

TO: Board of Education

FROM: Randall Booker, Superintendent

SUBJECT: **ELEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM DESIGN PROCESS**

I. **SUPPORT INFORMATION**

In support of Shaping Our Future 2.0, and to prepare and best serve our 21st century learners, the Tri-School Site Council identified the need to evaluate how we can optimize our efficiency and effectiveness to support our elementary age students. By examining the various components of the elementary instructional program (math, literacy, science, technology, music, library, art, PE, etc.), as well as the time required to appropriately address each component and their corresponding standards, we aim to develop a daily instructional schedule that can best provide the needed coherent blocks of time for instruction.

District staff is recommending that the Board adopt the following contract language and bell schedule change that will enable the development of a new daily instructional schedule for the three elementary schools:

Contract Language

Article VI - Hours and Professional Responsibility

A.3. Professional Day

At the elementary level, a full-time teaching position shall consist of direct instruction based on state mandated instructional levels with an average of 30 40 minutes of preparation time per day.

Bell Schedule

Early start (8:00am) for the elementary Instrumental Music Program.

To gain an understanding of the most valuable and effective approach to guide the redesign, a core Design Team of Tri-School principals, school staff, and parents has participated in a facilitated process that utilizes a Design Thinking approach. Design Thinking is a process that focuses on the needs of end users: our students. This facilitated process, beginning in the 14-15 school year, has continued over the past several months. Ultimately, with the support and input from all stakeholders, the goal is to develop a new daily instructional schedule for the three elementary schools.

This elementary Design Team has conducted observations and engaged in interviews with teachers, students, administrators, and parents to define our strengths and identify any potential needs and priorities. They also researched

best practices within and beyond the school district and reviewed scholarly research that best supports student learning.

The team has developed six guiding principles that have provided direction for the next phase of work—creating schedule prototypes. These principles have stayed front-and-center during the elementary Design Team’s discussions. The guiding principles are as follows:

- **Create Opportunities for Integration of Curriculum:** Provide opportunities to integrate a variety of content and subject matter into core curriculum.
- **Support Flexibility and Creativity:** Create structures that support flexibility with how we use our learning spaces, and time to foster exploration and creativity for our students.
- **Minimize Transitions:** Design our schedule thoughtfully to minimize the impact of transitions and/or eliminate them when possible.
- **Attend to Well-Being of Students and Staff:** Be thoughtful and supportive of the whole person (academic, emotional, social, psychological, physical) to optimize learning and teaching.
- **Create Uninterrupted Instructional Blocks:** Create uninterrupted blocks of time that are developmentally and grade appropriate.
- **Integrate Collaboration Time Within the School Day:** Create additional opportunities for teachers to collaborate with grade level teams, specialists, enrichment teachers and support staff.

Ultimately, the goal to develop a new schedule that best supports our elementary students is driven by three issues identified by teachers and administrators:

1. The current schedule does not provide enough time for core academic instruction.

The goal of our instructional program design work is to maintain a rich, comprehensive elementary learning experience, while preserving instructional time for core academic instruction. As we transition to teaching Next Generation Science Standards, which include engineering, we will need sufficient time to address the three dimensions of learning that are integral to any new science curriculum (Scientific and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas, Cross-Cutting Concepts). Currently, in many classrooms, science instruction is not given the time it deserves due to the constraints on student learning time.

We are extremely fortunate to have the support of PEF and parent support groups, which have allowed us to offer an extremely rich program. Our program is much richer, in fact, than similar districts such as Orinda and Palo Alto where students do not receive nearly the same breadth of programming outside of the general education classroom. As we have shifted to common core standards and the expectations that go along with them, we have reached a point where we needed to examine how we teach all content areas in a holistic way. For example, the standards support technology instruction becoming embedded in art, science, math and literacy.

The adoption of Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Mathematics requires teachers to provide their students with opportunities to explore fewer concepts more deeply, experience real-life problem solving, and work across disciplines.

Our goal is to provide a balanced educational program for students where the core academic standards are studied across disciplines. For example, if students are studying the solar system. They can read about solar systems in Reader's Workshop, they can write about solar systems in Writer's Workshop, use facts about the solar system in their math work. They can be creating solar systems in art, and do creative movement representing solar systems in PE. The possibilities go on, however currently we do not have the time or structure to make this vision for interdisciplinary learning opportunities a reality.

2. The current schedule has too many transitions and does not provide consistent “blocks” of instructional time.

Our goal is to create a consistent schedule for students. In the current schedule, literacy instruction happens at various and inconsistent times during any day of the week. In our prototypes, students will go to their specialist class the same time each day, which allows literacy instruction to occur consistently as well. Longer blocks of instructional time give teachers the flexibility to use their professional judgment and capitalize on teachable moments. When students are highly engaged in an activity, teachers can provide more time without having to transition students to specialized classes as often.

To maintain the breadth of our current programming and gain consistent blocks of instructional time, we need to make adjustments to the instructional programs taught by teacher specialists. Although the minutes students spend receiving direct instruction from teacher specialists will decrease, shifting to a model where we provide interdisciplinary learning experiences will result in a net gain for students over time, and teacher specialists will be provided the time to support these endeavors. Classroom teachers will have more time with their students and as a result students will have increased opportunities to connect what they learn to other disciplines and their real life experiences.

Furthermore, when we examine our current schedule, we must take into account the time needed to accommodate transitions. When a group of 25 elementary students return from PE or recess or Music, getting them to settle into a math lesson is no small task. As much as 5-10 minutes is lost in these transitions as students put away snacks, take out workbooks, and use the restroom, before a lesson can begin. It can feel like the class just began a new lesson before another interruption comes along. This is another reason behind the desire for longer “blocks” of instructional time.

3. The current schedule does not provide adequate collaboration and planning time for teachers in order to create lessons that align to the Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards, as well as develop interdisciplinary units.

Creating interdisciplinary units at all grade levels where students are making high-leverage connections will take time. Currently, our teachers have limited opportunities to collaborate; therefore, an integral aspect of our design work is to create shared prep times for teachers (i.e., having the same time each day to meet and plan together) so they can develop curricular units and lessons that provide consistent experiences for students. Teachers will have the flexibility to use the common planning time in whatever way is most productive for them.

In the current schedule, elementary teachers get only 30 minutes of “prep” per day which is rarely aligned with grade level colleagues. In order to meet the changing demands of the elementary program, teachers need additional common planning time to provide consistent learning experiences for students.

Recently, the District developed an FAQ to help address and answer questions communicated from various engagement opportunities. The FAQ can also be found on the District website:

Piedmont Unified School District
Elementary School Instructional Program Design
Answers to Frequently Asked Questions
Revised May 20, 2016

Piedmont Unified is continually assessing and refining its educational programs, to further the District’s fundamental goal of educational excellence. Educational programs and objectives at the elementary, middle and high school level must keep pace with the changing needs of the world outside the classroom. Readiness for higher education requires different types of knowledge, different educational experiences, and a different set of skills than in the past. To serve the needs of elementary students, it is essential to offer students a broad range of educational opportunities. For example, elementary students must have the opportunity to: learn through project-based exploration and collaboration; investigate connections among different areas of study; work individually and in groups; and take full advantage of modern educational technologies. Equally important, teachers must have adequate time to collaborate with their peers, prepare and reflect on lessons, and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

For the past 18 months, Piedmont Unified’s three elementary schools have been assessing the educational needs of elementary students -- particularly as they relate to new reading, math, science, and social/emotional health curriculum implemented in recent years -- and how the school-day schedule could be modified to better meet these needs. This assessment culminated in a proposal to modify the school-day schedule, and this FAQ provides answers to frequently asked questions about this proposal. The Board of Education will consider this proposal on May 25th.

Why Change the Current School-Day Schedule?

The elementary school day is divided into 30-minute instructional blocks interspersed with blocks of time for physical education, art, music, computer science, recess, lunch, and library, and this configuration does not support current curriculum and instruction. In recent years, the schools have implemented new curriculum in reading, math, science, engineering, and social/emotional health, and the new curriculum requires longer blocks of uninterrupted instructional time. There is simply not enough time for students to explore and immerse themselves in these core areas of study. When students are highly engaged in an activity, teachers have limited flexibility to extend lesson time and capitalize on teachable moments. Instead, teachers have to redirect students and transition them to the next activity. The short instructional blocks also limit the ability of teachers to integrate different areas of study into a single lesson, and differentiate for learners who need more challenge or more support.

A related issue is the inefficiency of multiple transitions during the school day. When students move to other classrooms, for PE or library time for example, as much as five to ten minutes is lost in each transition. With multiple transitions each day, these lost minutes add up to many lost hours over the course of the year.

Also significant, the current school-day schedule offers limited collaboration and planning time for teachers. This time is especially important for the implementation of Common Core Math and Language Arts Standards, and Next Generation Science Standards both now and over the next few years.

How Was The Proposed Schedule Developed?

In 2014, discussions among teachers, parents and administrators at the elementary Site Council meetings focused on how the current school-day schedule limits teachers' ability to implement and differentiate curriculum in effective and innovative ways. These discussions led to the creation of a committee to study and "redesign" the school-day schedule to better support educational programs and goals.

The committee studied various schedule options, consulted with experts, solicited and incorporated feedback from parents and teachers, and developed a series of iterative proposals for a new school-day schedule. The proposals were presented at faculty, parent club, site council and Board of Education meetings and parent engagement nights throughout this school year, and refinements were made based on the input received.

A similar, multi-year, iterative process was used recently to change and refine the school day schedule at both the middle and high school. Both the middle and high school changed their block schedules and the start and end times of the school day to better meet student needs and to adapt to new curricular demands, particularly in math and science.

Are There Any State Requirements Governing How The School Day Is Organized?

No. Each school district has discretion to develop a schedule that best serves the needs of its students and best supports the instructional program.

What Are the Goals of the Proposal Schedule?

The proposed schedule is designed to:

- Create longer uninterrupted blocks of instructional time that are developmentally appropriate for each grade level, with fewer transitions that disrupt the flow of teaching and learning.
- Promote opportunities for students to immerse themselves in material, seek greater depth of knowledge, and explore the connections among different areas of study through integrated learning.
- Support the whole student with a balance of academic, creative and social/emotional programs.
- Increase opportunities for teachers to collaborate with grade-level teams, specialists, enrichment teachers and support staff, helping to ensure consistent experiences for students.

To achieve these goals, there would be changes in scheduling of subjects outside the areas of core instruction, and this has sparked some controversy in the community. Nonetheless, there is strong consensus among the administrators, teachers and parents who participated in the redesign process that the proposed changes are necessary and will result in more benefits and educational opportunities for students. Specifically, teachers would have the flexibility to schedule art, technology and library time to “integrate” these disciplines into and augment other curriculum.

The need to change the schedule in order to support this kind of educational innovation is evident in the ongoing efforts to integrate lessons despite current scheduling constraints. For example, all 4th graders are studying the Gold Rush by reading and writing about this and producing *Gold Rush -- The Musical*. The students are creating art for the set, designing costumes, and writing songs, both during class time and at lunch and recess. The current schedule is simply not conducive to this kind of interdisciplinary project.

Another example of how the current schedule does not support integrated teaching and learning is the 2nd grade bread unit at Havens. This is a very successful interdisciplinary project, incorporating social studies, science, math, reading, writing, and art, yet it requires a disruption of the school schedule to make it work. The proposed schedule change would support these kinds of projects, which would become more common, and students would benefit from these rich educational opportunities.

How Would The Proposed Changes Affect Art Instruction?

Currently, there is a disparity in art education among the three elementary schools. Havens has 18 class sessions per year, Beach has 24, and Wildwood has 30.

Sessions are typically 60 minutes for the older grades and range from 30 to 60 minutes in the lower grades.

Under the proposal, students at all three schools would receive 24 class sessions of art per year:

- **Kindergarten** would have 24 30-minute sessions, totaling 12 hours of time with the art teacher. Nine of these hours would be in the art room and built into the classroom teacher's prep schedule. The other three hours would be arranged by the art teacher in collaboration with the classroom teacher. Recognizing space constraints can at times interfere, the vision is for these additional sessions to also be taught in the art room.
- Students in **Grades 1-3** would have 24 40-minute sessions, totaling 16 hours of time with the art teacher. Twelve of these hours would be in the art room and built into the classroom teacher's prep schedule. The other four hours would be arranged by the art teacher in collaboration with the classroom teacher. Recognizing space constraints can at times interfere, the vision is for these additional sessions to also be taught in the art room.
- Students in **Grades 4-5** would have 24 50-minute sessions, totaling 20 hours of time with the art teacher. Fifteen of these hours would be in the art room and built into the classroom teacher's prep schedule. The other five hours would be arranged by the art teacher in collaboration with the classroom teacher. Recognizing space constraints can at times interfere, the vision is for these additional sessions to also be taught in the art room.

(A brief comparison of the hours of current art classes and the proposed changes follows.)

These 24 sessions of dedicated art time would be supplemented by art integration in the core subjects as well as media arts integration in technology and core subjects.

Art instruction would also change due to the addition of a credentialed art teacher. Currently, art is the only content area in Piedmont Unified taught by uncredentialed personnel. Under the proposal, art would be taught by credentialed teachers, as recommended by both the California Department of Education and the National Art Education Association:

The visual arts in Pre-K through 12 school settings should be taught by certified/licensed and highly qualified art educators. . . . Certified/Licensed and highly qualified visual art educators should: Have a thorough understanding of the visual arts including history, studio skills, art criticism, aesthetics, and the study of visual art and cultures. Have a knowledge of teaching methodologies and how to apply them to the visual arts classroom. Have an ongoing understanding of and ability to integrate current and emerging technology into their teaching. Understand students

as learners, including diverse characteristics, abilities, and learning styles. Help students understand the ways in which the arts make meaning, connect with the entire curriculum, and prepare students for success in school, work, and life. Pursue ongoing professional development to support their continuous improvement in both teaching and the arts.

As discussed above, the proposed schedule would offer greater opportunities for integrating art into core curriculum.

Currently, because of how art is staffed, the classroom teachers are legally required to remain in the room during art lessons. Because classroom teachers would no longer be required to attend art classes, these teachers would gain additional preparation and planning time.

Has a credentialed art teacher reviewed the current plan to provide feedback?

Yes. The design team has been in frequent conversations with certificated art teachers to provide additional feedback on art instruction and art integration. One of the recommendations received was to balance standards-based skill development and creative exploration during art instructional time with a credentialed art teacher. A second recommendation was to allow for flexibility concerning sequencing of art sessions, clustering multiple art sessions over one or two or three weeks, rather than limiting art to a rigid schedule of art classes alternating by week. The additional six sessions, also with a credentialed art teacher, will be flexibly scheduled and allow classroom and art teachers to use their jointly-planned sessions to work on an art project two or three school days in a row if the project necessitates.

How Would The Proposed Changes Affect Music Instruction?

Currently, Piedmont Unified offers both vocal and instrumental music instruction in 4th grade, but instrumental music only in 5th grade. Under the proposal, 5th graders would have both vocal and instrumental music. Over the course of each student's K-5 experience students will have the same amount of instrumental music as they currently have. Piedmont Unified is considering starting the school day at 8:00 am on certain days for 4th and 5th grade students taking instrumental music. These students would have one early start day per week and schedules would be coordinated with the Piedmont Language School to avoid any conflicts.

How Would The Proposed Changes Affect Tech Instruction?

At each of the three elementary schools, all 4th and 5th graders now have chromebooks in their classrooms. This makes it possible for their teachers to integrate technology in classroom activities: students are developing skills such as word processing (including copy/paste, formatting, margins/tabs, header/footers, bullets, thesaurus and other functions), online research, media arts, and presentation of work (slideshows, PowerPoint), while also learning content. For this reason, dedicated tech time would decrease. Nonetheless, for tech integration to be most effective, and for students to become ethical, efficient, and reflective users of technology, students need a foundation in computer science and digital citizenship. Under the proposal, weekly instruction by a tech specialist would ensure that these important skills are introduced systematically.

How Would the Proposed Changes Affect Library Instruction?

Next year, each of the three elementary schools will be piloting new approaches to using the resources their libraries have to offer. We will be maintaining our traditional library program while also ensuring time for a library commons model. In addition to scheduled class time in the library, teachers will have opportunities to schedule into the library so students can develop their research skills and integrate library resources in their projects. An example of how students are already making greater use of the library, outside of scheduled library time, is the 3rd grade animal adaptation project where students spend additional time in the library to learn research skills and conduct research with the guidance of our teacher librarians. This combination of fixed and flexible library time serves our evolving curricular needs and gives classroom teachers flexibility concerning how best to incorporate library curriculum into core curriculum.

When Would the Proposed Changes Be Implemented?

If approved by the Board, the changes would be implemented in the 2016/17 school year and refined over the next several years.

Whenever we make changes to improve the education of students, we are building toward our goals with iteration and refinement. We teach, reflect, iterate, and then teach some more. A recent example is how we implemented Bridges and Number Corner this year. The implementation of Bridges will be improved upon next year--streamlining lessons, extending learning activities, supplementing enrichment lessons as needed. It is important to recognize that it can take a few years to fully implement new curriculum and new initiatives. This new school day schedule will strengthen our ability to accomplish all of our educational goals.

Plans are already underway to work with an arts integration specialist and consult with teachers and administrators at other schools to adopt prevailing "best practices."

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A brief comparison of the current schedule and the proposed schedule follows. Please see the section titled *How Would The Proposed Changes Affect Art Instruction?* To get an understanding of how class sessions translates into precise time. This comparison is in hours and does not account for minor variations among teachers and grade levels:

	Kindergarten	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-5
2015-16			
Art	Havens - 18 Beach - 24 Wildwood - 24	Havens - 18 Beach - 24 Wildwood - 30	Havens - 18 Beach - 24 Wildwood - 30
Tech	N/A	36	36
Library	18	18	18
Vocal Music	18	18	18
Instrumental Music	N/A	N/A	4th: 18 5th: 36
PE	36	54	54
Proposed 2016-17			
Art	12	16	20
Tech	N/A	24	30
Library	18	12 (not including flexible Library Commons time)	15 (not including flexible Library Commons time)
Vocal Music	9	12	15
Instrumental Music	N/A	N/A	27
PE	36	60	60

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The proposed changes in the elementary school day are designed to support curricular needs and offer more benefits and educational opportunities for students.

Illustrations of potential schedules are provided below:

The first is a sample schedule of a **current** 5th grade teacher. Please note: in the current model, the classroom teacher is present during both art and computer lab with the teacher specialist.

2015-2016 Typical 5th grade schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30-9:00	Reading Workshop	Word Work (Spelling and Vocab work)	PE (8:30-9:15)	Writing Workshop	Art
9:00 - 9:30	Reading Workshop	Reading Workshop	Reading/ Writing Workshop	Library	Art
9:30-10:00	Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop	Reading/ Writing Workshop	Reading Workshop	Reading/ Writing Workshop
10:00-10:35	Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop	Reading/ Writing Workshop	Reading Workshop	Reading/ Writing Workshop
	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess
10:55-11:25	Math	Math	Math	Math	Technology
11:25-12:00	Math	Math	Math	Math	Technology
12-12:45	Lunch/recess	Lunch/recess	Lunch/recess	Lunch/recess	Lunch/recess
12:45 -1:30	Number Corner	Science or Social Studies	Second Step/Social Emotional Learning	Writing Workshop	Math
1:30-2:15	PE	Music begins at 2pm	Homework (1:30-1:45) early release	Science or Social Studies	Math
2:15 - 3:00	Science or Social Studies	Music		Number Corner	Reading/ Writing Workshop

Below is a **model** 5th grade schedule illustrating our current proposal. The **blue** are classes taught by teacher specialists, which also provide prep time for classroom teachers.

Please note: While the content is the same, the time specials are scheduled, and how teachers use their time will vary. This is a model only to illustrate the curricular shifts.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:00-8:45		<i>Instrumental Music</i>			
8:30-9:20	Science	Social Studies	Science	Social Studies	Science
9:20-10:30	Math	Math	Math	Math	Math
10:30-10:50	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess	Recess
10:50-12:10	Reading Workshop	Reading Workshop	Second Step/ Social Emotional Learning	Reading Workshop	Reading Workshop
12:10-12:55	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess	Lunch/Recess
12:55-1:45	<i>Technology</i>	<i>PE</i>	<i>Vocal or Art</i>	<i>PE</i>	<i>Library*</i> /Project Time
1:45-3:00	Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop		Writing Workshop	Writing Workshop

*Library meets every other week as a prep.

Classroom Teacher Curriculum Responsibilities:

Best practice is that math is taught for 45-60 minutes daily. The publisher recommends that Bridges and Number Corner are taught for 80-90 minutes daily.

Best practice is that Literacy is taught for 80-90 minutes daily, although the publisher recommends two hours.

Best practice is that Science is taught for 180 minutes weekly. As we move into an adoption of a NGSS curriculum we will learn the publisher recommendation.

Best practice for social studies instruction is 120 minutes weekly.

The Second Step Social/Emotional curriculum requires 60 minutes weekly.

Research shows that students learn best when student learning is connected across disciplines and to their personal lives. Teachers work to build these connections throughout the instructional day.

The following subject areas are taught by teacher specialists and represent prep time for classroom teachers:

Here's the proposal for prep distribution (an illustration follows):

TK/Kindergarten:

Art and Vocal Music alternating
PE twice a week for 30 minutes
Library once a week for 30 minutes

1st – 3rd Grade:

Technology/Computer Science, including media art 40 minutes weekly
Art/Vocal alternating 40 minutes
PE x 40 minutes
PE x 40 minutes
PE/ Library rotating weekly x 40 minutes

4th - 5th Grade

Technology/ Computer Science, including media arts 50 minutes weekly
Art/ Vocal alternating 50 minutes
PE x 50 minutes
PE x 50 minutes
Library every other week for 50 minutes

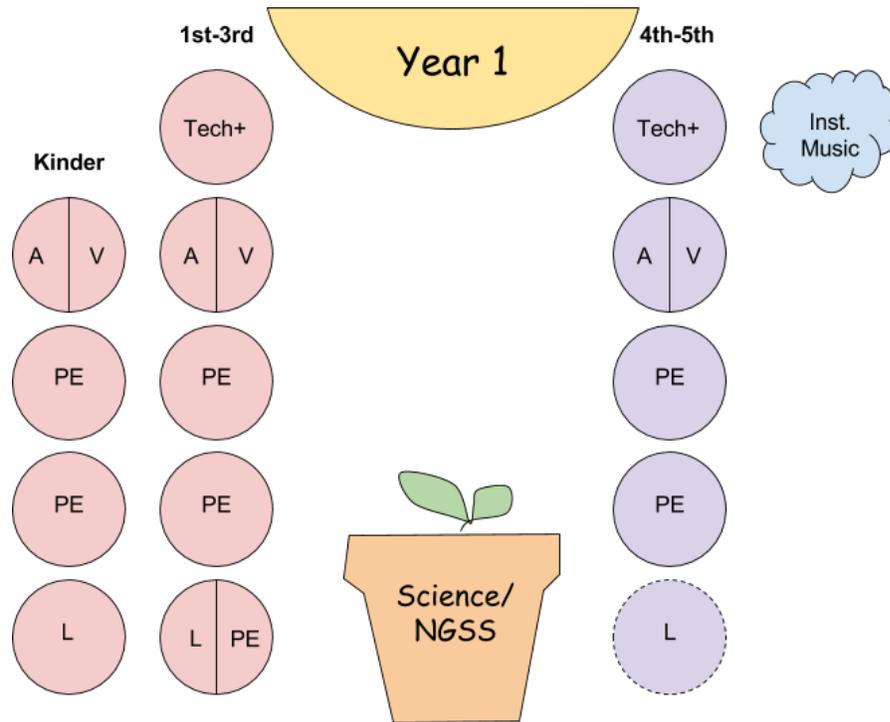
A few details to note:

Instrumental Music will remain a weekly class at fourth and fifth grades. We are exploring an early start to the day one day a week to allow instrumental to start around 8:00am and extend into the school day. Site Principals will work with the Piedmont Language School to best coordinate schedules.

Fifth grade students will have vocal music in addition to weekly instrumental music time.

The National Core Arts Standards: A Conceptual Framework for Arts learning will help us integrate visual art, media art, dance (taught through PE), and vocal and instrumental music. Credentialed art teachers will be hired to teach art prep.

Additional time for curriculum integration with library, tech, art, and music will be scheduled with teacher specialists by individual teachers or grade level teams. For example, a library commons model will also be available for classes to flexibly sign up to use library resources during non-scheduled weeks.



A = Art V = Vocal Music L = Library PE = Physical Education

Couldn't we just phase in some of these proposed changes?

The challenge in attempting to phase in one aspect of the plan without the others is their interconnectedness. If we focus on only one aspect in 2016-17, for example, hiring credentialed art specialists, the rest of the work becomes problematic to implement. Our goal through this process has been to address program changes holistically because we believe the outcome is what will work best for students.

II. RECOMMENDATION: ACTION

Adopt the following contract language in the *Agreement Between the Governing Board and the Piedmont Certificated Employee Organization* and bell schedule change that will enable the development of a new daily instructional schedule for the three elementary schools:

Contract Language

Article VI - Hours and Professional Responsibility

A.3. Professional Day

At the elementary level, a full-time teaching position shall consist of direct instruction based on state mandated instructional levels with an average of 30 40 minutes of preparation time per day.

Bell Schedule

Early start (8:00am) for the elementary Instrumental Music Program.

III. **RECOMMENDATION: ACTION**

Adopt the following contract language in the *Agreement Between the Governing Board and the Piedmont Certificated Employee Organization* and bell schedule change that will enable the development of a new daily instructional schedule for the three elementary schools:

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