

Middle School Study DRAFT Proposal

November 19, 2024

Respectfully submitted to the Plainfield and Cornish School Boards on behalf of the Plainfield Middle School Committee and the Plainfield and Cornish School Districts administrative team.

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Purpose of Proposal:

The purpose of this proposal is to provide the Plainfield and Cornish School Boards with a comprehensive report of the Middle School Committee's work, outlining the pros and cons of a shared middle school including both research-driven programming philosophies and practices as well as cost-benefit analyses. This proposal used the initial Middle School Report (December 2023) as its foundation and proceeded to develop that work in four critical areas: Academic Programming, Student Development, Facilities, and Infrastructure.

This proposal addresses the following essential questions based on each of these four areas:

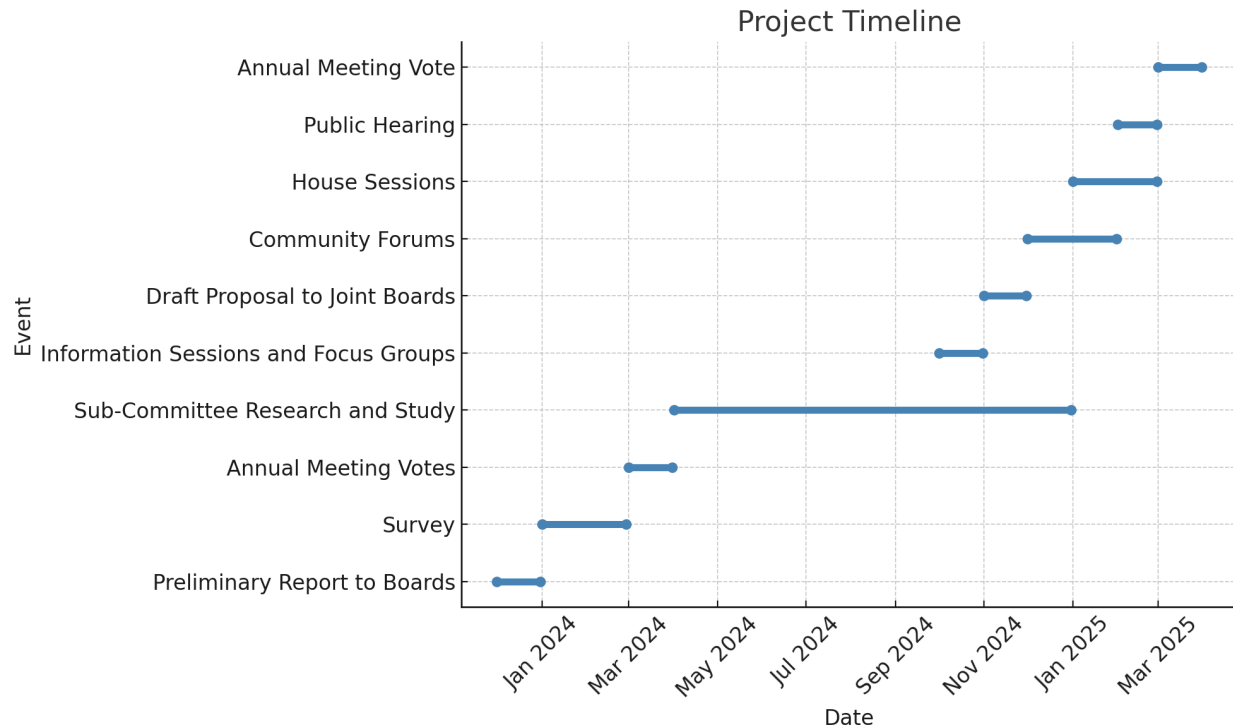
1. Academic Programming:
What are best and next practices in middle school academic programming and how can they apply to a shared middle school?
2. Student Development:
How do young adolescents develop socially and emotionally at this stage of their lives and what type of middle school programming and practices will foster healthy growth?
3. Facilities:
How can the Plainfield Elementary School renovate and/or add space that meets the needs of a future-ready middle school program?
4. Infrastructure:
What are the necessary changes to each school's budgets and overall infrastructure to successfully combine students in grades 6-8?

Based on this information, community feedback, and potential revisions, the Boards will ultimately determine if warrant articles move forward for the March 2025 annual meeting in each district.

Process

This proposal is the result of an extensive process over the past 18 months involving multiple steps and stakeholder involvement along the way. The timeline below represents each stage of our work with the goal of readiness for a warrant article in each district in March 2025.

Timeline:



Middle School Planning Guide:

Click this link to see the complete [Planning Guide](#). This document guided the work of each sub-committee throughout the process, including the project timeline, guiding questions, and an initial set of deliverables.

Stakeholder Involvement:

- Surveys:
Each School Board sent out community-wide surveys last year in order to solicit feedback from as wide a representation as possible. We're thankful for getting a strong response rate, with 242 responses coming in from Cornish and 168 responses from Plainfield.
- Town Vote:
Each town voted in favor of continuing the middle school study at their respective March 2024 annual meetings. These were taken as voice votes in each community.

- Committee:

Many thanks to everyone who volunteered their time to be a part of this study. Every individual listed here below contributed additional time and thought into the development of this proposal. This group wrestled with complex issues, agreed, disagreed, and problem solved in order to allow what's best for students to emerge from this extensive study. Again, THANK YOU!.

<i>Many thanks to our committee members for their service to our communities' children.</i>	
Beth Bierwirth Norm Berman Jim Bonney Emily Boynton Audra Bucklin Phoebe Buckman Donelle Bucholtz Corey Canfield Samantha Davidson-Green Kelsey D'Angelo Karin Denholm Christine Downing Janna Downs Melissa Drye	Matthew Dunn Vincent DiNapoli Tricia Kruidenier Marilyn Lord Paige MacLeay Brian Nolan Tim Olsen Amanda Parker Betsy Rybeck Lynd Nichole Sorenson 24. Rosa Sousa Elizabeth Underhill Josie Wolfinger

Vision, Mission, and Purpose for Shared Middle School:

Why?

Middle school students are at a crucial developmental stage requiring a tailored learning environment that addresses their physical, social, and emotional needs. A combined middle school for the communities of Plainfield and Cornish offers students a chance to connect with new peers before transitioning to larger educational systems, fostering strong schools that contribute to our vibrant communities. Adolescence brings significant growth, and a diverse, interest-driven learning environment will better engage students while accommodating their varied needs. Although committed to the K-8 model, both communities face challenges due to small class sizes that limit educational experiences and social development. Both schools have made strides in addressing these challenges, yet a well planned collaboration between them can accelerate the development of innovative educational solutions, benefiting students and community engagement for this and future generations.

Middle School Draft Mission:

The Cornish and Plainfield School Districts are committed to creating an innovative, future-ready educational environment through a shared middle school program that empowers students academically, socially, emotionally, and physically as they develop through early adolescence. Our learning design will meet the needs of middle level learners throughout this pivotal stage, providing a rigorous and robust curriculum that emphasizes civics, citizenship, sustainability, and creativity. By working collaboratively across our communities, we will create opportunities that inspire students to learn, lead, and contribute meaningfully to a more just, innovative, and sustainable future as engaged citizens seeking to make a positive impact on the world.

Middle School Draft Vision:

The Plainfield and Cornish Middle School fosters a vibrant and rigorous educational community where curiosity, creativity, innovation, project-based learning and interdisciplinary approaches inspire students to connect their studies to real-world challenges and grow as confident, collaborative, and empathetic individuals who actively engage in their communities.

Strategic Planning Goal Alignment

The vision of improved middle school programming is noted in both districts' strategic plans.

- Cornish School Board Strategic Plan:
 - Focus Area #3, Goal 1:
 - In 2024-25, we will create a middle school study committee in collaboration with Plainfield to research and draft a report to distribute to both communities. Additional goals are noted throughout Focus Area #1; Improved Learner Outcomes and Opportunities.
- Plainfield School Board's Strategic Plan, Initiative #4:
 - To Foster a middle school environment that supports individual student self-worth, agency, confidence and maturity.
 - Provide opportunities for students to develop and participate in leadership activities.
 - Provide students with ways to explore subjects of personal interest and identity to foster their capacity to act independently and make skilled choices.
 - Provide students opportunities to take responsibility for aspects of their life that are

- within their control.
- Promote interdisciplinary inquiry and provide the necessary structural supports within the academic program.
- Showcase our middle school traditions and enrichment experiences.

History and Overview of Current Models:

History of Middle-Level Education

Middle-level education refers to the education of students in grades 6-8, which is a critical period of transition between elementary and high school education. The concept of middle-level education emerged in the United States in the 1960s as a response to the need for a more developmentally responsive program that would provide a gradual transition between the elementary and high school years with a focus on social-emotional skills and instruction. Prior to this, students in this age group were typically educated in junior high schools, which were designed to meet the needs of older adolescents (typically grades 7-9) and often mirrored high school scheduling. Junior high schools maintained a subject-specific focus in order to prepare students for the rigors of high school academics yet did not directly address the unique developmental needs of students aged 10-14. The middle school model was created to provide a more supportive and nurturing environment for students in this age group, with a focus on meeting their unique academic, social, and emotional needs.

In short, the traditional junior high school model focused on academic content areas while middle school models focus on the student.

Junior High vs. Middle Schools	
Junior High	Middle School
Subject-based, with emphasis on academic development	Student-oriented, with dual emphasis on academic and relational development
Provides primarily subject-based academic and elective classes	Provides more options for exploratory and elective classes
Traditional six-period day	More flexible scheduling approaches
Teachers are in subject-based departments	Students and teachers are in teams based on grade level
Classrooms arranged by subject area	Classrooms arranged by grade level

Today, there is a significant body of research indicating that middle schools, regardless of grade configuration, are doing a better job meeting the social-emotional needs of students through advisories, a focus on the teacher-student relationship, and purposeful programming related to transitions to and from middle school. However, most middle schools still struggle to meet the academic needs of early adolescents. We have not fully achieved the vision for matching early adolescents' curiosity, voice, and interests with interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, instruction that allows for real-world problem-solving. Researchers suggest this is due to several systemic factors including limitations in professional preparation and development of both middle-level educators and structures (such as schedules, shared planning time, etc.) that continue to limit collaboration among educators and departmentalize instruction.

The academic programming proposed for a shared middle school takes into consideration the above research to design a curriculum that is engaging, rigorous, and targeted towards middle level development. The student development integration into this programming intends to meet the specific needs of young adolescents while making it both directly and indirectly part of each child's school experience.

Plainfield School Middle Level Education

The Plainfield School (Plainfield Elementary School, or "PES") at Bonner Road was built 51 years ago with the vision of bringing several smaller village schools together in one place. Combining schools provided larger classes, connections to a broader peer base, and more dynamic programming through additional faculty and increased collaboration between and among teachers. Over the next few decades, Plainfield School enjoyed considerable growth in the school population, peaking at approximately 315 students in the early 2000s.

At its peak, the "middle school" was 7th and 8th grade with two homerooms each and class sizes averaging from 15 to 20 per homeroom. Students were "tracked" based on advanced math starting in 7th grade. There were several iterations of the schedule, all featuring daily classes in math, science, social studies, and English Language Arts with a variety of electives and Unified Arts configurations over the years.

Between 2005 and 2010, Plainfield School's population began to decline. In addition, sometime around 2009, Kimball Union entered into an agreement with Cardigan School that allowed Kimball Union faculty to send their male students to Cardigan and Cardigan School faculty to send their students to Kimball Union Academy. Over the next decade, this contributed to a decline in enrollment and several different iterations of class configurations and schedules. To optimize staff and continue to meet the needs of middle school students, 6th grade was incorporated into the middle school model and the program was moved from "the Pod" to the back wing of the school.

The current enrollment in "middle school" (grades 6-8) at Plainfield School ranges between 70 and 75 students. PES continues to struggle with attrition to private schools between 6th and 7th grades. That said, the administration has found creative ways (largely through the schedule) to minimize tracking, provide limited shared planning time, and encourage interdisciplinary units. Instruction continues to happen in 45-minute blocks of content-specific instruction except for a

“Personal Wellness” class that incorporates guidance, media literacy, and health curriculum content. The limited number of middle-level educator staff and the need to split all of our Unified Arts instructors across a K to 8 schedule hinders our ability to make the changes necessary to fully realize the vision for interdisciplinary instruction.

PES enrollment continues to decline and is currently at 182 students for the 2024-25 school year. Though enrollment is declining around New Hampshire as a whole, there are particular housing issues (inventory and affordability) in Plainfield that are influencing a Plainfield-specific enrollment decline.

Cornish Elementary School Middle Level Education

Cornish Elementary School (CES) was established in 1953 to service grades 1-8. In 1984, CES became a K-8 school after various Kindergarten models and studies prompted the community to add this early learning stage to its programming. In 2015, Cornish added PreK, making it a PreK-8 school. Enrollment at the school at its peak in 1970 was approximately 278 students. Following the peak, Cornish enrollment began to decline, finally dropping to a low of 81 students in 2015.

The Cornish School has always had an upper and lower wing in some capacity. The upper wing serves as the middle school (grades 5-8), while the lower wing serves as the elementary school (PreK-4). There have historically been several iterations of the configuration of the upper wing or middle school. Originally, grades 4-8 were housed in the Upper Wing. Fourth-grade students were in a self-contained classroom, while students in grades 5-8 were able to move between classes.

Currently, the upper wing houses about 49 students in grades 5-8. Enrollment is on the rise in Cornish and has grown from those 81 students in 2015 to the current 140 in the 24-25 school year. School schedules and facilities configurations over the past few years have changed regularly due to changing needs in programming, enrollment, and special education. CES currently runs on a 45-minute block of content-specific instruction with eight blocks in the day. CES administration struggles to find the right balance for middle school students in academic and extracurricular activities as its size is limiting.

Current (P)K-8 Models

The current model for middle level education at both Cornish and Plainfield Elementary Schools is an extension of (P)K-8 programming. Cornish is currently PK-8 and Plainfield is currently K-8. Both schools work to create a middle school model within this framework.

Based on best practices in middle school education, the proposal has determined middle school to be grades 6-8. This was also confirmed by the surveys in both towns, with respondents clearly delineating these grade levels as what constitutes middle school.

- **Plainfield:** 72% of respondents defined middle school as grades 6-8; the next highest option was 16% identifying grades 5-8.

- **Cornish:** 57% of respondents defined middle school as grades 6-8; the next two highest options were 21% (for grades 7-8 only) and 20% (for grades 5-8) respectively.

Academic Programming

Best and Next Practices for Middle School - Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Elements

Scientists have learned a great deal of information about how the adolescent brain works and what motivates middle-level learners. It takes strategic planning and systemic professional learning and leadership to create middle schools that are more than just “mini high schools.” The foundation for this to occur rests in curriculum design, instructional approaches and varied assessment experiences that guide middle-level learning. Middle school curricula must be designed and implemented through a responsive approach to learning, social, and behavior needs specific to adolescent learners. Curricula must be articulated with concise and transparent competencies and learning targets for all stakeholders. Core subjects, such as English language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science, should not be presented in silos, but rather integrated in authentic contexts often found through problem-solving learning design, place-based education, phenomenon-based education, the integration of essential arts (art, music, physical education, health, digital literacy), career and technology explorations, and evolving 21st Century educational trends. Middle school students benefit from curricula that embed core knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts and applications that promote multiple levels of rigor and relevance. (from [Rigor and Relevance Handbook](#) from the International Center for Leadership and Education). To excel in the middle grades, adolescent learners need opportunities to explore and engage in a variety of pathways as their interests and passions develop during this important time in their lives.

To state this in simplified terms, middle school is, by nature, the time when students are most eager to “try things on for size and fit.”

Middle school instructional and assessment approaches need to consider key characteristics of adolescence, which include self-discovery, importance of social awareness, increased decision making, desire for logical connections, and thinking abstractly. Student agency, including voice and choice, are essential, non-negotiable components of instructional strategies and opportunities to demonstrate learning. In addition, planning for the social and emotional drivers that impact adolescent learners can turn these natural tendencies into pathways that motivate and engage middle-level students. Flexibility and adaptability are necessary for adults working with middle-level learners.

Academic Design includes:

- Interdisciplinary, inquiry-based units of instruction;
- Phenomenon-based and seminar learning models (shorter periods of time per unit);

- Curriculum designed around Tony Wagner's Principles of Innovation: [Most Likely to Succeed](#);
- Brain-based, trauma-informed instructional practices directed at neuroscience for developing adolescents;
- Increased student agency through voice and choice in academics;
- Real-life, hands-on community-and place-based projects;
- "Early and often" approach to career exploration and connections;
- Frequent opportunities for active learning and interaction with peers;
- Less competitive activities that welcome and affirm all students regardless of their current level of physical or cognitive development; and
- Flexible scheduling that allows for extended learning opportunities and flexible groupings of middle school students for instruction, rather than grouping by chronological age or grade level.

Definitions:

Project-Based Learning

"Project Based Learning (PBL) is a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects.

From The Buck Institute ([PBL Works](#)):

In project-based learning, students will:

- work on a project over an extended period of time – from a week up to a semester – that engages them in solving a real-world problem or answering a complex question;
- demonstrate their knowledge and skills by creating a public product or presentation for a real audience;
- develop deep content knowledge as well as critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills needed for future success; and
- unleash a contagious, creative energy among students and teachers.

How does PBL differ from "doing a project"?

PBL is becoming widely used in schools and other educational settings, with different varieties being practiced. However, there are key characteristics that differentiate "doing a project" from engaging in rigorous Project Based Learning.

We find it helpful to distinguish a "dessert project" - a short, intellectually-light project served up after the teacher covers the content of a unit in the usual way - from a "main course"

project, in which the project is the unit. In Project Based Learning, the project is the vehicle for teaching the important knowledge and skills students need to learn. The project contains and frames curriculum and instruction.

In contrast to dessert projects, PBL requires critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and various forms of communication. To answer a driving question and create high-quality work, students need to do much more than remember information. They need to use higher-order thinking skills and learn to work as a team.”

Place-Based Education (PBE)

(from [Promise of Place](#))

“Place-based education (PBE) immerses students in local heritage, cultures, landscapes, opportunities and experiences, using these as a foundation for the study of language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum. PBE emphasizes learning through participation in service projects for the local school and/or community. Research has shown that well-designed initiatives can achieve the goals outlined below.

Place-based education can “feed three birds with the same seed” as it addresses the integrated goals of:

- Student Engagement
PBE boosts students' engagement, academic achievement, and sense of personal efficacy as stewards of their local environment and community. It also can re-energize teachers.
- Community Social and Economic Vitality
PBE forges strong ties between local social and environmental organizations and their constituencies in the schools and community, which helps to improve quality of life and economic vitality.
- Ecological Integrity
Through project-based learning, students make tangible contributions to resolving local environmental issues and conserving local environmental quality.”

Interdisciplinary Design

(From Harvard School of Education's [ProjectZero](#)):

“Disciplines ranging from history and the arts to biology and mathematics embody culturally valued knowledge and modes of thinking that deepen our understanding of the world and our capacity to create products, solve problems, explain phenomena. Understanding and engaging

today's most pressing societal issues: from climate change to mass migration, from global health to the digital revolution, requires that we prepare our young to integrate disciplinary perspectives and to do so with quality.”

Benefits of Interdisciplinary Instructional Design include:

- Improved academic achievement
- Engagement in deeper learning, challenging students in terms of complexity
- Engages and stimulates the brain by requiring analysis, synthesis, and reasoning
- Instills social work skills through collaboration and respect for varying perspectives
- Creates agile brains through flexible thinking, adaptability, and problem solving

Improved Academic Achievement

The cornerstone of an improved middle school model rests on its ability to foster academic achievement. The research completed to design academic programming has been shown to do this.

Multiple Studies from The Deeper Learning Initiative; The Hechinger Report; Lucas Research; the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Math; the National Association of Middle Level Education; Middle School Science; and The Learning Policy Institute point to the need for instructional design around the middle school brain. (See the [Appendix](#) for all resources and links to research.)

While each study has its own focus, there are several common characteristics that consistently promote the success of project-based learning and interdisciplinary approaches:

1. Student-centered learning that meets the needs of the adolescent brain
2. Relevance to the students' community – small and large
3. Less “sit and get” overall
4. Ownership over learning and assessment (voice and choice)

Middle school priorities emphasize a holistic, personalized, and student-centered approach to education that values communication, creativity, and critical thinking. These priorities are accomplished through interdisciplinary learning that is connected to rigorous academic expectations. Social learning, emotional intelligence, and collaborative skills are highlighted as essential for adolescent development. Experiential and project-based learning along with student agency (voice and choice) are the drivers that establish an environment which fosters curiosity, innovation, community, and personal growth. The goal is to equip students for real-world readiness.

Priorities:

- *Holistic, personalized, and student-centered approach*
- *Communication, creativity, and critical thinking*
- *Social learning, emotional intelligence, and collaborative skills*

- *Experiential and project-based learning along with student agency (voice and choice)*

Overview of Current Student Data:

Academic Achievement:

Achievement is tracked and monitored via multiple means of assessment data at the state and local level. Statewide, the NHSAS is the assessment used consistently to assess student achievement in the areas of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science. Below are the percentages of Plainfield and Cornish students in grades 6-8 who achieved a score a “proficient” on those assessments over the past five years (Note: there’s no 2020 data due to a COVID hiatus.)

Plainfield Middle Level Proficiency Data

English/Language Arts (ELA), % of Student Proficiency

Grade	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
6	81	60	69	71	50
7	59	42	43	77	75
8	71	69	38	50	85

Math, % of Student Proficiency

Grade	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
6	59	67	64	46	46
7	55	58	62	62	63
8	76	46	50	44	74

Note: Science is only administered in grades 5 and 8.

Science, % of Student Proficiency

Grade	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
8	41	48	31	56	66

Cornish Middle Level Proficiency Data

English/Language Arts (ELA), % of Student Proficiency

Grade	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
6	56	75	55	45	55
7	60	53	50	45	60
8	77	75	42	50	54

Math, % of Student Proficiency

Grade	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
6	55	50	45	64	55
7	60	41	50	73	60
8	69	63	32	67	9

Science is only administered in grades 5 and 8, leaving only 8th grade % proficiency applicable for this report.

Science, % of Student Proficiency

Grade	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024
8	69	63	42	50	36

Assessments:

The administration believes that targeting instruction towards middle school needs will result in improved academic achievement. In the proposed new middle school, standardized assessment data will continue to be tracked in order to analyze longitudinal data and evaluation growth.

The Cornish and Plainfield Schools have worked collaboratively to align their local assessments. We are in our second year of offering the NWEA, which we believe is giving us data more closely aligned with NHSAS in addition to more specific measures for student growth. After our first assessments of NWEA, we are seeing some improvement in the area of ELA but are not seeing improvement in Mathematics. Efforts in ELA have been significant in terms of teacher training and an early literacy focus. We believe this will of course have a positive impact on middle school assessment measures in the future. Mathematics is a concern schoolwide, and our curriculum focus next year, regardless of any changes in middle school, will be on math teacher training, instructional strategies, mapping an articulated curriculum, and early intervention in the general classroom.

Other local assessments, such as STAR, are given now to students identified with specific needs in order to gain more detailed information about their skills in specific areas and what instructional interventions are working well and those that need to change.

In summary, academic achievement is needed in all areas at the middle level, with a particular focus on math and science. A middle school design around project-based learning specifically designed for what science tells us about the early adolescent brain and its development is a viable and in many cases optimal avenue for this improvement.

Academic Pathway

If approved, a complete scope and sequence will be developed by Cornish and Plainfield educators. The following gives an example of what this might look like.

Sample Scope and Sequence

The scope and sequence for grades 6 through 8 is designed to provide students with diverse learning experiences that support their personal, intellectual, behavioral, and social growth throughout their three years in middle school. These opportunities are provided through six different learning pathways. Students will have opportunities to experience all six of the pathways throughout the middle school experience. Since interdisciplinary learning is a key instructional model, pathways will overlap and intersect to promote experiential learning and student engagement. This scope and sequence encourages student exploration in a variety of college and career connected areas.

- Humanities (English Language Arts, World Languages, Social Studies, and Social

Sciences)

- Applied Sciences (Mathematics, Science, Computer Education, and Digital Literacy)
- Makers (STEAM, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Career Technical Education)
- Outdoor Learning & Leadership (Physical, Environmental and Social education)
- Community Connections & Service (Extended Learning Opportunities and Place-Based Education)
- Creativity & Performance (Digital, Visual and Performing Arts)

Learning Pathways for Grades 6 - 8			
Humanities (ELA, World Languages, Social Studies, & Social Sciences) Humanities examine the human experience, culture, and values through qualitative analysis. The humanities are a broad term for the study of human culture, values, beliefs, and expressions. The word "humanities" comes from the Latin word humanitas, which means "human nature" or "human quality". The humanities are a way to study ourselves, the past, and our culture. They help us understand how humans were created, how they passed their values to generations, and how they developed their civilizations. This pathway provides students a comprehensive study of the social sciences, reading, and writing through project-based learning as well as content and skills-based instruction. Students engage in a combination of readings, discussions, and interactive activities as they develop critical thinking and analytical skills. Topics covered in the course include world history, current events and more. Humanities projects, while integrated with other areas of study such as math, science, and art, will address themes such as culture, resilience, civil disobedience, cooperation, courage, citizenship, and justice. Students will develop transferable reading skills to engage with assigned texts and texts of choice, both fiction and non-fiction. Students will also develop as writers, engaging in producing many genres of writing during the course.			
Grade Level Experiences	Grade 6 - Humanities 1 year long With electives in different aspects of Humanities (such as World Languages)	Grade 7 - Humanities II year long With electives in different aspects of Humanities (such as World Languages)	Grade 8 Humanities III year long With electives in different aspects of Humanities (such as World Languages)
Applied Sciences (Mathematics, Science, Computer & Digital Literacy) Sciences study the natural world using empirical methods and quantitative data to establish objective truths. Applied science is a discipline that is used to apply existing scientific knowledge to develop more practical applications. This pathway immerses students in math/science/digital literacy within the project-based environment. We address integrated math content (the number system; expressions and equations; functions; geometry; and statistics and probability) through rich problems and projects. Science is based on the NGSS standards. We explore earth, life, and physical science topics through project-based work. Math/Science projects, while integrated with other areas of study such as humanities and art, address themes such as community, change, empowerment, and justice. As we design and create products for authentic audiences in and around our community, we engage in the design thinking process to gain feedback, critique, and revision in all of our work. Students are			

seen as principal investigators in this work, so it is our vision that all our students will confidently guide their own personal growth by consistently reflecting on their goals of study. Throughout the course students will be encouraged to think critically and make connections between mathematical and scientific concepts, as well as apply skills and reasoning to real-world scenarios.

Grade Level Experiences	Grade 6 - Math - integrated math content (area, surface area, and volume; ratio reasoning; unit rates and percents; operations with decimals and fractions; solving equations and inequalities; negative numbers; and statistics) Science - explore earth science topics Year long With electives in different aspects of Applied Sciences (such as computer science)	Grade 7 - Math - Probability, Statistics, Geometry, and Pre-Algebra concepts Science - explore life science topics Year long With electives in different aspects of Applied Sciences (such as computer science)	Grade 8 - Math - the number system; expressions and equations; functions; geometry; and statistics and probability) Science - explore physical science topics Year long With electives in different aspects of Applied Sciences (such as computer science)
Makers (Technology, Engineering & Career Technical Education) In the Makers learning pathway, students will have the opportunity to explore the world of making and creation. Through various projects and challenges, students will learn how to design, build, and bring their ideas to life using a variety of tools and materials. Whether they are creating something functional, artistic, or just for fun, the focus of this class is on the process of making and the thrill of seeing their ideas become a reality. The curriculum will cover basic skills in areas such as woodworking, electronics, and CAD, while also encouraging students to think critically, work collaboratively, and solve problems creatively. With a focus on the STEAM principles of science, technology, engineering, arts, and math, students will develop technical skills and gain a deeper understanding of how these subjects relate to the world around them. In this Makers class, students will have the freedom to be creative, take risks, and make mistakes, all in a supportive and encouraging environment. Whether they are working on individual projects or collaborating with their classmates, they will develop confidence, perseverance, and a love for making that will serve them well in all areas of their lives			
Grade Level Experiences	Grade 6 - All students will experience Makers for at least	Grade 7 - all students will experience makers for at least	Grade 8 - all students will experience makers for at least

	one trimester in an academic year	one trimester in an academic year & the option for a 2nd trimester as an elective	one trimester in an academic year & the option for a 2nd trimester as an elective
Outdoor Learning & Leadership (Physical, Environmental, and Social education) Outdoor Learning & Leadership pathway combines physical education, environmental education, team building, social emotional learning, and artistic expression. This includes the strong agricultural connections that surround our school and community. Students will engage in a variety of physical outdoor activities including cooperative and competitive physical activities intended to promote healthy lifestyles, develop athletic skills, and foster leadership and teamwork. Working together is a crucial part of this class. Students will participate and reflect on team building activities that will help develop communication, trust, and collaboration skills. As students explore environmental topics, they will learn about the natural world and how to protect and preserve it. Students will discuss environmental issues and learn how we can make a positive impact on the environment. Students will express their relationship with the natural world and themselves creatively through forms of artistic expression by engaging in a variety of visual art forms. Through experiential projects in outdoor recreation and environmental education, students will gain a deeper understanding, appreciation, and connection to the natural world while fostering stewardship for their planet, community, and self.			
Grade Level Experiences	6th grade - year long With electives in different aspects of Outdoor Learning & Leading	7th grade - year long With electives in different aspects of Outdoor Learning & Leading	8th grade - year long With electives in different aspects of Outdoor Learning & Leading
Community Connections & Service (Extended Learning Opportunities & Place-Based Education) The community connections & service learning pathway bridges the school learning environment with local and regional community resources and partners. This includes the strong agricultural connections that surround our school and community. This pathway will use the tenets of extended learning opportunities (ELOs) to support students in passion projects that grow and apply their knowledge, skills, and interests, while at the same time supporting school, local, and regional service projects. All students will participate in an introductory ELO course that outlines resources. All middle school staff will serve as advisors to support students in their efforts. Local and regional partners will provide presentations, activities, and learning opportunities to students throughout their 3-year middle school experience. Community service is a way for middle school students to help others and their community, and can help students develop important skills and a sense of belonging. Some examples of community service include: Volunteering: Students can volunteer at a food bank, soup kitchen, animal shelter, or homeless shelter. Organizing events: Students can help organize a local community event, such as a run or walk. Tutoring: Students can tutor underprivileged children. Cleaning: Students can clean up a local park or highway.			

Writing letters: Students can write letters to nursing homes, veterans, or orphanages.
 Visiting animals: Students can visit an animal shelter and read to animals awaiting adoption.
 Community service can help middle school students: develop empathy, build confidence and self-esteem, learn new skills, meet new people, become active members of their community, and understand civic responsibility.

Grade Level Experiences

Grade 6 - All students will experience at least one trimester in an academic year

Grade 7 - all students will experience at least one trimester in an academic year & the option for a 2nd trimester as an elective

Grade 8 - all students will experience at least one trimester in an academic year & the option for a 2nd trimester as an elective

Creativity & Performance (Digital, Visual and Performing Arts)

The creativity and performance learning pathway draws from the digital, visual and performing arts disciplines. The exploratory art class is designed to help improve students' basic art skills and fine motor skills, specifically: drawing, painting, and designing artwork using a variety of media and techniques. The projects selected will develop students' creativity and self-expression by allowing for student voice and choice on both project choice and artistic direction within projects in a mixture of different collaborative settings. Students will also learn to critique, reflect upon, and revise their own artwork and the artwork of others. Judgment will not be passed on students' artwork and instead will be evaluated based on a rubric and specific catalog of necessary requirements per project or art piece given to students prior to evaluation. The main goals for students are to recognize and use the art elements (line, shape, color, value, space, texture and form), and design principles (rhythm, balance, proportion, variety, emphasis, harmony and unity) continuously in a collaborative and focused direction. In music, students will explore various methods of music making while strengthening their knowledge of the elements of music, music reading, composition, recording, editing, and critical listening. Students will apply their new knowledge to singing and playing various musical instruments such as ukulele, guitar, keyboard, pitched, and non-pitched percussion instruments. Student learning will be presented in the form of various projects. Curriculum may be adjusted in order to carry out those projects. The Theater course teaches skills-based theater for beginning actors and theater artists. In this class, students will learn about actor tools: body, voice, & imagination and use these tools to become expert storytellers & presenters. Areas of creative work include playwriting, design, puppetry, mask making, audience etiquette and performance. Additionally, students will learn about theater as an industry and collaborative artform.

Grade Level Experiences

Grade 6 - All students will experience at least one trimester in an academic year

Grade 7 - all students will experience at least one trimester in an academic year & the option for a 2nd trimester as an elective

Grade 8 - all students will experience at least one trimester in an academic year & the option for a 2nd trimester as an elective

Samples of Two Articulated Courses:

The following serve as samples of what an interdisciplinary course will comprise. The first example is a combination of two content areas; the second example is a combination of four core content areas plus essential arts.

Sample Course I. Two Content Areas: English Language Arts and Social Studies

Humanities Course Description	
Humanities is the combination of Social Studies disciplines and English/Language Arts strands. Humanities combines fiction, nonfiction, history, speaking, listening, geography, writing for a purpose, critical thinking, government, communication, analysis, economics, and everything in between. Students learn through the integration of these skills and knowledge to make connections among ideas and have a more rich picture of each theme they explore. As part of this course, students will propose and carry out a year-long action-research service project that reflects the expectations and skills of a Graduate. At the end of the year, students will present and defend their project, as well as showcase their communication skills, critical thinking abilities, learner's mindset, global citizenship qualities, and application of content knowledge. Students will also edit, contribute to, and publish a literary magazine twice a year with contributions and support from authors in the community. This will also include local news articles and local historical research and interviews. When students work for a real-world, community audience and participate in active community exhibitions, they are held to a higher standard. This is authentic learning. <i>Note:</i> This course works best in a co-teaching model and a 90-120 minute class period. <i>Disclaimer:</i> Below is a framework, with the intention that teachers can alter, update, and change materials, projects, and processes. Students, also, will drive products, projects, and processes through their individual and group choices.	
Introduction to Humanities	
Identity: 1890-1910	Topics: Industrialization, Progressive Reforms, Social Darwinism, Laissez-faire Economics Literature: American Born Chinese, Native American Literature Process: Literature Circles Project/Product: Persuasive Essay
America in the World 1910-1920	Topics: Causes of World War I, World War I, US Entry, Outcomes of the War, Roaring 20's Literature: Poetry and Informational Texts, Primary Texts Project/Product: Various

America in the World 1920-1945	Topics: Great Depression, Causes of World War II, Pacific Theater, European Theater, US Entry, Outcomes of War Literature: The Harlem Renaissance and The Great Gatsby/To Kill a Mockingbird Process: Literature Stations Project/Product: Poetry, Socratic Seminar, Debate
Power and Politics: the Holocaust	Topics: Antisemitism throughout history, Nazi Policy, Perpetrators, Bystanders, Victims, Rescuers, Lasting impact Literature: Choice books in literature circles Project/Product: Narrative writing (short story), Interviews
Power and Politics: 1940-1975	Topics: Berlin & Dividing of Europe, Containment, Korean War, Vietnam War, Fall of the Soviet Union Literature: Monster (Literature Circles) and 12 Angry Men Project/Product: Debate, Socratic Seminar, Creative Writing and Analysis, Research Paper, Mock Trial and Restorative Justice
Culture and Society: 1970-present	Topics: Self-Selection Literature: Poverty Informational Texts and The Outsiders and Choice Book, Choice Project Project/Product: Action Project, Poetry Analysis, Literature Remix (final literature project)
Personal Finance/Economics	Topics: Various Literature: Current fiction and non-fiction resources Project/Product: Self-Designed, including budget, savings, goal setting, college loans <i>Thanks to Mrs. D'Angelo-Worth (Cornish) and Ms. Buckman (Plainfield) for this sample and for your collaboration.</i>

Sample Course II. "Food for Thought"

Four Content Areas: English/Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and Math; Integration of Art and World Language

Food for Thought (Multiple Grade Levels)	
This Mini-Course provides a background for teaching the "Food for Thought" Middle School service-learning unit for the seventh grade. The "Food for Thought" unit covers how food is grown and harvested, the challenges of meeting the basic need of food, and the issue of food insecurity in the world. The interdisciplinary unit is taught in all subject-area classes and in advisories; this course is offered to multiple grade levels simultaneously. The interdisciplinary approach of "Food for Thought" helps the learner connect themes and skills to their life and community. It helps them see a real-life purpose in their learning. This section provides an overview of expectations and ways to connect to community resources in preparation for teaching the "Food for Thought" unit. The unit provides information and experiences to teach the following:	
Food: The Basics	Students will receive a foundation in food science and sustainability, including food security, the relationship between poverty and nutrition, and how food is grown and harvested (social studies)
Food: The Sciences	Students will understand: ● the science behind physical and chemical reactions in cooking ● cell biology and how this impacts digestion and nourishment ● soil science and environmental change factors (science) ● volume, measures, quantities, and pricing related to both food supply and cooking (mathematics)
Food: Farming	Students will research the history of farming and its current state locally, nationally, and globally (social studies)

	Students will understand current issues around migrant farm workers, immigration policies, and the effects on our food systems and culture (social studies)
Food: Its Travels	Students will map out the food supply chain through economic models (social studies) Students will learn about grocery planning and budgeting to manage household finances Students will experiment with changes in composition and nutritional value over time and distance (math and science)
Culminating Project: Food Truck	Students will design a food truck that represents best practices in food science, taking all unit information into consideration Students will speak to a group, advocating for their food truck while advocating for best practices in food science. (English language arts) The final product includes: designing a menu, restaurant logo, advocacy poster, individual expression of food science, – based on work of American art representing farming, food, and/or immigration (Art) Developing a plan and menu, including: costs, projected one-week profit/loss, nutritional value, and sourcing strategies.
Included in this unit will be hands-on work in the Plainfield School fields, greenhouse design, and local advocacy for food security. It is expected that EAs are integrated.	

Middle School Model Connections to Civics, Citizenship, STEM, and Sustainability

One of the most important pieces of the middle school years for a student is learning about who they are and where they fit in the world. In all of the above sections, the importance of belonging to middle school students is present. Middle school students thrive on learning who they are in the context of the world surrounding them. In order to do this, they must also learn about the world in which they live, and how they can contribute to it. Many schools use service learning projects or various community engagement activities to offer students opportunities to think, learn, and act as informed and reflective citizens. To this end, the connection to global citizenship is a very important one. One way in which to do this, is to look at the [Inspire Citizens model](#). The Inspire Citizens Model helps schools to take a long view of their curricular and cultural transformation to incorporate global citizenship opportunities in each learner's experience. Schools build a whole school blueprint to support the program and culture and to ensure that global citizenship is an integral part of the middle school experience.

The Plainfield and Cornish communities offer a rich history of civic engagement and stewardship of the environment. These two communities along with the surrounding Upper Valley offer a wide range of industry partners from family-owned farms to global engineering firms, local government officials to elite education institutions, a variety of arts organizations, and numerous non-profits.

Additional Examples of Interdisciplinary Work for Food Science Unit:

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT-BASED LEARNING EXAMPLES

ENGAGING LEARNING FOR KID

ECO-FRIENDLY SCHOOL GARDEN:

"We're building a school garden! We get to decide what to plant and how it'll help the environment while using math for budgeting and science for choosing the right plants. Then, we'll present our design to the school board! I love that we're the ones making it happen—our ideas can actually make a difference!"

RECYCLING AWARENESS CAMPAIGN:

"We're leading a school-wide project to reduce waste! We're diving into social studies to learn about waste management and using English to create cool posters and videos that encourage our peers to recycle. Then we get to present it to the whole school—how awesome is that?!"

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE PROJECT:

"We're doing a project all about healthy living! In Health class, we'll learn about nutrition and the importance of exercise, while in PE, we'll create a fun fitness challenge for the whole school. In Science, we'll explore how different foods affect our bodies and how exercise impacts our health. In Math, we'll track our fitness progress using charts and graphs to analyze our results, like calories burned and steps taken. Then, we'll write persuasive essays in English to encourage our classmates to adopt healthier habits. We'll even present our findings with a fun poster and a mini fitness event—it's going to be awesome!"

PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT ON LOCAL NATURE:

"We're going outside to take photos of local plants and animals for a photography project! We'll use what we learn in science about ecosystems and then edit our photos in art class to create a nature exhibition. We'll display our work at a school event to raise awareness about protecting our environment—how cool is that?!"

COMMUNITY MURAL PROJECT:

"We're working on a mural that represents our school's values and diversity! In art class, we'll sketch our designs, and then we'll paint the mural together, bringing our school spirit to life. This project combines art, history, and teamwork, and we'll even invite community members to help us paint—it's going to be amazing!"

Sample Student Schedule

Click this link to see a [sample student schedule](#).

Schedules may comprise both “regular” days and “interdisciplinary” days. *Note – grade levels are denoted here for scheduling purposes but students will be signing up for courses in mixed grade groups according to their interests and their appropriate level, depending on the course.*

Notes on Scheduling:

- ❖ Instructional planning time for teachers will be embedded into the school day to support development of learning pathways.
- ❖ Small-group breakout sessions will be designed in the schedule to allow for individual skill development.

Based on student focus groups, as well as the need for professional development, the committee is recommending that in year 1 of the middle school, students follow a regular schedule with three six-week interdisciplinary units, one in each of fall, winter, and spring trimesters. This will allow a more successful transition, better professional preparation for this type of teaching, and the ability to adapt and learn prior to year 2 and forward.

Student Development

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Elements Essential for Middle School Students

Middle schoolers are beginning to understand and experience more complex emotions and social situations. As they gain more independence from adults, they are expanding their peer relationships and learning how to navigate group dynamics and resolve conflicts. At the same time, they are developing a stronger sense of who they are, including their own beliefs and interests, as well as their sense of group-based identity. As they develop critical thinking skills, they’re also strengthening their ability to reflect deeply, analyze the impact of different choices, and make decisions after weighing many different factors.

Middle school is an important time for intentionally teaching and integrating social and emotional competencies throughout students’ learning experiences and environments. Because middle school can be a stressful transition, students in the first year of middle school may be particularly receptive to social-emotional learning (SEL). However, SEL implementation in middle schools can also be challenged by more complex student schedules and increased academic rigor, which sometimes leads to fewer SEL instructional opportunities as students enter a critical developmental period.

Currently, the smaller population at the Plainfield and Cornish middle school levels causes some concern in the area of social emotional development. Students, after having been in school together for so many years, often develop more of a “sibling” relationship with peers. A larger population at this level has the potential to create more opportunities to develop relationships, communication, and skills for learning about and understanding others. In a sense, an integration of new students at this level can “wake up” these social emotional skills, fostering the path towards expanding development.

To address these issues and ensure all students have opportunities for high-quality SEL, the middle school proposal uses a schoolwide approach anchored in evidence-based programs and practices. A [schoolwide approach](#) integrates SEL throughout every aspect of a student's educational experiences and environments – including curriculum and instruction, school climate, student services, and continuous improvement efforts. Evidence-based programs are the best way to ensure all students have consistent opportunities to learn and practice social and emotional competencies. SEL programs are best supported when the practices and principles of SEL are infused across all classrooms, integrated schoolwide, and in partnership with families and communities.

Middle school students have unique characteristics that will benefit from a school designed for exactly who they are at this stage of their lives. Middle school students require:

- a school community that recognizes the need for belonging;
- peer and self acceptance;
- advocacy for themselves and others;
- a reconciliation with who they are in the world;
- an intrinsic drive for the ideal and finding their “[flow](#)”, a critical concept (Csikszentmihalyi)
- caring about, fighting for, and having an impact on their world;
- and of course support as they transition to more independence and individual identity.
- Increased student agency through restorative discipline,
- Advisory groups that contribute to social-emotional learning at all levels,

The connection between a strong schoolwide approach to students development is also supported through the proposed academic programming:

BEHAVIOR . CULTURE. CLIMATE

How interdisciplinary, project-based learning inspires students & helps create positive culture and climate

BOOSTS BRAIN DEVELOPMENT:



PBL encourages creative problem-solving, with student choice fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to improved behavior and engagement.

INCREASES ENGAGEMENT:

Giving students control over projects boosts motivation and reduces behavioral issues, creating a school culture where student voices drive meaningful learning.



SUPPORTS GROWTH:



Collaborative projects build empathy, teamwork, and belonging, strengthening peer relationships and fostering a positive, inclusive school climate.

ENHANCES RETENTION:

Hands-on interdisciplinary projects deepen learning and help students connect to school, reinforcing a culture where curiosity and academic success thrive.



PROMOTES LEADERSHIP



Student-led projects boost confidence and agency, shaping a school environment where students feel empowered, contributing to a respectful, engaged community.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTION SKILLS

Self-regulation, self-awareness, the creative process, & personalization. It's about the way we think, plan, prioritize, and assess a situation. It's also about getting to know ourselves & how we may be the same or different from others.

BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

My prefrontal cortex is still developing. This means I may be quick to make decisions without considering consequences. I struggle with long-term planning & impulse control. My limbic system is highly active (think emotions & rewards center). I may have intense emotional responses and a heightened sensitivity to peer approval & rejection. I have a strong desire for social belonging and may start to align with my peers over my parents.



SOCIAL EXAMPLE

My teacher said I have to share my work with the class and I do not want to. I feel worried about what people may think & say.

We were all a little nervous, which is normal. So, before we shared our work, my teacher taught us a practice to calm down.

She also gave us useful tips on how to share & give feedback.

Our teacher said we do not have to agree or change our work based on the feedback but we have to listen, be open, and think about what is shared with us. Using these tools led me to feel more comfortable sharing work in class & more connected with my classmates. We are all helping each other grow. I feel accepted!



ACADEMIC EXAMPLE

I am feeling really overwhelmed about a big project that will be due next week. I am comparing myself to my classmates and worry they are much further along. I feel like giving up! My teacher helps me break up my work into pieces that are not as scary & more manageable. It helps me make sense of what I need to do first & create a timeline of when I need to complete each portion of the project. I act like I don't care but the steps really help me break down what I need to do so I can succeed in my work.

Critical Transition Periods (Into and Out of Middle School)

The transition from elementary to middle school marks a significant milestone in a child's educational journey, symbolizing a shift from a familiar, contained environment to a larger, more complex one. Academically, this transition introduces a broader spectrum of subjects, each taught by different teachers in distinct classrooms. Students navigate through diverse subjects, requiring them to adapt to new teaching styles, schedules, and expectations. This transition challenges them to develop greater organizational skills, time management, and a deeper level of independence in their learning process.

Socially and emotionally, moving from elementary to middle school marks an important transition in a child's life. A wider range of friendships and social circles provides students with the opportunity to negotiate social dynamics that can be both exciting and challenging. The shift also prompts personal growth as students learn to assert their individuality, discover their interests, and adapt to the changes in their social environment, which are integral aspects of their developmental journey.

Furthermore, this transition serves as a foundational period for students to explore their passions and interests through extracurricular activities, clubs, and sports. Our Middle school will offer a wider array of extracurricular opportunities, allowing students to delve deeper into their hobbies or discover new ones. These activities not only enrich their experiences but also contribute significantly to their social connections, self-esteem, and overall development. The transition from elementary to middle school, therefore, encompasses academic, social, and personal growth, laying the groundwork for their future educational pursuits and life experiences.

To allow students to reap the benefits of this transition, research suggests that a robust program be put into place to guide students, parents, teachers, and administrators and to help the students get used to this new and more complex academic and social environment. A successful transition/orientation program begins before the start of the 6th-grade year and continues through the middle of the school year to allow all stakeholders to fully understand the expectations, supports, and opportunities available as they learn and grow in the new environment.

In the same way that the transition program from elementary to middle school is necessary, a transition program from middle to high school plays a pivotal role in ensuring a smooth and successful shift for students navigating this critical educational juncture. Such a program offers invaluable support by addressing the academic, social, and emotional adjustments that students often encounter during this transition. It provides a structured platform to familiarize students with the new academic expectations, offering insights into the curriculum, study skills, and resources available in the high school setting. Additionally, these programs facilitate opportunities for students to forge connections with peers, teachers, and mentors, easing the anxiety associated with the unfamiliar environment and fostering a sense of belonging. By addressing these transitional challenges, these programs empower students to navigate high

school confidently, enabling them to focus on their academic growth and overall development. Some components of these programs include school tours, parent evenings, question and answer sessions for both parents and students, etc.

Ideas for Transitioning Elementary to Middle School

1. Creation or implementation of a peer mentoring program like [WEB](#) (Where Everybody Belongs) by the Boomerang Project or a self-created program that focuses on:
 - a. Sharing expectations and excitement of middle school between students
 - b. Supporting new students both academically and socially through planned meetings and classes coordinated by the adults and delivered by the students
 - c. Developing and Empowering student leadership through training of 8th grade student mentors that will work with 6th grade students over the course of the first year.
 - d. Developing leadership skills in 7th grade through pen pal programs for the upcoming student mentors so that they can connect with their 5th grade students before even coming to the middle school.
2. School visits where:
 - a. 5th graders will travel to the middle school to meet their 7th mentors and engage in team building exercises with them.
 - b. 5th graders will get the opportunity to shadow their 7th grade mentors over the course of the school year.
 - c. 5th graders will get the opportunity to meet their new teachers and participate in at least one fun team building activity with them over the course of their 5th grade year.
 - d. 5th graders will get the opportunity to meet other 5th grade students who will be in their classes through these various visits. This will give the staff the opportunity to see students together and learn how to build successful homerooms and advisories.
3. Provision of Parent to Learning Coach workshops over the course of the year that will help parents to understand their role in supporting their children by:
 - a. Helping parents connect with the school setting
 - b. Preparing the students to have multiple teachers
 - c. Encouraging the child's direct communication with their teachers
 - d. Helping students remain calm through changing academic standards
 - e. Teaching students to keep an open mind
 - f. Helping students to become independent learners
 - g. Providing opportunities for students to take on new privileges at home
 - h. Setting clear boundaries and expectations
 - i. Maintaining social and emotional needs
4. Continued engagements for students to work together on various academic and social skills such as:

- a. Homework club with peer tutors
 - b. Student led Game nights/Clubs
 - c. Dances
 - d. Presentation of school work events (Portrait of the Graduate, theme nights, etc.)
- 5. Staff working sessions to help implement a calendar of events for parents, students, and staff that support the progression of learning within our middle school.
- 6. Staff development that focuses on the transition program, its importance and implementation, and what it takes to make it successful.

Ideas for Transitioning from Middle School to High School

- 1. Creation of a monthly program where 8th grade students have the opportunity to learn about high school and secondary education.
 - a. Program of Studies Review
 - b. What are the requirements to graduate from high school
 - c. CES Students Only- Vermont vs. New Hampshire requirements
 - d. NH Scholars Program review
 - e. What is a GPA
 - f. Building Tour(s)
 - g. Shadow Days
 - h. Opportunity to learn more about extracurricular activities at the high school(s)
 - i. Opportunity to learn more about Tech Center programs available
 - j. Running Start Courses/AP Courses/Honors Courses
- 2. Work on the creation of a pen pal program that connects our middle school students with peer mentors at the high school level.
- 3. Staff connections created between high school(s) and middle school to help students with curriculum expectations.
 - a. Teachers connect with their counterparts to determine what is expected of students when they come into high school.
 - b. Teachers will use these expectations to fill out high school recommendation forms.
 - c. Teachers will align their programs so that if there are any gaps, they can talk through how this will be resolved.
- 4. Provision of Parent to Learning Coach workshops High School Edition over the course of the year that will help parents to understand their role in supporting their children by:
 - a. Helping parents connect with the new school setting
 - i. Orientation information
 - ii. Schoolwide Information System information
 - iii. Extracurricular information
 - iv. Signing your child up for classes
 - v. The School Counselor Office-What is it for?
 - vi. Knowing the requirements for the high school of choice
 - 1. Credits

2. GPA
 3. NH Scholars Program
 4. Credit Recovery
- b. Encouraging the child's direct communication with their teachers
 - c. Helping students remain calm through changing academic standards
 - i. Setting your child up for success
 - ii. Information about honors/AP/Running Start courses
 - iii. Resources available to every student
 - d. Teaching students to keep an open mind
 - e. Helping students to become independent learners
 - f. Providing opportunities for students to take on new privileges at home
 - g. Setting clear boundaries and expectations
 - h. Maintaining social and emotional needs

Opportunity Potential in Addition to Academics

Co-Curricular and Athletic opportunities help middle school students "try on" new identities, interests, peer groups, and passions. These opportunities will only be enhanced by larger numbers, as student interests will drive the creation of new options. In addition, existing opportunities will be enhanced through larger numbers and, in the case of athletics, full teams. Music (Band and Chorus) and Drama will benefit from a stronger turnout for performance and productions.

Current Options: (some already combined between the two schools)

- Fall - Soccer (grades 5/6 and 7/8)
- Winter - Basketball (grades 5/6 and 7/8)
- FAST
- Spring - Track & Field (grades 5-8)
- Math League - Grades 6 through 8 - full year
- LEGO League- Grades 5 to 8 for fall team; Grade through 8 for spring exploratory session
- Drama - 6 to 8 Spring production
- Jazz Band
- Art Studio
- Thinking Playground
- Yearbook Club
- Chess Club
- Leadership
- Student Council
- Big Sibz
- Ski/Life Program (5-8)
- School Dances (grades 5-8)
- Student Council (grades 5-8)

- Yearbook
- Cross country skiing
- 4-H
- Scouts
- Volunteering/community service (through class advisors)
- PES - Essential Arts Elective Rotation

Future Potential Opportunities:

- Sports: what else could be offered? (In addition to larger numbers on existing teams)
 - Mountain biking
 - Cross country running
 - Horseback Riding
- Music and Arts: theater/drama, art clubs, band, chorus, community mural project
- Academic Clubs: book clubs, foreign language clubs, STEAM related groups
- Service Based Activities: volunteer work, place based service/environmental projects, peer mentoring, fundraising events, garden
- Leadership: Model UN, Model Congress, student council, debate club
- Writing: newspaper, yearbook, poetry
- Debate Club
- Art Club
- Destination Imagination

Behavior and Social Emotional Learning

Behavior at the middle school level is a regular balance of learning and responsibility. Middle school marks a crucial stage in adolescent development, encompassing the ages of 11 to 14, where children undergo significant physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. During this period, adolescents experience rapid growth spurts, hormonal fluctuations, and the development of their identity. Socially, they begin to form more complex relationships with peers, navigating the challenges of peer pressure and group dynamics. Emotionally, middle schoolers may grapple with heightened self-awareness, leading to increased sensitivity and a quest for independence. In terms of cognitive development, abstract thinking and problem-solving skills are evolving, enabling students to grasp more complex concepts. Recognizing and understanding these multifaceted changes are crucial for educators and parents in providing adequate support and guidance.

Best practices for promoting positive school behavior in middle school involve creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment, establishing clear expectations for behavior, consistently enforcing rules, and implementing a fair and just disciplinary system that also involves students and student voice are essential components. All of this is integrated with the schoolwide SEL program tied above, with specific additions to address behavior.

Strong academic engagement, a main goal of the academic programming design, also fosters positive behavior. Middle schoolers benefit from opportunities to express themselves creatively and to engage in collaborative projects that foster teamwork. Providing choices for engaging instruction and encouraging autonomy within appropriate boundaries helps build a sense of responsibility and self-discipline. Additionally, fostering strong teacher-student relationships and promoting open communication channels allow educators to better understand the unique needs and challenges of each student. Implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) programs that address critical skills such as self-awareness, empathy, and decision-making as described above can contribute significantly to the overall well-being and positive behavior of middle school adolescents. Project-based studies and a focus on learning from and with your local community (the integration with place-based learning) can reinforce both SEL and the foundations of comprehensive, positive behavior as it creates meaning.

A school specifically designed to meet these needs is essential. Much of this work has already started, and behavior incidents are carefully monitored for trends and progress, as represented by the charts below. In addition, both schools are working on restorative practices at the middle level to move students towards positive behavior through positive methods.

In summary, while we are on the right path to better behavior systems and practices at the middle level, an integrated design with academics, social emotional learning, and developmentally appropriate behavioral systems (as presented through the vision of a new middle school) will offer more – and more appropriate – systemic and integrated approaches.

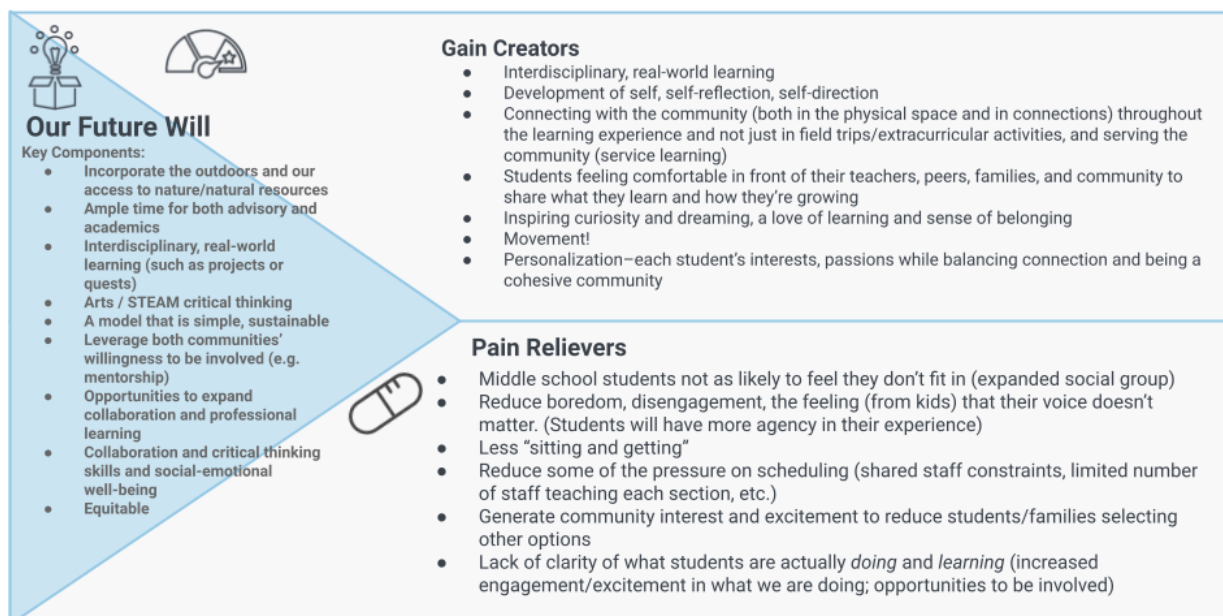
Student feedback will be essential to evaluating the middle school. We want students to let us know what a “five-star” experience is, as outlined below to capture both academic and social/emotional elements.

FIVE STAR EXPERIENCE



			
What does this student SAY?	What does this student THINK?	What does this student DO?	How does this student FEEL?
- I can't wait to come to school tomorrow. - I enjoy school, my friends and my teachers. - This school rocks...I am going to "kick it" in high school. - I know how to do this. I know who can help me. - Let me tell you about what we did today.	- They think they are doing things to feel prepared for the next steps - I can't wait to get back to my project. - I love going to school. - That all things are possible and the only limits are what I impose on myself. - I have an idea I want to explore and I know who and how to proceed.	- Is engaged in their work and their culture - Does their school work because they are interested and engaged - Ask questions, wonder, experiment, research, question, read, write, solve problems - Help their community - Take risks - Lead others - Help peers in positive ways	- Satisfied, calm, relaxed - Enthusiastic - That they matter - Connected - That they have been heard and validated - Prepared for life - Confident - Proud - Can do difficult things and support exists

In another exercise from our student committee, we were able to envision the future of our middle school along with the “gain creators” of the five-star experience and the “pain relievers” as well. Again, these integrate the essential elements and connections among academic, physical, social, and emotional growth.



Career Exploration

Career exploration during middle school is in direct alignment with their brain development. At this time of growth, the middle school brain “prunes” old information and rapidly develops and stores new information; it makes students primed for new experiences, as they’re processing information faster than almost any other time of life. This is a time to harness new interests, rapid processing, and “trying things on for size” towards career exploration. This also aligns with learners beginning to look towards college and career opportunities that align with who they are.

Students begin to understand their interests, strengths, and potential career paths early in their educational journey. By exposing students to a variety of careers, industries, and skill sets, they can make informed decisions about their future coursework and extracurricular activities. This early exploration fosters self-awareness and motivation, showing students how their education connects to real-world opportunities and long-term goals. Furthermore, career exploration in middle school can broaden students' horizons, helping them envision possibilities they may not have considered before. In terms of social and emotional development, this exposure is especially valuable in breaking down stereotypes and addressing equity gaps, ensuring all students, regardless of background, see pathways to success that align with their passions and talents. Ultimately, this early engagement can help guide students toward meaningful career exploration.

Connections to interdisciplinary, project-based, and place-based education is ripe for connections to working with the community for increased exposure to skills and professions. While integrated into academics, career pathway exploration is also well suited to advisory periods in order to provide varied avenues for exposure and discovery.

Partnership and Parent/Community Engagement

Family involvement in middle school significantly contributes to students' academic success, social development, and overall well-being. Middle school challenges include increased academic demands, social pressures, and the transitions as students grow and develop. When families stay engaged, they provide critical support, encouragement, and stability that can help students navigate these changes. Active family involvement—through communication with teachers, participation in school activities, and interest in their child's studies—shows students that their education is valued, motivating them to take learning seriously and fostering a positive attitude toward school.

The proposed middle school intends to create a strong partnership between home and school, enabling educators and parents to work collaboratively to address any challenges that may arise, such as academic struggles or social-emotional issues. This teamwork will ensure that students receive consistent messaging about the importance of education while helping to identify and meet their needs more effectively. When families engage, students exhibit better attendance, improved behavior, and higher self-esteem, which can lead to better long-term outcomes both in and out of school. Ultimately, fostering strong family-school connections

supports student achievement, builds a sense of community, and encourages holistic growth during these critical years.

Middle School Advisory Board

In order to foster strong home and school relations, the Committee proposes that a Middle School Advisory Board is created. This group, comprising representatives from both Cornish and Plainfield, would include 1 student from each town, 2 parents/guardians from each town, 2 teachers, 1 paraeducator, 2 principals, 1 board member from each board, and the superintendent. This Advisory Board will meet 3-4 times per year to review current middle school data, issues, evaluation, and planning for future improvements.

Home-School Opportunities – Existing and Some to Develop or Build Include:

- Middle School Orientation
- EA Exhibits and Band/Concert nights
- Parent teacher conferences
- Class Advisors
- Field Trip Chaperones
- High School Information Nights (fall and spring)
- Class Parent Meetings - starting in 6th grade
- Community Facilitators (for electives/projects)
- 6th Grade Hulbert or Nature's Classroom trip
- Mountain Day
- Ski Program/FAST
- Beaupre Community Service Day (expand to include Cornish projects and volunteers)
- TED Talks - parents come in and view the talks in January of 8th grade
- Celebration of Learning Luncheon
- Dances (setup, cleanup, chaperoning)
- Athletic coaches (one from each community wherever possible - this already happens to a degree in soccer and track)
- Restorative Circles (as needed to partner with families on behalf of students who are working through a challenge or conflict at school.)
- Drama, Lego League and other co-curricular coaching
- Promote area events for parents of teens (informational events and workshops about substance prevention, cyber safety, teens and mental health, etc.)
- Coffee with the principal
- Project showcases for Interdisciplinary Units with and for the communities

Facilities

General Statement on School Facilities:

School facilities play a critical role in enhancing the learning experience and overall development of students. A well-maintained, clean, and safe environment fosters a sense of security, allowing students to focus on their studies without distractions. Natural lighting, proper ventilation, and ergonomic classroom design all contribute to creating a conducive atmosphere for learning. Research consistently shows that students are more engaged and perform better academically when they have access to quality facilities, including science labs, libraries, and flexible learning spaces that accommodate different teaching methods and activities. These spaces not only support academic achievement but also promote creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

The task of the facilities sub-committee has been to connect the specific academic programming and student development strategies to facilities that will meet those needs.

School facilities that are future-ready include durable technology tools, innovative and creative spaces, flexible seating, and the general agility to help students thrive in a modern working world. Access to such resources also levels the playing field for students from diverse backgrounds, enhancing equity in education. Additionally, school buildings with well-designed common areas and extracurricular spaces contribute to socialization, mental health, and a sense of community. By investing in quality school facilities, the Plainfield and Cornish Districts would signal that they value education and are committed to fostering environments where students can reach their holistic full potential.

Process for Facility Design Development:

The Facilities Sub-Committee:

1. Reviewed the current facilities at PES and calculated space needs for an additional 35-45 students;
2. Reviewed the Capital Facilities Planning Committee memo regarding school district priorities; this connected information from the community survey plus the administrative history of proposed projects;
3. Researched best practices in facilities design;
4. Read and discussed *The Language of School Design* (by Prakash Nair) in order to facilitate discussions with common vocabulary and common language that connects learning to space;
5. Prioritized learning designs from this book;
6. Utilized the information from the academic program and student development sub-committees to begin the process of design;

7. Worked with architects from Banwell, Inc to provide design input, including meetings, walkthroughs, assessing similar design samples, matching spaces to educational needs, and reviewing prior conceptual drawings for building space;
8. Considered best placement for additional space onto existing structures;
9. Participated in a student presentation on middle school learning space needs;
10. Reviewed two draft plans;
11. Provided feedback from facilities sub-committee, teachers, and the leadership team;
12. Arrived at four plan options; and
13. Calculated estimated costs for each plan in order to drive future revisions.

Learning Designs:

As stated above, nothing is more critical to student success than identity, mastery, and creation. These concepts were all taken into consideration when looking at design options and all options have elements supporting these foundations for deeper learning.

Learning Modalities:

Educational facilities design focuses on the need for 20 “Learning Modalities” in order to offer at least 80% of the options students might need throughout their educational years. These 20 spaces are identified below, and those that have been a focus in our middle school design work are in **BOLD**: (*Note: Modalities not in bold are either 1. already existing in other parts of the school; or 2. would be nice to have but could make the project cost-prohibitive.*)

- 1. Independent Study**
- 2. Peer tutoring**
- 3. Team Collaboration**
4. 1:1 Learning with Teacher
5. Lecture-format (teacher directed)
- 6. Project-Based Learning**
7. Technology with mobility
8. Distance Learning
9. Internet-based Research
- 10. Student Presentation**
- 11. Performance-Based Learning**
- 12. Seminar-Style Instruction**
- 13. Interdisciplinary Learning**
- 14. Naturalist Learning**
- 15. Social-Emotional Learning**
- 16. Art-Based Learning**
- 17. Storytelling**
- 18. Design-Based Learning**
- 19. Team Teaching**
20. Play-based Learning

Connecting School Facilities Spaces to Human Experience:

In addition, school design focuses on four main realms of basic human experience. Again, those that served as a focus for the middle school design connections to learning are in **BOLD**:

(Note: Attributes not in bold are either 1. already existing in other parts of the school; or 2. would be nice to have but could make the project cost-prohibitive.)

Realms of Human Experience Within the Purview of School Planning Design	Attributes
Spatial	Intimate, Open, Bright, Closed, Active, Quiet, Connected to Nature , Monumental, Technological
Psychological	Soothing, Safe, Awe-Inspiring, Joyful, Playful, Stimulating, Creative, Encouraging reflection, Uplifting, Creating a Sense of Community
Physiological	Warm, Cool, Cozy, Breezy, Healthy, Aromatic, Textured, Visually Pleasing
Behavioral	Independent Study, Collaborative Work, Teamwork, Physical Fitness Activity, Research, Writing, Reading, Computer Work, Singing, Dancing, Performing, Presenting, Large-Group Work, Communing with Nature, Designing, Building, Teaching, Relaxing, Reflecting, Playing

Space Selections:

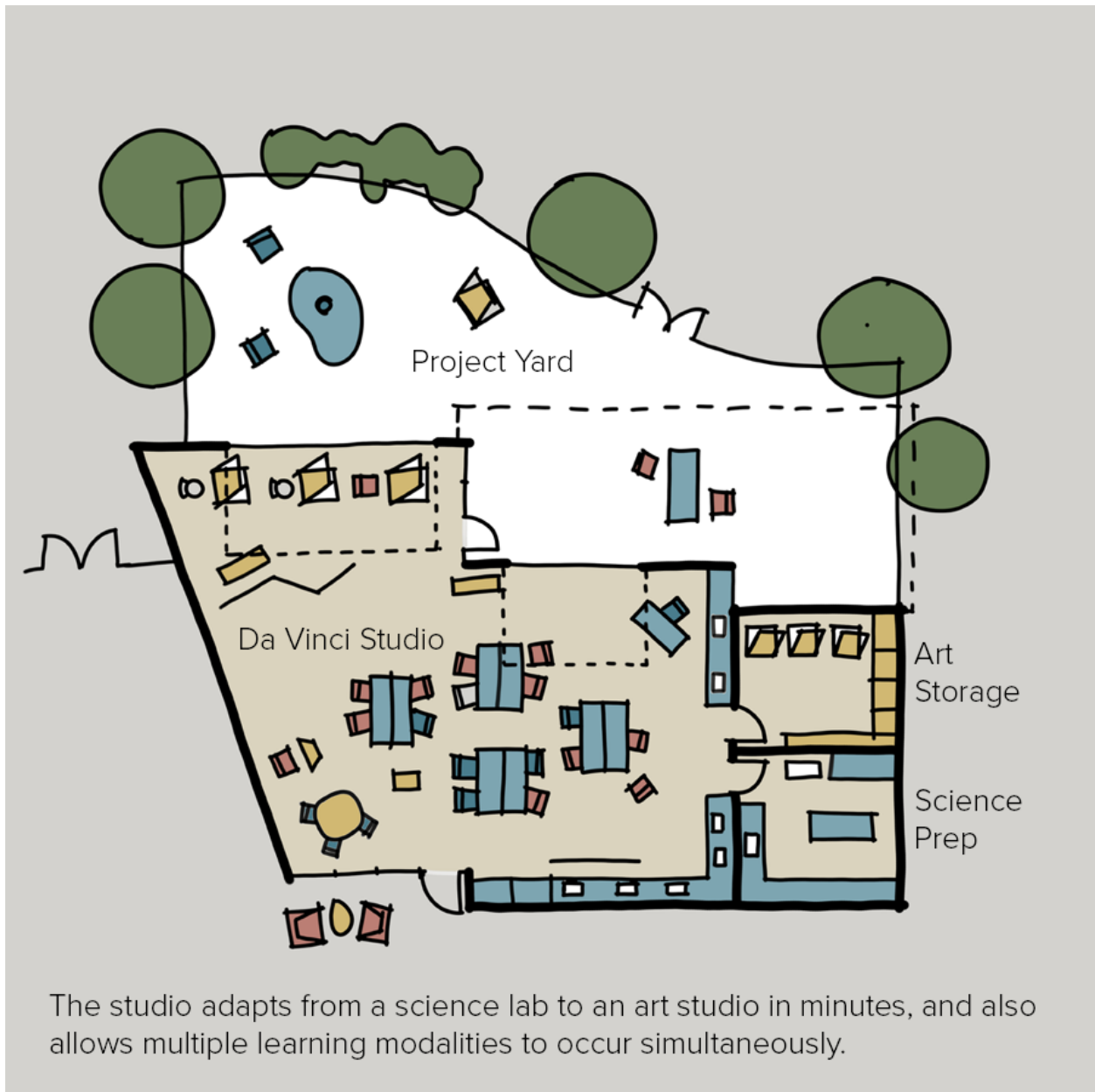
Based on the programming and learning design, the following spaces are the focus of our design:

The DaVinci Studio:

These spaces provide students with facilities that meet the nature of interdisciplinary, project-based learning and emerged as the focal point for our designs. DaVinci studios are designed to have the arts and sciences meet with the agility to respond to different learning and

teaching needs. These spaces include, at a minimum: messy space (projects and storage); active lab space (STEAM); collaboration space with table and chair variety (teamwork); and soft seating areas (think tank).

See below for an illustration of a DaVinci studio plus several examples in existing schools.



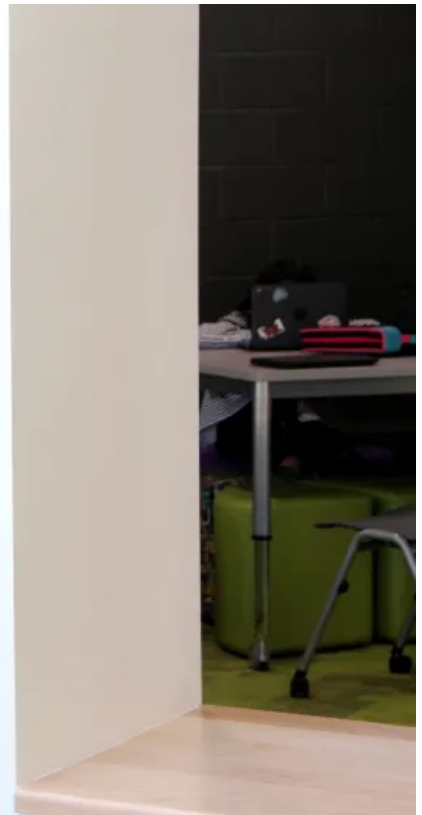




Cave Spaces:

These spaces provide students with the ability to have some quiet time, study independently, and find “nooks and crannies” throughout other spaces where they can concentrate and regroup. Cave space was the top priority from the student focus groups, as students felt that there’ no existing space in either school for this type of concentration.

See below for some samples of cave spaces – specifically some created by maximizing the use of other structures.





Breakout Space:

These spaces are needed to work in small groups; construction with windows can provide easy universal supervision while providing independence. Breakout spaces help students and teachers work on projects together, Socratic seminar-style discussion, and where a teacher or paraeducator can work with small groups on specific skills for intervention or enrichment.

See below for some samples of breakout spaces.



Campfire/Watering Hole Space:

These spaces are multifunctional and serve to provide a place for gathering; this could be for presentations, lectures, team building, large group instruction, eating, chatting, etc. Since Plainfield School does not have a cafeteria, and since an essential element of this design is to

work towards the middle school students having their own space and identity, campfire/watering hole space is integral to student development programming, identity, and connection to place.

See below for samples of campfire/watering hole spaces.





Kitchen and Cafeteria:

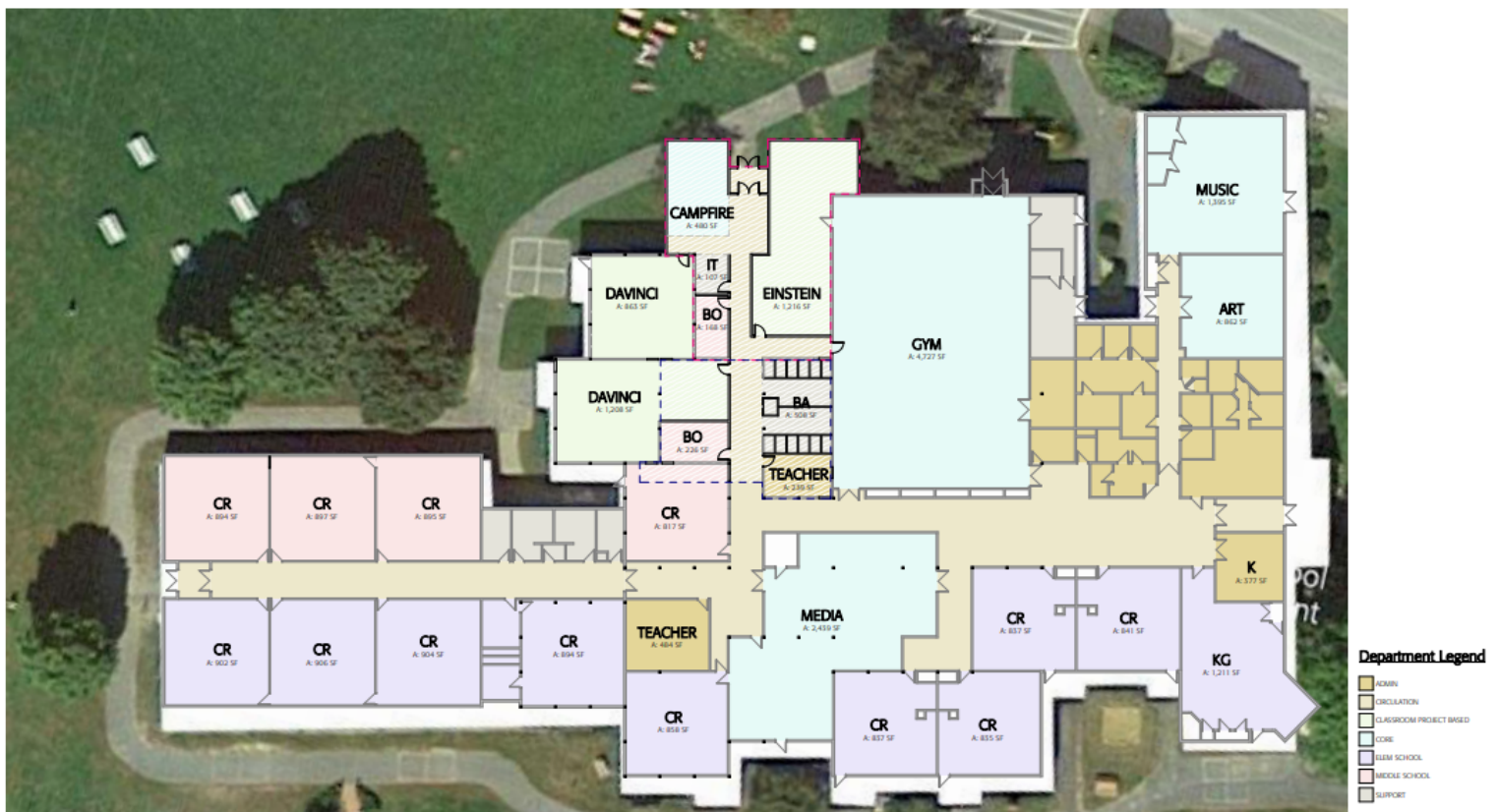
The Committee assessed the costs and benefits of adding a cafeteria and kitchen, and at this time decided that it would complicate the overall project and unnecessarily increase costs. For the future, here are our general pros and cons:

Pros	Cons
Healthier food and food selection	Additional facilities costs: kitchen and storage
Emergency Shelter for Town MultiPurpose	Potentially adding staff
Offering breakfast to PES	Potential loss of small, intimate class eating together in their rooms
More community building in a cafeteria, common eating space	

Facilities Design Options:

Many thanks to Tim Olsen and Ingrid Nichols from Banwell Architects for putting our ideas into designs. The four options below convey the Committee's priorities to meet academic and social/emotional needs and each has pros and cons. These will serve as the foundation of our discussions to lead towards a final, approved design.

Option #1: \$1,875,000



LEVEL 1 - OPT 1

AREA NEW 2826 SF
AREA HEAVY RENO 1848 SF

Option #2: \$1,941,250



LEVEL 1 - OPT 2

AREA NEW 2573 SF
AREA HEAVY RENO 2619 SF

Option #3: \$3,652,500



AREA NEW 5490 SF
AREA HEAVY RENO 3630 SF

Option #4: \$1,960,500



LEVEL 1 - OPT 4

AREA NEW 2175 SF
AREA HEAVY RENO 3492 SF

Infrastructure

Current Demographics:

Towns:

Plainfield, NH is in Sullivan County. Looking at census records, the population has shown an average increase of 4.4% over the past two decades:

Total Population	Residents	% increase/decrease
2000	2,254	N/A
2010	2,364	4.8% increase
2020	2,459	4% increase

According to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS) approximately 15-17% of the population is school-aged (measured by ages 5-19)

Cornish, NH is in Sullivan County. Looking at census records, the population has shown an average decrease of 1.75 % over the past two decades:

Total Population	Residents	% increase/decrease
2000	1,667	N/A
2010	1,640	2% decrease
2020	1,616	1.5% decrease

According to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS) approximately 12-15% of the population is school-aged (measured by ages 5-19)

Plainfield has slightly increasing population with a decline in student enrollment. Cornish has a slightly decreasing population with an increasing enrollment.

Speculation about these issues include the effect that both preschool and high school choice have had on drawing families to Cornish; the labor market; COVID effects; and of course, the housing and rental markets.

A report is forthcoming (January 2025) from NESDEC to give a second review of enrollment trends.

Grand Lists:

The current Plainfield Grand List is: **\$546,697,153**

The current Cornish Grand List is **\$356,668,170**

These are based on valuations done in just the past two years and will be used for tax rate projections.

Schools:

Plainfield Enrollment:

Plainfield School has occasional “bubble” groups that cause specific grade levels to be large or small by local standards; this makes it sometimes difficult to predict future class sizes, especially when the ratio of local births to Kindergarten enrollment varies. Over the past five years, this ratio has ranged from .8 (11 births to 9 enrolled in Kindergarten) to 2.8 (6 births to 17 enrolled in Kindergarten). Over the past 10 years, the ratio has averaged 1.9, meaning that for every birth in town, the kindergarten enrollment would be close to double. We are not, however, seeing that occur, due to people moving in and out and local housing and rental markets. In the past three years enrollment has declined from 214 students to 182. The projections for the future indicate one classroom per grade level.

On the other hand, once students enroll in Plainfield School, they largely stay. This means that we have more accurate predictions based on current class sizes as we project forward. It is close to a 1.0 ratio, meaning that we can confidently predict class sizes for future years using current enrollment. Of course, any significant changes with the economy, primarily including housing and employment, can cause this ratio to shift; however, this has shown to be a steady factor over the past decade.

Given these factors, projected enrollment for Plainfield at the middle school level (grades 6-8) can be predicted with some confidence as:

Year	PES 6-8
2024-25	70
2025-26	67
2026-27	75
2027-28	68
2028-29	64
2029-30	45
2030-31	45
2031-32	45
2032-33	51
2033-34	52

After this, the ratio of births will need to be used. Births have been steady for the past five years (12-15 per year), so to predict future class sizes, using a *conservative* ratio of 1.4 (while the average is 1.9 there is no recent indication that each class will double) we can estimate that each class will have between 16 and 21 students each. (Of course, if each class does in fact double in size, this range increases to a range of 23 to 29.)

Using these numbers to predict middle school population in the future, we can extrapolate that each grouping of 6-8 students will range between a low of 42-28 students for the years 2029-32. A maximum prediction would range from 72-78 in 2026-28.

Addition of Cornish Students:

When considering the possibility of adding Cornish 6-8 students to the Plainfield School. Cornish 5-year projections are as follows:

Year	CES 6-8
2024-25	35
2025-26	38
2026-27	42
2027-28	43
2028-29	47
2029-30	45
2030-31	45
2031-32	44
2032-33	48
2033-34	49

Using the same prediction methodology as Plainfield, the ratio for Cornish classes based on birth to Kindergarten ratio is a fairly steady 1.5. Over the past five years, births in Cornish have ranged from 8-11.

That would mean future estimations based on births in Cornish would be in the range of 12-17 per class.

5-Year Projections for a Plainfield/Cornish Combined Middle School:

Year	PES 6-8	CES 6-8	Combo	
2024-25	70	35	105	
2025-26	67	38	105	
2026-27	75	42	117	
2027-28	68	43	111	
2028-29	64	47	111	
2029-30	45	45	90	
2030-31	45	45	90	
2031-32	45	44	89	
2032-33	51	48	99	
2033-34	52	49	101	
			102 average	

10-Year Projections for a Plainfield/Cornish Combined Middle School (Range):

Utilization the range based on birth to enrollment ratios in each school, the following range can be estimated for years 6-10.

	Range for 6-8 Combined Plainfield and Cornish Low - High
2029-30 to 2033-34	87 - 120 (avg 104)

These estimates of course need to be taken into consideration when looking at construction for space needs and potentially enrolling other tuition students from the region.

Housing/Real Estate Summary:

Plainfield Housing Summary:

According to the ACS (American Community Survey), housing units studied over the years 2017-2021 can be broken down as follows:

Single Family Units:	964
Detached or Attached Units in Multi-Family Structures:	
Two to Four Units in a Structure:	66
Five or More Units in a Structure:	19
Mobile Homes and Other Housing Units:	29
Total:	1,078

The real estate market from 2022 (most recent official data so far) data shows that Plainfield had 29 units sold (7% more than 2021), the average sale price was \$381,759, these units had an average time on the market listing of 73 days, and all units sold for an average of 99% of the list price.

Cornish Housing Summary:

According to the ACS, housing units in studied over the years 2017-2021 can be broken down as follows:

Single Family Units:	748
Detached or Attached Units in Multi-Family Structures:	
Two to Four Units in a Structure:	14
Five or More Units in a Structure:	-
Mobile Homes and Other Housing Units:	63
Total:	825

The real estate market from 2022 (most recent official data) shows that Cornish had 21 units sold (4.5% less than 2021 (one unit equivalent), the average sale price was \$449,985, these units had an average time on the market listing of 56 days, and all units sold for an average of 97% of the list price.

Housing Summary:

Overall, each town's population and school enrollment would be considered steady; however, declining enrollment in any way is always a concern in terms of increasing taxpayer costs for school funding. The housing markets have a significant effect on student population, and the lack of inventory and in some cases affordable family housing greatly impacts the school's population, funding, and diversity. Each town has only an approximate 2% inventory movement, which is very low. While again this means a steady enrollment now, it could have repercussions later on.

As stated above, should this work continue, a formal study from an outside organization would be warranted. Records on lot sales, building permits, and other development should be pulled and analyzed.

Staffing:

Current Staffing:

Cornish:

There are 3.5 teachers to provide instruction for students in grades 5-8 for the core content area courses of English/Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science. Students have additional Essential Arts courses in Music, Spanish, Art, Physical Education/Health, and Library Media Studies, taught by shared staff in the PK-8 environment.

This proposal would reduce 3.5 FTE in the teaching staff but would also require the addition of 1.0 FTE to have a 5th grade teacher. This is a net result of a 2.5 reduction.

Plainfield:

There are 5.0 teachers on the middle school team currently providing instruction in grades 6-8. These educators are in the four main content areas: English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, plus Spanish. Students have additional Essential Arts courses in Music, Spanish, Art, Physical Education/Health, and Library Media Studies, taught by shared staff in the PK-8 environment. The proposed staffing model, in order to meet programming needs, would remove Spanish from the middle school equation (though the Spanish position remains 1.0 FTE).

Proposed Staffing

Proposed new middle school staffing:

- 7 teachers
- 1 case manager/instructional support teacher

- **8 total FTEs**

Each school also provides a school counselor, a school nurse, library media specialist, special education case managers and paraeducators, support staff, and a shared leadership team. There are no recommended changes to these positions.

If both schools were to combine, and given the estimates of student population from above, the administration presents the following as a staffing model that would maximize efficiency for both schools:

Core Instruction:

Total Teachers: 8 (an increase of 3.5 teachers)

Though the model presented would not be traditional (not always scheduled in specific content areas), for state purposes, we will still need teachers who are certified in specific areas:

- English/Language Arts (2)
- Science (1)
- Math (2)
- Social Studies (1)
- STEAM (1) *
- Special Education/Instructional Support

** The STEAM teacher may come from various certification backgrounds but would be considered an integrated learning facilitator in their teaching role to add these elements to all core instruction.*

This model puts the total teacher:student ratio at the middle school level at an average of:

1: 14

For core instruction scheduling, this would mean an average class size of:

1: 16

A maximum class size would be:

1:20

Therefore, small class sizes will remain, which has been an important factor to the communities. The anticipated class sizes also give flexibility in staff and student ratios to expand interdisciplinary and co-teaching as expected.

Essential Arts:

Since the middle school shares Essential Arts (EA) teachers, we believe the existing model would continue to suffice for EA between the two schools:

Plainfield:

- PE/Health (1.0)
- Art (.6)
- LMS (1.0)
- Music (1.0)
- Spanish (1.0)

Cornish:

- PE/Health (1.0)
- Art (.4)
- LMS (1.0)
- Music (1.0)
- Spanish (.4)

Other Positions:

- School Counselors – 1.0 in each building (no change)
- Interventionists – Each building has interventionists for math and reading; while there are no specific recommendations included in this report, we plan to explore these positions more fully in the future in order to ensure we're leveraging this expertise as much as possible.

Financial Estimates for Staffing:

All projections at this stage are general. More specific financial estimates would of course be outlined as budgets are built over the next year prior to opening. Given current staffing and the projected increase in operating costs, using an average salary (MA + 8) and benefits, an estimated 3.5 additional teachers plus associated costs (technology equipment, supplies, etc.) would be a first-year annual increase of:

\$449,085 (inclusive of benefits and NHRS)

Note that this increase is an estimate, and of course depends on individuals hired.

To make this increase viable, this amount would need to be offset annually through one of the following ways:

- per student tuition from Cornish to Plainfield,
- creation of a cooperative SAU, or
- an AREA agreement between the two districts

As you'll see below, the recommendation from the committee is a fixed tuition rate under a five-year commitment.

Plainfield, Cornish, plus Other Districts:

Slight increases over a combined Cornish and Plainfield enrollment would either be absorbed with the current staff; higher numbers, depending on age and grade level, would potentially result in increased staffing. However, given current numbers and no significant increases projected, the time may come when Plainfield entertains opening up the proposed middle school to students from other districts.

Additional teachers, and potentially space, would need to be considered if the district chooses to *significantly* expand the program to tuition students from other districts, but there will likely be room enough to admit 10-12 students with little to no impact on space, staff, and programming. Unanticipated enrollment increases in Plainfield and Cornish could warrant the same; however, that would take drastic housing changes in a very short time period, which is unlikely.

The Committee recommends that the districts hold off on accepting tuition students from other districts until its 3rd year of operation, 2028-29. This will allow the program to launch, learn about successes and needed changes, optimize its operations, and then be able to accept other students for whom this model is suited.

Recommendations for Future Tuition Students:

1. Develop an application
2. Set parameters for acceptance process
3. Develop a second tuition formula or set rate for students outside the agreement

As a general estimate, 10 tuition students from other districts at \$20,000 per student per year could bring in \$200,000 revenue each year.

Contractual Considerations:

Teachers at the middle school level in both districts are under contract. To meet this proposed model's needs, if any changes or hiring occurs that would initiate a reduction in force, it would need to go through the proper notification and CBA process with both unions.

Future Space Needs/Capital Facilities Projects:

In addition to factors with staffing, there would need to be an additional requirement for space given significant increases in students. Continuing with the best possible middle school model, these spaces would likely not be traditional classroom space but rather flexible and “lab-style” spaces more conducive to integrated study and project-based learning in alignment with current proposed design options.

Budgeting and Cost Projections (Overview)

In order to anticipate the changes in both the Plainfield and Cornish School District budget with a shared middle school, the Infrastructure Sub-Committee took the existing budgets for 2024-25 and adjusted them as if the middle school existed this year. This gave us accurate baseline information with real – not projected future budget amounts – to work with to generate future operating costs, percentages, tuition formulas, and staffing models.

Click this link to access the complete [Projected Budget Worksheet for Cornish and Plainfield.](#)

Operating Cost Increase: \$449,085 in 24-25 then adjusted annually thereafter by 3%

Construction: Depending on design chosen
Current estimates are between \$1.7 - \$1.9 million

Tuition Formula:

Ultimately, the Infrastructure Sub-Committee recommends using the following formula:

Total Cost of Middle School Staff:	\$828,146
+	
20% of all other functions, excluding:	
• School Board	
• Transportation	
• Food Service	
• Transfers	
• Debt Service	
• Grants	
	\$765,561
Total Cost of Middle School:	\$1,593,707
Divided by 110 Students	\$14,488

In order for both districts to maintain consistency in budgeting and coming to an agreed tuition amount, it is recommended that a tuition rate be set of \$15,500 for a five-year term, which should cover increased staffing and inflation of budgets over the time period.

This was achieved by estimating the percentage of Cornish students at PES over the five year period (rounded average of 20%) and increasing the tuition costs by 3% each year over that period (rounded average of \$15,500).

The Committee recommends that the tuition formula should be revisited in the 2029-30 school year in order to reassess the costs of running the middle school and develop a successor agreement between the two districts. This, of course, would be moot if the districts at that time are in a cooperative agreement.

Return on Bond Investment:

Depending on the arrangement between the two districts – tuition, cooperative, or AREA, the combined funds would more than likely cover the bulk of a bond for the construction within approximately 5 years. This, of course, is dependent on the facilities design selected.

Using a rough and conservative estimate of \$15,500 per student from Cornish and given the population estimates, the following two funding projections would occur over a five year period:

Funding Projection for a 5-Year \$500,000 Bond at 3.5%

Year	Additional MS Students	Increased MS Operating Costs	Offset from Tuition	Revenue	Bond Payment	Differential/ PSD
Current Data (for projections only)						
2024-25		\$449,085	\$0	\$0.00	\$0	N/A
2025-26		\$462,558	\$0	\$0.00	\$12,500	-\$12,500
Middle School Opening						
2026-27	42	\$476,434	\$651,000	\$174,566	\$114,625	\$59,941
2027-28	43	\$490,727	\$666,500	\$175,773	\$111,375	\$64,398
2028-29	47	\$505,449	\$728,500	\$223,051	\$108,125	\$114,926
2029-30	45	\$520,613	\$697,500	\$176,887	\$104,875	\$72,012
2030-31	45	\$536,231	\$697,500	\$161,269	\$101,625	\$59,644
2031-32	44	\$552,318	\$682,000	\$129,682	\$0	\$129,682
2032-33	48	\$568,887	\$744,000	\$175,113	\$0	\$175,113
2033-34	49	\$585,954	\$759,500	\$173,546	\$0	\$173,546
				Total Bond	\$553,125	
3.5% rate	5-year bond	\$500,000				

Funding Projection for a 5-Year \$1,000,000 Bond at 3.5%

Year	Additional MS Students	Increased MS Operating Costs	Offset from Tuition	Revenue	Bond Payment	Differential/P SD
Current Data (for projections only)						
2024-25		\$449,085	\$0	\$0.00	\$0	N/A
2025-26		\$462,558	\$0	\$0.00	\$25,000	-\$25,000
Middle School Opening						
2026-27	42	\$476,434	\$651,000	\$174,566	\$229,250	-\$54,684
2027-28	43	\$490,727	\$666,500	\$175,773	\$222,750	-\$46,977
2028-29	47	\$505,449	\$728,500	\$223,051	\$216,250	\$6,801
2029-30	45	\$520,613	\$697,500	\$176,887	\$209,750	-\$32,863
2030-31	45	\$536,231	\$697,500	\$161,269	\$203,250	-\$41,981
2031-32	44	\$552,318	\$682,000	\$129,682	\$0	\$129,682
2032-33	48	\$568,887	\$744,000	\$175,113	\$0	\$175,113
2033-34	49	\$585,954	\$759,500	\$173,546	\$0	\$173,546
				Total Bond	\$1,106,250	
3.5% rate	5-year bond	\$500,000				
NHMBB						

To access the spreadsheet for these estimates, click here to see the [Middle School Financials](#).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposal for a shared middle school between Cornish and Plainfield offers numerous benefits for students, as thoroughly outlined through a detailed examination of academic programming, student development, facilities, and infrastructure. This shared approach aims to create a robust educational experience tailored to meet the diverse needs of all students while preparing them for future success. By pooling resources, the two communities can provide a greater variety of academic options, enhanced extracurricular programs, and modern facilities that would otherwise be difficult to achieve independently. The emphasis on collaboration, innovation, and comprehensive student development ensures that every child has access to a rich learning environment that fosters personal and academic growth.

This proposal also represents a strong return on investment, with a relatively small financial contribution from each community leading to substantial rewards for the students. It is a commitment that pays dividends in the form of stronger educational outcomes, improved facilities, and better long-term opportunities for all children in both districts. We look forward to continued input and feedback from both communities, as all voices will help shape and refine this vision.

Appendices

Appendix A: Links

General:

[Middle School Study Planning Guide](#)

[Plainfield School District Survey 2023](#)

[Cornish School District Survey 2023](#)

[Plainfield School District Strategic Plan](#)

[Cornish School District Strategic Plan](#)

[The Successful Middle School: This We Believe](#)

Research Links:

Academics:

[Rigor and Relevance Handbook](#)

[Benefits of Place-Based Education](#)

[An Argument for Interdisciplinary Learning in Middle School](#)

[Engage Secondary Students: The Future Depends On It](#)

[Middle school's moment: What the science tells us about improving the middle grades](#)

[New Pedagogies for Deeper Learning](#)

[Deeper Learning Research](#)

[Design Principles for Schools: Putting the Science of Learning and Development Into Action](#)

[Project-Based Learning and Student Achievement: What Does the Research Tell Us?](#)

[The Evidence Is Clear: Rigorous Project-Based Learning Is an Effective Lever for Student Success](#)

[Lucas Research Briefs on the Success of Project-Based Learning](#)

[A study of the impact of project-based learning on student learning effects: a meta-analysis study](#)

[Interdisciplinary Learning: A Cognitive Epistemological Foundation](#)

[Sample Interdisciplinary Unit: Cold Cats and Hot Dogs](#)

Student Development

[Why the preteen years are a critical period for brain development](#)

[The Promise of Adolescence](#)

<https://schoolguide.casel.org/what-is-sel/indicators-of-schoolwide-sel/>

[The Boomerang Project](#)

Resources for Elementary to Middle Transition

<https://www.connectionsacademy.com/support/resources/article/help-your-online-student-make-a-successful-middle-school-transition/>

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/easing-shift-elementary-middle-school/>

<https://www.boomerangproject.com/transition-programs/web/>

Potential Resources for Future Design:

[IB MYP](#)

[High Tech Schools](#)

[AMLE](#)

[Middle Schools Matter Institute](#)

[New England League of Middle Schools](#)

<https://www.ccboe.com/academics/middle-school-program-of-studies>

Appendix B: Community Survey Feedback:

The Middle School Study Committee met to review the survey data and develop key takeaways from the community responses. For each question, the committee revisited what each question was asking, what the community's response was, and what this information means for middle school education.

Key Takeaways by Survey Question:

11. Academic achievement is the top priority for the community with healthy peer relationships a close second. Community involvement was the third ranked. Everything else was fairly even overall. This information, in conjunction with Question 12, leads us to believe that academic achievement and healthy peer relationships need to be the primary focus area for any future work in middle level education.

12. Location and grounds are rated very favorably overall. The school building rated somewhat moderately and the moderate to low rating is programming. Like above, specific adjustments need to be made with programming. The student behavior system has the most "poor" responses; however, this category also has the most spread among the options –this causes this to warrant more in-depth study. This is also one of the highest non-answered categories, which likely is a result of so many community members without children in school answering the survey. The comments suggest that there is a connection between classroom behaviors and academic achievement. This connection would need to be a focus in any new programming.

13. Middle school is grades 6-8. A clear majority response.

14. 50% of people believe something should change in the current middle school model; only 8% believe nothing should change. The need for change appears to emphasize programming as in questions 11 and 12. programming,

15. There is a good spread among the various categories, indicating that there's a consistent set of priorities. It is clear that the community values preparing students for high school and that this has been a long-standing priority for the town.

16. All responses are very close to each other among the different categories. They are all equally important and therefore all should be part of any future middle school programming.

17. Aside from the core content areas, STEM and Citizenship/Civics are next in terms of importance, followed by Art/Music/Visual Arts, then World Language and Economics. The data here suggests we should be taking an integrated approach, especially with the emphasis on STEM and Citizenship/Civics. This aligns to the intentions of the donation for a capital project as well as the outlined vision of a new middle school program overall.

18. Data shows that students should "move and do" slightly more than "sit and learn." We also need to prepare students for high school by having them experience what a high school

classroom is like (likely to be more sitting and learning) so this can't be excluded from the latter transition. More moving and doing is also in alignment with this report's vision.

19. The highest ratings are the sports we already have with the exception of baseball and softball; Lacrosse also rises towards the top. We're offering what is most wanted, which is good to confirm. Baseball and softball could be possible with more students but that would require field work and coordination with Cal Ripken. There are a lot of comments about cross country – running. This should be explored. The discussion around this given a combined middle school is simple – that more students means more opportunities.

20. The highest ratings are the co-curriculars we already offer. Environmental and chess club had a showing. Again, it is helpful to confirm that the current offerings are what's wanted by our community.

21. Academic rigor is the most important though they all are rated high. As stated above, the community priority remains steady in its emphasis on preparation.

22. Learning by contributing to local community is definitely valued. This has an average rating of 72 and this is something that should be included in future programming planning. This rating is even higher than the similar question related to "moving and doing".

23. There is a clear winner with a combined school at a neutral costs however there is also a significant number of responses that a slight cost increase with educational benefits is acceptable. 90% in favor of some combination overall; only 10% not in favor of combining. It's clear that Plainfield is interested in looking into combining.

24. The majority of responses is a combination with Cornish and other districts. This suggests a recognition that the middle school is too small and would benefit from being bigger. This would have an impact on school building construction. The community is not interested in having middle school students go to other districts.

25. Most significant number of people think the school is too small. This supports looking to add students. More kids means more programming opportunities.

26. The belief is that most respondents believe that all these options would be enhanced by a bigger school. This is another clear indication that combining middle level students would be a benefit.

Appendix C: Focus Group Summaries

Students:

- Already do things with kids in the other towns, so it wouldn't be that big of a change.
- Excitement over going to school with some friends. Some hesitation as well if there's a known conflict.
- Gender balance repeatedly brought up – would be a really good thing to have more options for friends and peer groups.
- Some worry that a certain percentage of people are mean, so what if we combine schools and that means there are more mean kids?
- Wonder over how long the bus route would be – depending on where you live in Cornish.
- Some kids like the same schedule all day all year – might be hard to get used to the interdisciplinary units.
- Definitely want more time out of their seats and out of the classroom and especially outside (universal response).
- Definitely like a combination of a traditional schedule and interdisciplinary unit schedule – the combination of both would be best (universal response).
- Fun Fridays or having choice in what we do on every Friday would be good.
- Would like to be able to play in the snow and be outside in the winter too.
- Some interdisciplinary units that would be really fun would be; dinosaurs, woods hop, ice ages, creative writing, photography,
- They would like to design their own interdisciplinary courses.
- Definitely like the idea of changing classes and mixing up grade levels (universal response). Really like getting to know more kids in other grades.
- Like that we already do sports together – maybe there could be more sports if there are more kids – something besides basketball.
- Some kids would still want to play Lebanon sports.
- More clubs would be good – photography club, art club, cooking club, fitness club, more plays, etc.
- Want some more time for study skills to get work done during the school day – especially if there will be more sports or clubs.
- Would like a greenhouse and would like working in it (universal response).
- Keep classes small – that's a good thing. (universal response)
- If they're changing the building at all, we should have a bigger gym, a movie theater and a pool.
- Like the idea of having choice in classes instead of just assignments.
- Want to learn other languages other than Spanish. Like maybe Chinese or ASL.
- A cafeteria would be great – time to meet with other friends and relax.
- Would like ways to get to know kids from the other school in the early grades so it doesn't happen all at once in grade 6.

- Want space to be quiet and read or be alone for a minute – “nooks” (universal response).
- Can we have a peaceful room and a rage room?
- Want to start school later, definitely.
- Want a better discipline system – no more reflective things.

Staff:

- Need to make sure that the model incorporates access for students who learn differently.
- One teacher had this model in secondary school – still the most memorable experience.
- Sounds like a good idea but it's very complex to put into practice.
- Student grouping will need to be very defined – mixing up and combining intentionally all the time.
- Could be a good idea to have time with regular classes and then move into time for the interdisciplinary work.
- Will need a lot of professional development as soon as it passes to be prepared. The prep work is essential for this – and ongoing time to prepare with partners.
- It might be harder to find connections for math in interdisciplinary work. And need to find how science standards figure in. Need to make sure students are prepared for high school.
- Need to define a system for working with students who don't meet the competencies in the interdisciplinary work – can't let them be stuck in a loop and not able to move forward. Need to have a really clear definition of mastery for each interdisciplinary unit.
- How will this experience be for special education students?
- Sometimes group projects are a problem – it will be important to figure out guidelines for that that are consistent. Will also need to make sure there's a very clear assessment scale.
- There will be some content and skills that don't directly fit into an interdisciplinary unit – will those be taught in traditional classes? Small breakout groups? Etc.
- Want to make sure all the new units have meaning and purpose.
- Positive move to get the kids exposed to more kids at this level – by this time they know how to push each other's buttons.
- Sharing would really help them “stretch” – both academically and socially/emotionally. This will come from having more teachers, too – learning from different styles and methods and personalities.
- Better gender balance would help.
- A lot of the kids already know each other and play sports/do things after school so the transition wouldn't be too hard.
- It would be great for kids to be able to find a group if they don't already have one – more options and opportunities.
- Good “middle step” between elementary and high school – very appropriate. A bigger mix but still in a safe environment.
- Would like to make sure class sizes stay the same – not too big.
- Tuitioning in more students after the first two years sounds like a good idea – adding to the class make-up and bringing in more diversity.

- Will need the right kind of space to make this kind of learning happen.
- Possibility of keeping lab/science sizes lower, around 14-15? 20 would be too large.
- This also opens up a lot of potential for the K-5 world too – more focus on foundations and depth.
- Would like to address new traditions for 8th graders – Cornish losing 8th grade traditions – can't just adopt the Plainfield traditions – need to create something new for the kids – building their own culture. Can be sad to lose St. Gaudins graduation, etc.
- Don't want to see this middle school happen.
- Could help balance things if middle school went through and then Plainfield sent PreK to Cornish.
- Great opportunities to co-teach and have teaching partners. This kind of collaboration helps with reenergizing. Would also be good to alternate who has the “lead” role in each unit – gives people and content areas a chance to step forward/be highlighted.
- Love seeing how math can be applied in so many ways in interdisciplinary work.
- Want to ensure EA schedule opens up for collaboration in interdisciplinary units.
- Like the idea of piloting 3 a year in the first year, then grow.
- Important to remember that this would be something very new – not just absorbing more students into the existing structure.
- Would there be a need for an additional counselor? Would the Cornish school counselor continue to have contact with middle school students? Especially since they still need to go through the high school choice process.
- Need to remember that for most kids this opens opportunities to find their people/peer group but for a few it could potentially drive them even further “out.”
- Would definitely benefit from a designated middle school space if possible – in the K-8 but on its own – balance of independence and autonomy/supervision and small.
- There's a benefit to being around younger kids for community and social-emotional development. Don't want to lose this.
- There will be more “dating”
- Need to figure out a new advisory system and schedule – how often? Purpose? Etc.
- Will there still be “WIN” time? How will it be used/structured in the new model?

Parents/Guardians and Community Members:

- If this moves forward there will need to be a clear emphasis on how it will help academics.
- Need to be clear on how this model increases challenge, allows for hands-on learning and makes sure kids at this level have less hand-holding before they go to high school.
- Model needs to take into account students who still like traditional learning – has to still have that flexibility.

- If it passes, it would be great to see a full outline of how learning will be scaffolded so we know students are advancing as they move through grades 6-8 – by content area knowledge and skills.
- Group work is always a concern because it seems like it's always one or two kids who do everything – how will all this project-based work address that?
- A lot of families move or stay here for the small school and small class sizes, so those would need to stay the same.
- Lots of families and kids already do things outside of school, so it would be an easy fit.
- Schools are already sharing well together – will be a concern over costs and what those look like long term.
- Economies of scale and options are almost always good things – this would be a big asset to both towns.
- People are reluctant to pay more taxes, so this can't cost too much.
- There will be a switch in which kids are “the top dogs” in both schools – would be now grade 5 in Cornish and grade 8 combined – how will that affect school cultures?
- Multiple comments about balancing costs for both districts. Will one district save and one district lose?
- Will more families choose Lebanon as their choice high school if Cornish goes to Plainfield for middle grades?
- Good idea to mix students – opens more opportunities for friendships and helps both communities.
- A downside could be that with more kids comes more adult-like behavior – is that a risk? Both communities like kids being kids for as long as possible.
- Change is hard – this will take a lot of discussion in both communities.
- Aside from academics, this would be worth it just for the social and developmental benefit – these kids really need this.
- How will students transition to a traditional high school after this? Does having this type of project-based learning environment make it harder for them in the long run?
- Really like that with more kids, there will be more families, which means more involvement, help, support of the schools overall – good community effort. And good for the Upper Valley.
- Concern over facilities – why do we need more space for this if we used to have classes this big? Could we just bring students in without doing any changes to the building? Worry that Plainfield will be stuck with these new spaces if Cornish leaves after the five year agreement.
- Maybe this can wait until we see if the two districts join as a combined single district.
- We don't have to have the best of everything – we can move forward with things being ok if it means our taxes won't increase.
- If I have the money I'll support the tax increase; if I don't have it, I won't.
- PES is a great campus for a middle school – perfect location and resources for this type of project-based learning.
- Privilege doesn't always create good people – there has to be a strong social-emotional program as part of all of this.