

May 16, 2008

The 5th-Grade “Migration”

The significantly smaller class sizes made possible with the community’s support of our February 5th referendum mean more sections at each grade level. With each grade level using more classrooms, the Big Hollow School Board made the necessary decision to reconfigure which grades are housed in each of our buildings. For the 2008-09 school year, early childhood programs will move to the Primary School, 2nd grade will shift to the Elementary School, and 5th grade will move to the Middle School. Big Hollow administrators, staff and Board members are working diligently to make these transitions as smooth as possible for students and parents alike.

The Big Hollow community has expressed particular concern over the 5th-grade “migration” to the Middle School. First and foremost, the School Board would like to emphasize that while our 5th-graders will be housed in the Middle School, they will not become Middle School students. They will not follow the Middle School program with subject-specialist instructors and students moving from one classroom to the next at regular intervals. Other than the start and end time of their day, our 5th-graders will have the same experience they would if they remained in the Elementary School.

The following are some questions we have fielded regarding the 5th-grade move, and answers to those questions. We will continue to communicate proactively as more details become clear, and encourage the Big Hollow community to contact the School Board at boardofeducation@bighollow.us with additional questions and concerns.

Will the 5th-graders have the same start time as the 6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders? Yes, the 5th-graders will start and end school at the same time as the Middle School students.

Will the 5th-graders ride the bus with 6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders? Yes, to keep busing as efficient as possible, they will ride the same bus and all will have assigned seats. When they arrive at school, they will be in a different area than students in grades 6, 7 and 8.

Will the 5th graders continue to have recess? Yes.

How often will 5th-graders interact with the 6th-, 7th- and 8th-graders? Interaction between the grades will be kept to a minimum. The 5th-grade students will have their own wing on the first floor of the Middle School while grades 6, 7 and 8 will be located on the second floor. It is possible that 6th-graders may use two classrooms (science and social studies) in the 5th-grade wing. The 5th-graders may occasionally pass other students in the hallways on their way to gym, art, music or computer.

Will the 5th-graders be required to dress for gym? No, they will have gym just as they would in the Elementary School building. They will be in a separate gym with no need for them to be in the locker rooms.

Will today's 4th-graders receive a Middle School "orientation" as has been done for 5th-graders? As we have done in the past with all students moving on to Middle School, we will host a visitation day for the current 4th-graders and they will receive a tour of their new building. It is a special day where they can begin to familiarize themselves with the new setting.

Will parents be able to familiarize themselves with the Middle School? Yes. Between 6:30 and 9 p.m. on Thursday, May 22, during the Ice Cream Social, interested parents and their students may visit the 5th-grade wing and the "specials" wing, both of which are on the first floor. All classrooms currently in use will be locked, but parents and students may enter the empty classrooms. All students touring the 5th-grade wing and "specials" wing must be accompanied by an adult.

Also, we encourage parents and students alike to attend our annual Meet-and-Greet to be held on August 26, 2008. Parents and students together can explore their new surroundings and meet our 5th-grade teachers.