

## **Work Session Meeting**

Tuesday, April 21, 2026 6:00 PM

Board Assembly Room, 1250 West Broadway Avenue, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55411

1) **Call to Order and Roll Call**

2) **Topics and Discussions**

2)a. School Transformation: The Middle Years

3) **Adjournment**



**School  
Transformation**

---

**The Middle  
Years**

# Transformation Resolutions Timeline

	Engagement	Enrollment	Physical Space	Programming
<p><b>December 2023</b></p> <p><b>Board resolution</b></p> <p>Initiating school transformation process</p> <p><i>Data compiled 2024-2025</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caregiver Priorities Survey</li> <li>• Community Engagement Summary Report (review of feedback over the past 10 years)</li> <li>• MPS Data Dashboard</li> <li>• Supt. 100 Day Plan Listening Tour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• June 2025 Enrollment Projections Presentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical Space Study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priority-based budgeting</li> <li>• Spanish Dual Language Task Force Recommendation</li> </ul>
<p><b>October 2025</b></p> <p><b>Board resolution</b></p> <p>Defining next steps &amp; Direction</p> <p><i>Data compiled Dec. 2025-May 2026</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area Budget &amp; Transformation Mtgs., 1:1 phone calls &amp; interviews with MPS caregivers</li> <li>• CityWide student engagement sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enrollment strategy - lower class sizes (2025-27 MFE/MPS Collective Bargaining Agreement)</li> <li>• Updated demography report</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nov. 2025 Defining Transformation</li> <li>• Jan. 2026 Transformation &amp; the MPS Student Experience "Impacts on Class Sizes &amp; Programming" Presentation</li> </ul>

## Supporting Inputs

- Anishinabe Academy Facility Advisory Committee Recommendation
- Program Updates: Career and Technical Education, Community Education, and Special Education
- Resolution Modifying the Grade Level of Seward Montessori Elementary School

# Transformation Resolutions Timeline

	Engagement	Enrollment	Physical Space	Programming
	<b>April 2026</b> - <i>Planning and analysis</i>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>October 2025 cont'd</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Board resolution</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Defining next steps &amp; Direction</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Data compiled Dec. 2025-May 2026</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue Area Budget &amp; Transformation Mtgs., 1:1 phone calls &amp; interviews with MPS caregivers, and Citywide student engagement sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Enrollment &amp; Retention opportunities</b></li> <li><b>Strategies to increase enrollment and attract new families (music, arts, dual language, IB, etc.)</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cost/ benefit analysis for physical changes</li> <li>Repurposing existing buildings</li> <li>Feasibility for inclusive special education spaces</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>K-8 advantages &amp; challenges</b></li> </ul>

# Areas to Increase Enrollment

1

## Prioritize Early Entry

### Increase Kindergarten Enrollment

Enroll more Minneapolis families at entry point

2

## Enroll Residents

### Enroll More Minneapolis Residents

Students new to MPS & those returning from charter schools, non-public schools, or other districts

3

## Bridge Transitions

### Strengthen Elem. → Middle Transition

Address the largest loss point in the system

4

## Stabilize Grade-to-Grade

### Improve Year-to-Year Retention

Reduce losses between grade levels

# The MPS Student Experience

The guaranteed MPS student experience ensuring each student has it all: the opportunities, experiences and skills to choose their individualized path to graduation.



## Ethnic Studies and Social Emotional Learning

### THE CORE

- Math
- Science
- English Language Arts
- Social Studies
- The Arts
- Personal Finance
- Physical Education & Health

### BEYOND THE CORE

- Career connected learning K-12
- Early college credit
- Advanced Academics
- International Baccalaureate
- Dual Language
- Athletics
- Clubs

# Alex's Developmental Needs in the MPS Experience



## Elementary

### Foundational skill-building:

- Academics
- Social
- Emotional



## Middle School

### The bridge to high school:

- Identity & belonging
- Increasing academic demands
- Increasing autonomy
- Exploratory learning



## High School

### The capstone experience:

- Strong need for autonomy
- Advanced academic demands
- Post-secondary pathway preparation

# The Middle Grades: 6–8



**Middle School**  
Age 11

**MPS is committed to ensuring that students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally in grades 6–8, a period of rapid developmental change.**

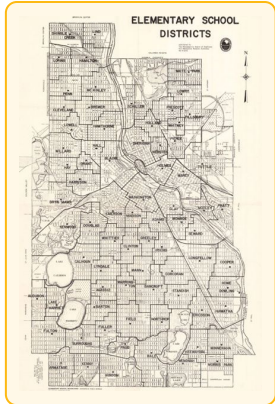
# Context Behind Middle Year Schools

# Minneapolis Schools Evolved with a Changing City

The locations, sizes, attendance areas, and enrollments of Minneapolis schools are a product of urban development and legislation.

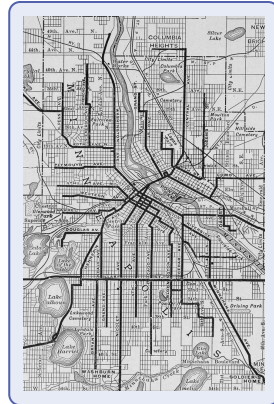
## Proximity

1850-1930



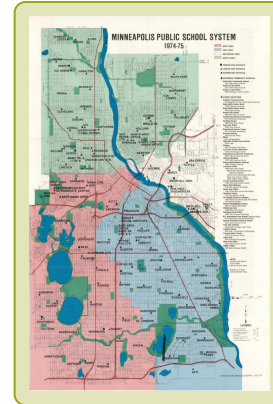
## Transportation

1930-1970



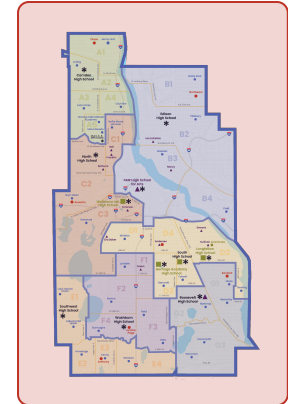
## Desegregation

1970-1990



## Choice

1990-Present



# School Configurations for the Middle Years

**Elementary**

1-8

**Junior High**

7-9

**Middle School**

6-8 & K-8



School configurations for the middle grades have shifted over time to better align with the needs of early adolescent learners.

# Early School Structure: Grades 1–8 and 9–12

## Elementary

1–8

## Junior High

7–9

## Middle School

6–8 & K–8



### Elementary: Grades 1–8

- “Grade school” model, middle grades included in elementary school
- Focus on basic skills

### Secondary: Grades 9–12

- Subject- or career-driven learning
- High school attendance not universal

# The Junior High Era: Grades 7–9

## Elementary

1–8

## Junior High

7–9

## Middle School

6–8 & K–8

### Junior High: Grades 7–9

- Acknowledgement that early adolescence is a distinct stage of human development
- Junior highs were content driven and departmentalized; “mini high schools”

# Middle Schools: Designed for Adolescents

**Elementary**

1-8

**Junior High**

7-9

**Middle School**

6-8 & K-8

**Middle School:**

- Grades 6-8

-OR-

**K-8 School**

- Grades 7 and 8 join K-6 elementary schools

Families have choice in the school configuration their students attend

# School Configurations for the Middle Years

## Elementary

1-8

## Junior High

7-9

## Middle School

6-8 & K-8



MPS school configurations for the middle grades continue to evolve to meet the unique needs of the early adolescent learner and ensure that students thrive academically, socially, and emotionally .

# The Middle Years Experience: Grades 6-8

# The Early Adolescent Learner: a Time of Rapid Change



**Physical**

**Cognitive**

**Social**

**Emotional**

# The Unique Needs of the Early Adolescent Learner

## Physical & Cognitive

- Rapid physical growth
- Puberty
- Sleep and nutrition challenges
- Executive function development (planning, organization, impulse control)
- Increasing capacity for abstract thinking
- Need relevance and active learning

## Social & Emotional

- Need for belonging
- Peer influence
- Developing social identity & self-concept
- Heightened emotions
- Need supportive adult relationships
- Test boundaries
- Developing moral reasoning
- Developing decision-making skills

# Alex's Middle Years Experience



**A guaranteed MPS middle years experience that is grounded in research to support the unique developmental needs of the early adolescent learner is:**

- **Responsive:** grounded in an understanding of adolescent development
- **Challenging:** high expectations and rigorous learning
- **Empowering:** students take ownership of learning
- **Equitable:** each unique learner has access to the supports they need
- **Engaging:** relevant, exploratory learning experiences

# Responsive & Empowering

**Responsive:** grounded in an understanding of early adolescent development

**Empowering:** students to take ownership of learning



## A guaranteed MPS student experience looks like:

Relevance	Relationships	Routines
learning connects to student identity, cultures, communities and future self	focus on connections and an advisory model	support organization and self-management

# Challenging

**Challenging:** high expectations and rigorous learning



## **A guaranteed MPS student experience looks like:**

rigorous core instruction aligned to the intended level of rigor of Minnesota State Standards ensuring high school academic readiness

enrichment to go beyond the standards

# Equitable & Engaging

**Equitable:** each unique learner has access to the supports they need

**Engaging:** relevant, exploratory learning experiences



## A guaranteed MPS student experience looks like:

school schedules intentionally designed to meet the needs of each unique learner inclusive of students with IEPs, English Learners, Intervention, Advanced Learner

exploratory learning opportunities to support development of individual identity

## Caregiver feedback is aligned to the needs of the early adolescent learner

### **Intervention**

- In middle grades this is currently variable depending on school schedule, school size, and Title eligibility.

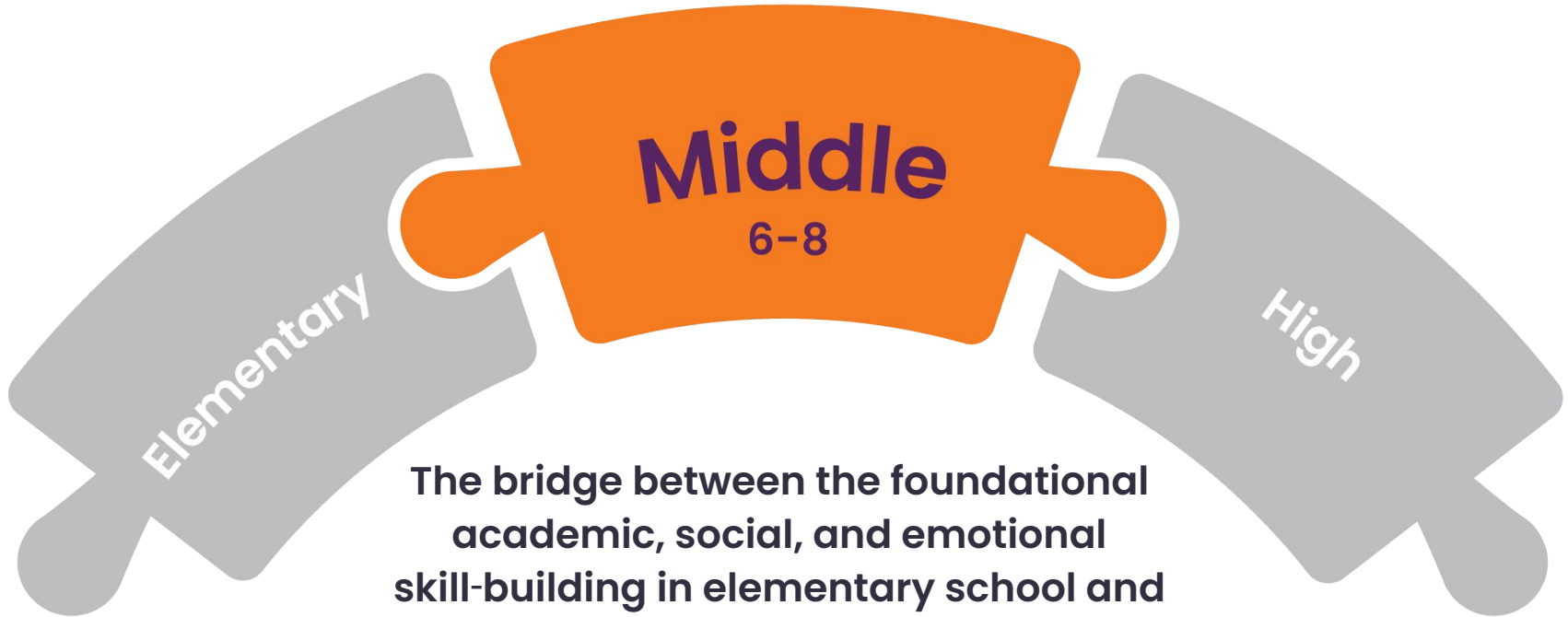
### **Advanced Academics**

- In middle grades this is currently math acceleration, exploratory courses

### **Diverse elective choices, including language offerings**

- In middle grades this is currently exploratory courses and magnet theme

# The Middle Years Experience



**The bridge between the foundational academic, social, and emotional skill-building in elementary school and the credit-bearing, discipline-specific coursework of high school.**

# Bridging for the Early Adolescent Learner

A guaranteed middle grades MPS experience that bridges from elementary to high school and ensures the early adolescent learner thrives looks like:

<b>Social &amp; Emotional developmental needs are met</b>	<p>Necessary school size to support the unique developmental needs of the early adolescent learner as they transition from elementary to high school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social worker, Counselor, Students Support Staff</li><li>• Consistent implementation of SEL curriculum</li></ul>
<b>Academic needs are met</b>	<p>Teacher specialization by license</p> <p>School size to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implementation of MDE middle grades requirements to ensure high school readiness</li><li>• academic differentiation and intervention</li></ul>

# Academic Requirements of the Middle Years

Content Area	MDE Academic Requirements
Math & English Language Arts	Meet all MDE Academic Standards and grade level benchmarks each year
Science	Meet all 2019 Academic Standards and benchmarks in Science each year <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>6th grade: Earth and Space Science Benchmarks</li><li>7th grade: Life Science Benchmarks</li><li>8th grade: Physical Science Benchmarks</li></ul>
Social Studies	Meet all 2021 Academic Standards and Benchmarks in Social Studies each year <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Social Studies standards contain grade-specific standards for each of the four main disciplines. (Citizenship &amp; Government, Economics, Geography, History, Ethnic studies)</li></ul>
The Arts: Media Arts, Visual Arts, Music, Dance, Theater	Students must be offered <b>at least three</b> and are required to meet the state standards and benchmarks in <b>two</b> arts areas <b>each year</b> .
Physical Education & Health	Yearly instruction in Physical Education to meet MDE benchmarks Health standards currently locally determined

# K-8 Background and MPS Reality

# K-8 School Research & the MPS Experience

## Research

K-8's **can lead to more favorable** academic and disciplinary **outcomes** for middle schoolers in K-8 schools compared to 6-8 schools; however, these **gains do not persist** after students' 9th grade year.

## K-8s in MPS

- **Academics:** Literacy results (MCA and FastBridge) indicate consistent achievement across 6-8 and K-8 middle schoolers for the last two years.
- **Disciplinary outcomes:** No overall difference in suspension rates.
- **Retention:** K-8 middle year students have similar retention rates over the past three years than 6-8 schools.
- **Additional Considerations:** Limitations in staffing and licensure lead to constrained schedules and a smaller course catalog in K-8 schools compared to 6-8 schools.

# MPS K-8 & 6-8 MPS Academic Experience

MPS Academic Experience	K-8 (548 students)	Comprehensive MS (750 students)
<b>Math:</b> meet all MDE grade level benchmarks each year	Grade-level progression grades 6-8	Grade-level progression grades 6-8
<b>ELA:</b> meet all MDE grade level benchmarks each year	Grade 7 and 8 are <b>combined</b>	Grade-level progression 6-8
<b>Social Studies:</b> meet all MDE grade level benchmarks each year	Social Studies grade 7 and 8 <b>rotate</b> yearly	Grade-level progression grades 6-8
<b>Science:</b> meet all MDE grade level benchmarks each year	Science grade 7 and 8 <b>rotate</b> yearly	Grade-level progression grades 6-8
<b>The Arts:</b> Offer 3 Arts areas, students achieve MDE benchmarks in 2 arts areas each year	2 arts areas, <b>missing</b> one art area	<b>Meets</b> MDE guidance of 3 arts areas
<b>Physical Education &amp; Health:</b> Yearly instruction in Physical Education to meet MDE benchmarks	<b>Meets</b> MDE guidance	<b>Meets</b> MDE guidance
<b>Exploratory offerings</b>	None	<b>Additional</b> arts, world languages, engineering classes, & MYP Design

# School Size Required to Ensure MPS Student Experience

## K-8 School

	<b>Grades K-5</b>	<b>Grades 6-8 6 period day</b>
<b>&gt;=70% FRL</b>	<b>424 to 544 students</b>	<b>Minimum of 594 students</b>
<b>&lt;=70%FRL</b>	<b>485 to 795 students</b>	<b>Minimum of 648 students</b>

### **Total Enrollment**

Note: Additional students would need to be introduced at 6th grade or overall enrollment in the grades leading up to 6th would need to be increased in order to offer holistic middle school experience. If not, program would not be independently financially stable.

**Min of 1,018 students**

**Min of 1,133 students**

# K-8s and Physical Space



## K-8 programs require specialized buildings that:

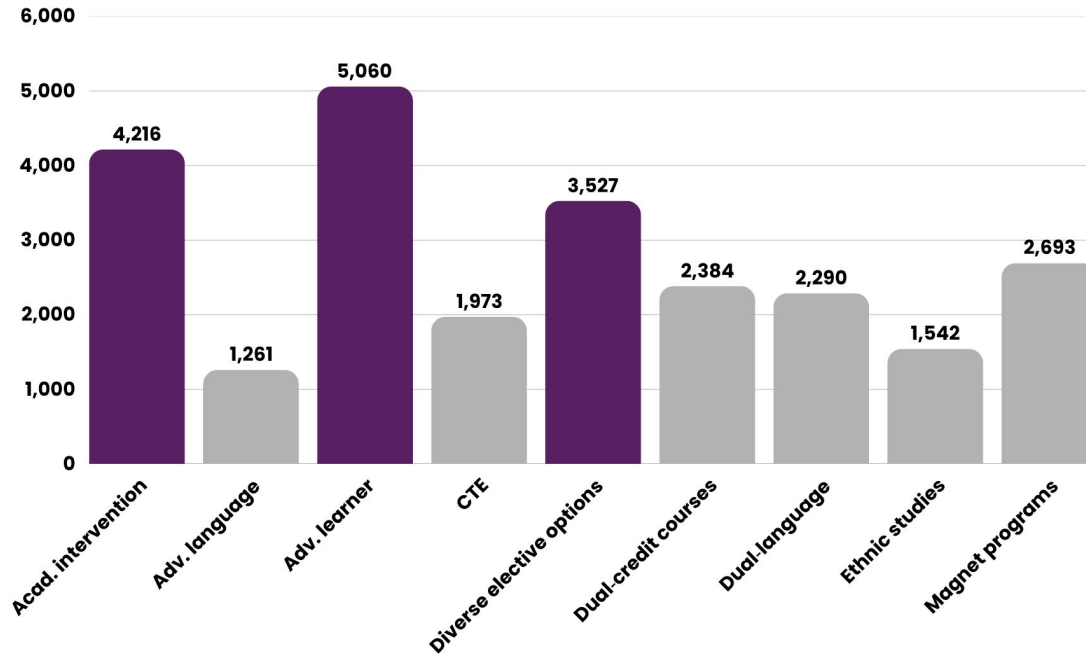
- Are large enough to host the approximately 1,000 students required to have a comprehensive, holistic program
- Have grade-level appropriate learning spaces (e.g., science labs)
- Have appropriate building facilities (e.g., gyms, cafeteria)

**Currently fewer than 5% of buildings in MPS meet all criteria**

# Caregiver Feedback: Top Academic Priorities

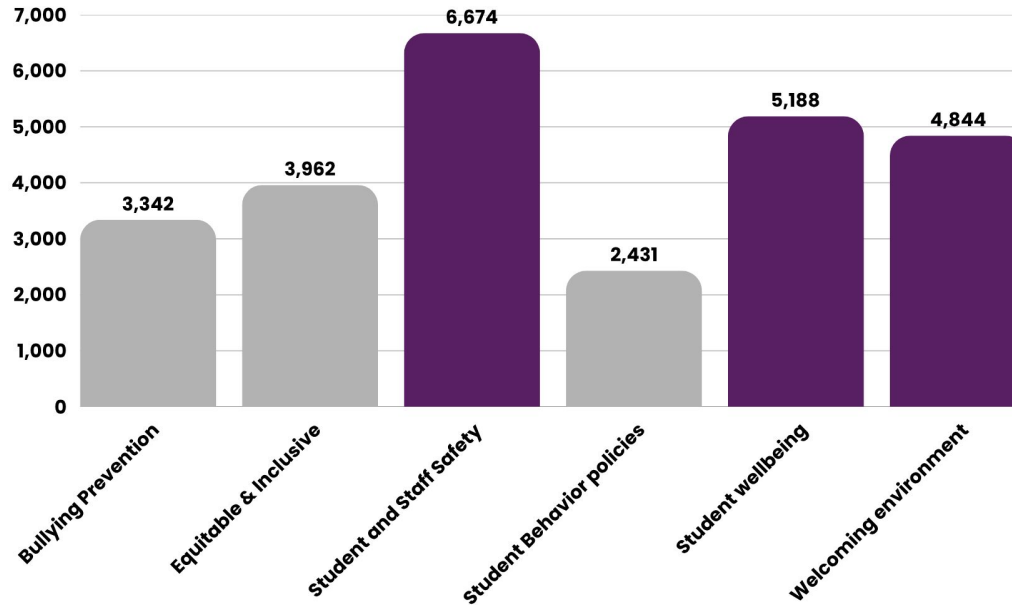
## Top three priorities:

advanced learner services, academic intervention, and diverse elective options.



# Caregiver Feedback: School Climate Priorities

**Top three priorities:**  
Safety, student wellbeing, and a welcoming environment.





## Rigorous

Robust  
academic experience



## Reliable

Consistent  
programming &  
supports



## Sustainable

Long term financial  
stability

# Areas to Increase Enrollment

1

## Prioritize Early Entry

### Increase Kindergarten Enrollment

Enroll more Minneapolis families at entry point

2

## Enroll Residents

### Enroll More Minneapolis Residents

Students new to MPS & those returning from charter schools, non-public schools, or other districts

3

## Bridge Transitions

### Strengthen Elem. → Middle Transition

Address the largest loss point in the system

4

## Stabilize Grade-to-Grade

### Improve Year-to-Year Retention

Reduce losses between grade levels

# Questions and Discussion