate support for the change. **The Skyline Network has not requested reconfiguration. This meeting will help the community members decide whether or not they want to pursue reconfiguration.**

#### Why consider reconfiguration?

The basis for considering reconfiguration stems from academic data that indicates benefits to students as they prepare for college and career including:

- Fewer Transitions: All four high school years will occur in one setting. Currently, 8th grade students transition to high school (9th grade) at the junior high, then physically transition again when they move to the high school for 10th grade.
- Comprehensive Counseling: Students in the 9-12 configuration receive all-inclusive guidance from a counselor who provides support from the beginning to the end of their high school career, resulting in higher graduation rates and fewer dropouts.
- Enhanced Academic Consistency and Rigor: This configuration allows 9th grade students access to the Granite Technical Institute (GTI), AP courses, and other higher level academic and elective courses. Currently, only students whose parents can provide transportation can access these programs. Additionally, other programmatic, activity and athletic opportunities would improve for 9th grade students, including access to higher-level coursework and arts programs and Freshman sports teams.
- Consistent mature student behavior and academic expectations.

In the case of the Skyline Network, reconfiguration is considered also as a means of preventing further decreases in enrollment at Skyline High School. Open enrollment permits have steadily declined in recent years due to grade reconfigurations within Canyons School District and other school networks in Granite School District, and additional decreases may have an impact on the IB program, athletics, elective classes, and other academic programs at the school.

Students in a 7-8 or 6-8 model benefit from enrollment in a true “middle school” model and philosophy. Without the concern of having to offer high school level requirements, the master schedule lends itself to enhanced teacher teaming and cross-curricular instruction. Additionally, junior highs can focus more on developmentally appropriate and responsive instruction and services. The Skyline community is also considering the implications of moving 6th grade to the junior high. While there is no data to suggest an academic advantage of a 6-8 model (primarily because most U.S. middle schools/junior high schools include 6th grade), the district is open to this suggestion as a way to increase educational opportunities for students at both levels. A K-5 elementary model will free up classroom space and may reduce the need for portable classrooms. Additionally, Utah State Standards separate K-5 and 6-12.

### **What happens to class sizes as a result of reconfiguration?**

Overall, individual class sizes would not change in the event of a reconfiguration. The increase of new students would be offset by teachers and staff who would adjust from other schools that have reduced staff, and/or by hiring new teachers. Additionally, all teachers and staff at the junior high and elementary levels have options for placement. In all previous reconfiguration processes, no teacher or staff member has lost their position, although many followed students to the reconfigured school locations.

### **Are ninth-graders safe in an environment with older high school students?**

- In the case of other Granite School District high schools that have reconfigured 9th grade, incidents of bullying have decreased at both the junior high and high school level. Additionally, administrators and teachers report 9th grade students appear to “mature” quicker in the high school environment, and data indicates a reduction in tardies and absenteeism for 9th grade students in the high school as opposed to the junior high.
- Parents concerned with younger students being introduced to dating should understand that schools do not establish or maintain those standards or rules. Families are the appropriate place for the enforcement of dating standards.
- One of the most common questions brought forward in previous reconfigurations is if teen pregnancy rates will increase. There is no data to suggest a rise teenage pregnancy numbers with the presence of 9th graders in the high school.

### **Are any programs cut at the junior high level?**

All programs would still be available. Classes that have mixed 8th and 9th grade students would become 8th only. Junior high schools with a 7-8 configuration have boosted participation in intramural sports programs in which all students can participate. Likewise, fine arts performances such as band/orchestra, choral, musicals and plays remain in place and have allowed for additional participation by 7th and 8th grade students. Ninth-graders currently have opportunities to participate on freshman teams or be involved in high school level programs. Additionally, the option of moving 6th grade to the junior high school may be considered as a way to increase FTE and expand programs at the junior high level. A K-5 elementary school could also potentially expand programs with newly available building space.

### **How do athletics align with the 7-8 or 6-8 model?**

Schools with only 7th and 8th grade students are not precluded from participating in all currently offered district athletics. In fact, many ninth-grade students already participate in athletics at the high school level as “freshmen.” The existing 7-8 schools have created robust intramural sports programs wherein all students can participate in lieu of a single team that competes with other schools. These schools also organize inter-school intramural championship playoffs. These types of competitions will increase as more junior high schools configure to a 7-8 model. Additionally, a 6-8 junior high would have the same level of athletic opportunities as 7-8 schools. As more junior high schools shift to a 7-8 or 6-8 model, district intermural athletic competitions will mirror current 7-9 competitions.

### **Will ninth-graders at the high school mean more traffic?**

Since ninth-graders don’t have drivers licenses, it is not expected that there would be any additional parking issues. However, there would be an expected increase in parent drop-off/pick-up and bus routes. The current physical configuration of Skyline is conducive to moderate increases in morning and afternoon traffic. Adjustments in drop off points can always be implemented depending on the actual impact.

### **If this is pursued in our community now, when would reconfiguration take place?**

If the community continues to pursue reconfiguration, and if research indicates patrons support the change, a formal request is brought by the community to the board of education (typically in June). If grade reconfiguration was approved in June of 2016, the shift would be implemented in the 2017-18 school year. Later approval would likely delay the change a full school year.