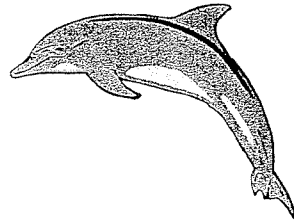




Salt Lake City School District

NIBLEY PARK ELEMENTARY

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Principal



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21 November 2005

To Salt Lake City Board of Education:

Earlier this fall, the Salt Lake City School District (SLCSD) asked Nibley Park and the other elementary schools that feed into Hillside Intermediate to review the option of becoming a 'K-8 school'. This option came about as the district considered rebuilding its two east-side junior-highs, Hillside and Clayton.

A "building-team" was created by Principal Olson and the Nibley Park School Community Council. This building team was charged with researching the K-8 option and its potential for the Nibley community, parents and students. The membership of the team is three parents, two teachers and Principal Olson. Its recommendation is to be submitted to the school district by November 23rd, 2005.

The team kicked-off with other building teams at a September 7th meeting at Hillside where the district presented the K-8 option to all of the Hillside feeder schools. The team then met regularly to discuss data obtained by individual members or provided by other building-teams and the district. This data included review of main-stream media, articles from education publications, administrator's reports from K-8 schools and private studies (such as the Rand Corporation's "Wonder Years" report). Team members also discussed K-8 benefits and concerns with faculty, administration and parents engaged with public and private K-8 schools in Phoenix and Denver.

Committee members attended parent forum meetings presented by building-teams from Beacon Heights, Highland Park and Indian Hills. The other elementary schools feeding into Hillside are Dilworth and Whittier.

The Nibley Park team discussed the K-8 option with our parents. Likewise, we heard and reviewed parent feedback provided during SEP conferences, the Halloween Carnival and through other discussions with faculty and the administration.

Next, a forum was held for parents to hear the school district present details of the option at the school October 13. After the district presentation, parents were invited to voice their questions and comments to the district and building team. Responses and comments also came from many of the school board members attending the meeting. Meeting announcements were circulated in the Dolphin folders and posted conspicuously throughout the building. Parents were invited - through this announcement and after the meeting - to

write down any unanswered, personal or miscellaneous comments or concerns and take them to the office where they were reviewed by the building team later.

The building team continued to review parent and community input during subsequent meetings. Discussions with parents and students continued. Finally, a survey was prepared to assess the desires of our parents. This survey was sent home in Dolphin folders November 9th and instructed parents to fill out one form per family. The survey asked three simple questions and for a comment regarding the parents' thoughts on the biggest benefit and biggest concern regarding K-8. These surveys were provided in English and Spanish for each student's folder.

Here are the results of the 148 surveys returned:

YES	82
NO	61
UNDECIDED	5

Based on these results and our building-team's extensive review of available information, we hereby submit Nibley Park's position of **SUPPORT FOR THE K-8 OPTION**. This position is contingent upon the following:

- The Salt Lake City School District must commit to Nibley Park's efforts as a K-8 school. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - The district must offer their recommendation for curriculum and facilities to provide for the new 7th and 8th grades.
 - The district must provide counsel regarding implementation, or "phase-in" of the new grades.
 - The library must be provided ample media and facilities to allow for the needs of both younger and older student populations.
 - The district must commit to adequate funding for incorporating the two new grades and associated athletic, music and academic curricula.

In light of this recommendation, the building-team would like to address some of the concerns that parents expressed on the survey. The most common concerns heard and our building team's responses are:

- The foremost concern was for the safety of having young children mixing with 7th and 8th graders. This question was the first one posed by the team also. The point to remember is that the 7th and 8th graders will be the same children that were 4th, 5th and 6th graders. After looking at extensive research, the safety issues can be minimized with proper planning, building structure and implementation. Our discussions with parents and administrators from other districts found **ONLY ONE** instance of school problems with bullying after implementation of K-8. This was quickly overcome through "simple" re-structuring.

- Another was the lack of available space or facility for sports, music or elective classes. Nibley has the space. Some building addition or modification may be required, but Nibley has significantly more surrounding real-estate than many elementary schools in Salt Lake.
- Funding for electives... Additional students mean additional funds. The same administration would be in place with need for very little more. The bulk of the additional funds would support additional faculty and even a counselor - something previously unavailable to small elementary schools.
- The last big concern was the potential for bad-influence from the older kids. These kids will now be in a familiar and comfortable environment. They know the teachers and the teachers know them. The research shows that teachers in K-8's can provide more productive discipline because of the quantity of time they have associated with kids. The teachers will know the students. Your children won't be entering a new intermediate school with scores of unknowns. They and you will know the concerns and there will be time to have them addressed.

As for what we, and our parents, felt are the benefits to becoming a K-8 school:

- The transition to intermediate school is eliminated. Studies show students' scores on standardized testing take a substantial dip following this transition - and at a time when students elsewhere in the world tend to excel past their American peers.
- Children can strengthen friendships over two more years rather than being forced to integrate with children from miles away during very sensitive pubescent years.
- Our children will stay in the neighborhood. They won't need to be bussed miles to a school away from their siblings. Many Nibley kids attend Evergreen Jr. High because it's closer to some of our homes. Parents with many younger children will reduce the number of stops to get kids to and from school.
- Children can benefit from building on Nibley's already popular after-school program.
- Students will have familiar faculty and administration during sensitive events in their lives. In addition, a school counselor would be available to students earlier than "junior-high".

We understand that the earliest date that 6th graders would possibly remain at Nibley for 7th grade would be the fall of 2007. Students would not be brought back out of the intermediate school into Nibley. Seventh and eighth grades would be phased-in, starting with retaining sixth graders - followed the next year with retaining seventh graders.

We thank You for the opportunity to review this option and your assistance with our investigation. While we understand that not everyone's concerns have been adequately addressed with this recommendation, we do hope you'll help us support the wishes expressed by many.

Sincerely,

The Nibley Park Building Team

Mike Holman, parent, chair

Sarah Getzelman, parent

Jeneal Burt, teacher

Rebecca Rowley, parent

Tracey Slinger, teacher

Shauna Olson, principal