

# Rumney/Doty Configuration FAQ

## I. Process, Compliance, and Community Engagement

1. Why was this decision made?

**Answer:** The decision was made to finalize staffing assignments and essential operational details for the upcoming school year, with the goal of creating a stable, equitable configuration.

2. Will there be a pause in implementation to allow for genuine community review and for meaningful public forums to be held before any implementation moves forward?

**Answer:** No. The decision to move forward (PK-2 at Rumney, 5-6 at Doty, 3/4 at both) remains in place for the upcoming school year. Community forums will be held to gather feedback for how to make this transition as easy as possible.

3. Why is this grade reconfiguration proposal being handled through a different process than previous school closure proposals, which were sent directly to voters?

**Answer:** School closures require voter approval under the Articles of Agreement. The current grade reconfiguration (PK-2 at Rumney, 5-6 at Doty, 3/4 at both) is an administrative decision.

4. How did this process comply with the Articles of Agreement, which require "timely and sufficient opportunity for local input," and the community participation commitments made at the merger?

**Answer:** [The Articles of Agreement](#) does not relate to administrative decisions. It requires that the District Board "provide timely and sufficient opportunity for local input on policy and budget development." The administration acknowledged the "decision-first" approach was not ideal and that a broader discussion/input should have occurred earlier, but it was driven by the urgent need to finalize staffing and operational details. Because the WCUUSD School Board does not have to approve the proposal, it took no formal action. The discussion in the executive session was related to the personnel issues involved in the administrative decision.

5. What alternatives were considered, and what specific data drove this decision?

**Answer:** The district Configuration Committee met for the past two years to develop criteria for how to organize our district. Previous alternatives that included closure of schools were considered and voted down. Changes in staffing needs and class sizes since the community vote in February necessitated consideration of alternatives. The current configuration decision was driven by the need to create a more stable and equitable grade-level configuration, improve consistency of educational experiences, and better

allocate critical resources, including dedicated single-grade math and literacy instruction for 5th and 6th graders. Combining the 5th and 6th grades provides academic and social enrichment while fostering a larger peer group to prepare them for U-32.

6. Have there been comprehensive discussions with the select boards of the five towns over time to ensure holistic planning with the communities?

**Answer:** No

7. How will the district address transportation challenges for those who live farthest from the new school site?

**Answer:** The district is committed to adhering, as much as possible, to a maximum one-way travel time of 45 minutes for elementary students. The revised transportation plan for the current Doty/Rumney move aims to reduce overall bus time. Bus routes will be developed with input from family surveys.

8. How will the district answer community questions throughout this transition process?

**Answer:** The district is committed to a communications campaign featuring weekly updates. We also encourage parents to bring their specific questions and suggestions to dedicated community forums and presentations.

## II. Configuration Rationale, Grade Level Moves, and Alternatives

1. Why not increase social interactions between Doty and Rumney students through combined field trips, community events, and extracurricular activities instead of an abrupt transition?

**Answer:** The purpose of the changes goes beyond this. The goal is to create a more stable and equitable grade-level configuration while allowing the district to use critical resources more effectively. The consolidation creates a larger peer group (approx. 14-19 students per class), which allows teachers to better address individual student needs.

2. Why not wait to make changes until a merger with Montpelier is impending or a middle school building is created, so all students in the district can make the change together?

**Answer:** A merger with Montpelier would be a long (several year) process requiring the creation of a new district and new articles of agreement. The current reconfiguration is needed to address short-term cost and quality issues. Even if a future merger with Montpelier occurs, these issues would still require reconfiguration,

3. Could an alternative configuration be considered, such as keeping the youngest grades close to home at town schools, hosting the older grades at Doty, and sharing space in Rumney with the Town of Middlesex for town offices?

**Answer:** This specific configuration would not effectively address the core challenges that the current reconfiguration plan is designed to solve. The administration designed this plan (PK–2 at Rumney, 5–6 at Doty, and 3/4 at both) to use both school buildings fairly and balance enrollment. It also creates an intermediate school experience for older elementary students that helps prepare them academically and socially for their eventual transition to U-32.

- **Class Size and Cohort Inefficiencies:** Keeping the youngest grades in separate town schools would continue the problem of very small and uneven class sizes. For instance, Doty’s kindergarten class is expected to have as few as two students. Groups this small make it harder for the district to create balanced classes that support friendships and give students a wider group of peers to learn with.
- **Resource and Staffing Constraints:** Spreading the youngest grade bands across multiple town schools would strain the district’s ability to efficiently allocate critical resources. Under the current model, combining grade bands allows the district to maximize the impact of specialized personnel—such as reading and math interventionists, full-time school counselors, and nurses—without overextending staff capacity across sparse cohorts.
- **Operational and Financial Sustainability:** Running separate town schools for very small groups of students costs much more per student. (Schools with fewer than 150 students face financial challenges because building and administrative costs stay the same even when enrollment is low.)

### III. Student Experience and Social-Emotional Impacts

1. What is the plan for social-emotional support for students during the transition, and what specific steps could staff or administration take to help alleviate children’s concerns before the new school year?

**Answer:** The administration is providing additional leadership and counseling support to help students and families adjust successfully and reduce disruptions to students’ well being and daily routines.

2. What are the opportunities for students to meet their new peers and teachers?

**Answer:** Students will move to their new school with their peers to help reduce uncertainty. The district also plans to create a welcoming transition through activities such as student-led orientations, "Step-Up Days," and family events where students and families can meet teachers.

3. Will the separation of friends, support staff, and the loss of peer-to-peer bonds (like "book buddies" and older peer role models for younger students) negatively impact children?

**Answer:** The move is expected to give students more opportunities to build friendships while also helping staff create positive classroom environments and reduce situations in which students in conflict remain together for multiple years. The administration also recognizes the impact of the transition and is providing counseling support to help students adjust.

4. Are the benefits of 5th and 6th graders remaining in a small cohort within their community, acting as leaders and role models, not as important as expanding their social circles?

**Answer:** The move is designed to create a stable, equitable, high-quality educational program with appropriate class sizes and consistent support services. Combining the 5th and 6th grades will also give students a richer academic and social experience and better prepare them for U-32 by connecting them with a larger and more diverse peer group.

5. What will nursing and school counseling services look like at the schools?

**Answer:** Both schools will share a full time nurse who will allocate her time between buildings based on student needs. Nurse delegates will be trained and available when the nurse is not physically present in a building. Rumney has a 0.8 FTE school counselor and Doty has a 1.0 school counselor who will work collaboratively at both sites to support student needs and provide a robust program.

## IV. Financial and Budgetary Impacts

## V. Facilities and Logistics

## VI. Future Planning and Long-Term Viability

1. If the 6th grade moves to U32 in the future, would 5th graders be sent to Rumney for just one year on an annual basis? Why wouldn't Doty then adopt a K/1, 2/3, 4/5 configuration?

**Answer:** The move of Grade 6 to U-32 is currently on hold since it was based on the closure of two elementary schools. Further consideration of moving the 6th grade will depend on enrollment trends and financial implications.

2. Is the district open to revisiting the decision to move the grades if Worcester's student population were to dramatically increase?

**Answer:** Future decisions will be based on enrollment and maintaining a sustainable school system.

3. Instead of this proposal, should the district be looking at the possibility of Doty becoming an early learning center for PK-2 students from both towns while Rumney transitions to a facility for grades 3-6?

**Answer:** The current reconfiguration decision is PK-2 at Rumney, 5-6 at Doty, and 3/4 at both. This decision was made to create a stable, equitable grade-level configuration and allocate critical resources. Further changes to the configuration of grade levels will depend on enrollment trends and how the board chooses to allocate resources.