

Sent May 7, 2025 via Parent Square

Title: Transition for Next Year's 4th & 5th Graders

Dear 3rd and 4th Grade Families:

At Blackwell, we are well into planning for next year. This includes aligning staffing with our current student enrollment. Staffing in classrooms is based directly on student enrollment. Over the past few years, elementary schools in our district have experienced declining enrollment. This is based on several factors including lower birth rates in King County, school choices for families, and the cost of living in our area. Next year's enrollment is projected to be roughly 30 students less than our current school size.

Based on this decline and changes in planned district changes to elementary staffing models for next year's fourth and fifth graders, we will be moving from straight 4th and 5th grade classrooms to **five 4.5 multiage classrooms** next year. We will no longer run straight 4th or 5th grade classes. Our model will be similar to the 4.5 model used in our highly capable programs.

This program change will allow our 4th and 5th grade teachers to collaborate and plan a robust learning experience for our students. There will be roughly an equal number of 4th and 5th graders in each of these multiage classes. We will commit to the 4.5 multiage classroom model for the next two-year cycle.

Having a collaborative teaching team working together is the best option for our students moving forward.

Benefits include:

- Teaching all the 4th and 5th grade learning standards within the two-year window.
 - We will teach the 5th grade content of science, social studies, and integrate ELA next year (2025-26)
 - We will teach the 4th grade content of science, social studies, and integrated ELA the following year (2026-27)
 - Math standards are unique in each grade level and will be taught as separate 4th and 5th grade break outs.
- Integration of curricular standards across multiple content areas.

- District Teaching and Learning Department support for a successful transition to 4.5 multiage
- Maintaining established relationships with teachers as many students may loop for two years with the same teachers. Students will know the classroom expectations and will be able to “hit the ground” running in the second year. Older students will be excellent role models for the younger students within each grade level

Our 4.5 teaching team is working closely with district guidance to deliver robust and rigorous opportunities for our students next year. Specific teachers and class placements will be announced in late August. We look forward to the opportunity this will provide us to build deeper relationships with students and families. This is a key factor in the academic success of students.

To do:

I would like to collect additional caregiver input for class placement from you. This input will be in addition to input you may have submitted earlier this spring during our annual family input process. Specifically, this additional input will be to identify any student(s) you'd prefer your child not be placed. If you're a fourth grade family, there's a question for consideration to remain with your current teacher in the 4.5 multiage class. Here's a link to the form - <https://forms.office.com/r/muCcH0br8D> Please complete the survey by May 13th.

I look forward to our continued partnership in learning.

Sincerely,
Jim Eaton,
Principal