

Top Three Options

Option 1

1 school for grades PK-5
1 school for grades 6-8
1 school for grades 9-12

Option 2

1 school for grades PK-2
1 school for grades 3-5
1 school for grades 6-8
1 school for grades 9-12

Option 3

2 schools for grades PK-5
1 school for grades 6-8
1 school for grades 9-12

Details for Each Option

Each of the above options is detailed on the pages that follow. For each option we present the summary grade configuration, a brief explanation, and the strengths and weaknesses/challenges inherent in the option. The ACSD Facilities Steering Committee operated with the knowledge that the district expects to continue to have approximately 200 students per grade level and approximately 100 students enrolled in preschool. For each option below we list the expected number of students per school based on this information.

There were four key values that emerged during the Facilities Steering Committee's discussions, and these served as priorities for these different possible grade configurations for Athens City Schools.

- Equity (all children have equal access to educational programs)
- High Quality Education (curriculum and facilities that promote best education)
- Financial Responsibility (operating schools within the budget)
- Teachers' Professional Development (to promote high quality education for kids)

The Facilities Steering Committee makes the following recommendations that would hold for any of the three options provided below.

- 1) The current thinking of the group is that it would be best to eventually move middle school students to a location closer to AHS in The Plains. This could involve building a new middle school or re-purposing a facility currently owned by the district. Having the middle and high schools close together makes it easier for programs to share facilities (labs, gymnasium, sports fields, etc.), which minimizes bussing between schools. It also makes it easier for middle school students to take accelerated classes and to participate in extra-curricular activities, while also creating greater opportunity for planning across grades for middle and high school teachers. Furthermore, as college student housing has expanded in the area near the current middle school, AMS's location in uptown Athens has become problematic.
- 2) Sixth graders should be moved into the middle school. Transitions can be difficult for children in this age group. Our current arrangement has MS age students working through two school transitions in a two-year period of time. Having the MS students in one building for three years would spread out the distance in time between transitions.
- 3) The ACSD public preschool should be incorporated into elementary school building in order to make it easier for at-risk kids to transition into elementary school.

Option 1

1 school for grades PK-5

1 school for grades 6-8

1 school for grades 9-12

This option involves building a new school for all elementary aged children in the district. The building could be built in a way that has separate wings for different grade-level groups such as having PK-1 in one area, grades 2-3 in a second wing, and grades 4-5 in a third wing or more than one building on a single campus. The location of this school is not yet determined. The sizes for each school would be approximately 1300 students in the elementary school, 600 students in the middle school, and 800 students in the high school. This option would involve moving the middle school (grades 6-8) to a location near Athens High School.

Strengths:

- Because this option involves only one school at each level, students from around the district would be together the whole way through school, which promotes diversity, inclusion, and equity of access.
- This option makes it easier to provide special services (English Language Learning, Special Education, Gifted Education, etc.) readily available to all elementary students without extensive bussing.
- This option improves teachers' ability to collaboratively plan and support within each grade.
- Having a single building could make it easier to create a strong sense of identity among students and families.
- This configuration makes it easier for students to accelerate subjects that would span different grade levels.
- This option increases the opportunities for peer mentoring and programs that integrate different ages.
- Because all students would be in the same school, there is not a need to redraw district lines in order to alleviate concerns of intra-district enrollment, which currently causes an imbalance in enrollment and class sizes.
- This option would involve building a new elementary school, which is a sizable cost, but in the long run may actually be less expensive than efforts to refurbish/build and operate multiple buildings. A new building can also mean state of the art facilities.

Tradeoffs/Concerns:

- This configuration means that the elementary school will be much larger than our current elementary schools (would have 1300 students, as opposed to our current scenario of approximately 300-400 per school). Such a large school might feel overwhelming to students.
- Having all students from around the district in a particular grade in one building could increase the time spent on busses for some kids.
- Moving all elementary students into one building is a large change and will mean moving away from the neighborhood school concept, which holds for some, but not all, of the current Athens City elementary schools.

Option 2

1 school for grades PK-2

1 school for grades 3-5

1 school for grades 6-8

1 school for grades 9-12

This option maximizes equity by bringing all of the grades for each level together into one school, which means kids from all over the district will be in school together. The size for the school grades PK-2 would be 700 students. The schools for grades 3-5 and 6-8 would each have 600 students, and the high school would have 800 students. This option would involve moving the middle school (grades 6-8) to a location near Athens High School.

Strengths:

- As a whole, this option means that students from around the district would be together the whole way through school, which promotes diversity, inclusion, and equity of access.
- Having grade-level buildings improves teachers' ability to collaboratively plan and support within each grade.
- This option makes it easier to provide special services (English Language Learning, Special Education, Gifted Education, etc.) readily available to all elementary students without extensive bussing.
- Because all students would be in the same school, there is not a need to redraw district lines in order to alleviate concerns of intra-district enrollment, which currently causes an imbalance in enrollment and class sizes.

Tradeoffs/Concerns:

- Having 1 school for all preschool through 2nd grade students means this school will be larger than our current elementary schools (800 students instead of 300-400 in our current K-6 buildings).
- This option involves more transitions to a new school, which could be difficult for kids. The transition to a new school at 3rd grade might feel especially difficult to some children.
- Having more transitions could also make it more difficult for schools to develop a strong sense of community among students and families.
- Having all students from around the district in a particular grade in one building could increase the time spent on busses for some kids.
- Grade-level buildings separate kids based on age, which could reduce opportunities for peer mentoring and programs that integrate different ages.
- Having grade-level buildings makes it more difficult for teachers to collaboratively plan with other subject-area teachers at different grades.
- This option could make it more difficult for students to accelerate subjects that would span different grade levels.

Option 3

2 schools for grades PK-5

1 school for grades 6-8

1 school for grades 9-12

This option integrates preschool into the elementary buildings, and creates two elementary schools that each include elementary students through 5th grade. Each elementary school would serve approximately 650 students. There would be 600 students in grades 6-8 and the high school would have 800 students. This option would involve moving the middle school (grades 6-8) to a location near Athens High School.

Strengths:

- Having two elementary schools for the district makes it more likely that students from around the district would be together the whole way through school, which promotes diversity, inclusion, and equity of access.
- Having fewer transitions at the elementary level can make it easier for schools to develop a strong sense of community among students and families.
- This option increases the opportunities for peer mentoring and programs that integrate different ages at the elementary school level.
- Having two elementary schools makes the schools feel smaller than a single school, which could make students feel more comfortable.

Tradeoffs/Concerns:

- Having 2 elementary schools for the district means that these schools will be larger than our current elementary schools (650 students instead of 400 in our current K-6 schools).
- This option will require drawing new district lines for elementary schools to address concerns about equity, inclusion, and diversity.
- Having multiple schools at the elementary grade level makes it more difficult to adjust to changes in enrollment, which can mean that some schools have bigger class sizes than others.
- Having multiple schools at the elementary grade levels makes it more difficult to provide special services (English Language Learning, Special Ed., Gifted Education, etc.) to all elementary students without bussing students between locations.