

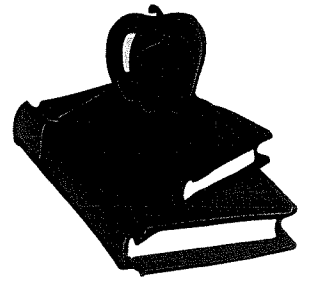


Whittier Elementary School

1600 South 300 East, Salt Lake City, Ut. 84115

(801) 481-4846 Fax (801) 481-4849

Jane A. Fitts, Principal



Dear Board Members:

As directed by the school district, Whittier Elementary School has been studying and researching the possibility of becoming a K-8 school. Our committee consists of four teachers, five parents (including our school community council chair) and the principal.

We have met twice a month since September to review and discuss articles relating to the K-8 school models used in other states and school districts. Time was also spent discussing how changing to a K-8 school would impact Whittier Elementary. Some of these issues would be the configuration of the building, having enough teachers to meet the needs of our current enrollment and the addition of 180 students in 7th and 8th grades. The safety of our students, the culture of our school, funding of this change were also included in the discussions.

Parents and the community members were invited to informational meetings regarding K-8. We held two meetings in English as well as two in Spanish with interpreters in order to serve our families appropriately. Attendance at these four community meetings was very low. At our first meeting 16 parents attended and the second meeting brought 22 parents to the discussion. The Spanish meetings had 2 parents at the first meeting and 1 at the last.

Surveys were sent home to the families of all our students. The survey, written in Spanish and English asked questions basic and fundamental to the K-8 question. We also provided space for parents to write some concerns or positive information regarding the option of Whittier Elementary becoming a K-8 school. Out of 320 families surveyed, 171 surveys were returned. We were very encouraged by the number of surveys returned. The survey provided the feedback needed to properly know the feelings of our parents and community. The results reflect an almost 2/3 majority in favor of K-8. The survey results were as follows:

1. Would you support Whittier as K-8 school? *63% Yes 37% No*
2. Would you send your children to Whittier as a K-8 school? *69% Yes 31% No*
3. Do you support the Year round Calendar at Whittier? *79% Yes 21% No*

Removing the Magnet Extended Learning Program (ELP) from Whittier Elementary, the influence of drugs, gangs, the over-all age difference among the students, as well as providing enough electives for the middle school students were concerns voiced by the parents on the survey. These concerns were addressed not only by the school K-8 committee but also the visiting District personnel and/or board members at the community meetings. We agree there will be concerns and issues that will arise and will need further discussion and solutions.

After reviewing the research data, and making a K-8 school visit the committee voted to move towards the K-8 model. The results were seven votes for and three against the move. Again the results are 2/3 majority in favor of K-8.

The faculty of Whittier Elementary also had many discussions over the possibility of moving towards K-8. The faculty was very supportive in the discussions and research. Again, the concern of losing the magnet ELP program was addressed and teachers teaching in both the magnet and neighborhood student settings agreed to the importance of continuing the program at Whittier and requested this be one of the criteria of our recommendation. Student progress and the needs of our students are the main focus of our faculty. Every teacher's comment or question during discussions was directed towards the benefit for our present K-6 students as well as providing the best alternative for students entering 7th and 8th grades in our area.

The teachers voted for or against the K-8 option in a secret ballot form. The results were counted and announced at the same meeting. Teachers voted 14 for K-8 and 5 against. Not all teachers were present during the voting but the SLTA representative for the teachers at our school stated enough teachers were present to uphold the vote. Again, voting resulted in a 2/3 majority in favor of K-8.

It is the recommendation of Whittier K-8 committee members, faculty, and parents to make Whittier Elementary a K-8 school. We strongly recommend the following:

1. The Magnet Extended Learning Program (ELP) stays in place at Whittier.
2. Provide the funding to support the need for additional faculty: teachers, counselors and administration.
3. The Year Round Calendar will stay in place at Whittier.
4. Provide funding to create a physical facility to meet additional needs associated with athletic, music, science, and other academic curricula as determined by the design of the Whittier K-8 program.
5. Retain Jane Fitts as Principal of Whittier.

We have appreciated the opportunity, flexibility, and trust given to us to explore this academic option for our students.

Sincerely,

Sue Harmon, teacher 5/6 grades
Tammy Gibbons, teacher 5/6 grades
Crystal Maggelet, parent
Chris Herrman, parent
Jane Fitts, Principal

Linda Nesi, teacher 5/6 grades
Dawn Fowler, teacher 4th grade ELP
Jeff Alhers, parent
Louis and Loyda Tovar, parents