



Sonoita Elementary School District #25

Elgin School

23 Elgin Road

Elgin, Arizona 85611

(520) 455-5514 Fax (520) 455-5516

Christopher Bonn Ed.D, Superintendent

Melissa Paul, Administrative Secretary

March 2018

Dear Parents and Families,

By now, I am sure that many of you have heard about my recent recommendation to the board about moving 5th grade into the middle school beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. While there were many factors contributing to this decision, I want our partners in education know that a commitment to students is my highest priority; every decision made here in Elgin should put the best interests of our students first. Our current budget situation may have been the most recent catalyst for this decision, but it is important for members of our learning community understand that we truly believe this is what is best for our students – and that is the reasoning behind this decision.

Moving our 5th grade students into the middle school will essentially divide our school in half – as opposed to our current model which places 6 grades in the elementary school and only 3 grades in the middle school. This will make student supervision and academic interventions much easier; since middle school and elementary school are not on similar schedules, it brings flexibility to our support staff, interventionists, and food services. At the middle school level, these students will be taught 5th grade academic standards by highly qualified teachers who are experts in their content areas. Each of our middle school teachers are appropriately certified to teach 5th grade, and these teachers will receive additional support and resources to ease this transition. This will give our students an additional year to prepare for the structure and rigor of high school, and research has shown that an additional year at the middle school level can improve academic performance at the secondary level.

Our teachers are already implementing project-based learning models and collaboratively developing interdisciplinary lessons that will smoothly move students from the more isolated general education model of the elementary classroom into the collaborative subject-specific model of the middle school. Focusing on the developmental needs of students in the 10-14 year span, and offering a variety of opportunities for remediation, integrated learning, and individualized assistance are instructional practices that have been proven to be highly effective in easing student transitions between the elementary and secondary levels. Our 5th grade students have already successfully joined their middle school classmates through their participation in Elgin School sports and activities, and we have every confidence that they will also be able to share a lunchtime and participate in enrichments (Art, PE, etc.) together.

While this idea may not work in larger schools, in a small, rural school like Elgin where students already know each other quite well, we feel this will be an effective way of meeting the instructional needs of our students. We understand that this is a significant change in the Elgin School culture, and that families will continue to have questions and/or concerns. Please know that we consider your input critical to easing this transition. We will be having a meeting for families at 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 to allow parents an opportunity to provide input and help us determine our next course of action. We look forward to your input and participation throughout this process. Thank you for continuing to support Elgin School as a partner in education.

Sincerely,

Chris Bonn, Ed.D
Principal/Superintendent

