2/23/2018

Re: 6th Grade to Bell Transition Committee Update

Dear Shelton 6th Grade Families:

I wanted to share an update on behalf of the **Golden Articulation Area 6th Grade Transition Committee**. This committee was formed after Jeffco’s School Board made the decision to move 6th graders to middle school throughout the district to help ensure clear communication and a coordinated transition approach.

This committee has met three times since September 2017, with principals and several parent representatives from all Golden articulation area elementary schools, along with staff from Bell Middle School and district personnel. Shelton’s parent reps were Caroline Blair, Kim Mangle and Lee Ridley.

Overall, things are going very smoothly and Bell is looking forward to welcoming new 6th grade students in the fall.

We held our most recent meeting on February 20 and I’d like to share some highlights:

* There is a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) link on Bell’s website that provides answers to many questions, so please be sure to visit that link.
* Based on current enrollment, Bell is projecting approximately 1,000 students in the 2018-2019 (currently at about 750 students). Principal DeAndre feels comfortable with this number and the school will be able to accommodate the new students without having to add temporary buildings.
* The Manning School conducted its lottery in early February and currently has a waitlist for 6th and 7th grade. Having Manning in the community is a great resource and helps to ensure adequate capacity and choice for all of our Golden area students.
* Bell will hold a Choice Night on March 8 from 4-5:30 for families who have made the decision to choice enroll at Bell.
* Bell will be undergoing construction over the summer to ensure the facility is ready for the increase in students this fall. This includes new carpets and tile throughout the school, expanding the cafeteria, creating additional breakout space for project-based learning, office space for teachers, and several new classrooms (made possible by utilizing space from the library that is currently underutilized), and possibly an expanded orchestra room.
* Bell is in the process of hiring several new teachers for next year.
* Bell utilizes a team approach, which means that students are placed into groups that share the same team of science, social studies and English teachers. Bell will have three teams of 6th graders next year and they will all be in the same wing of the school, mostly separate from the 7th and 8th grade students aside from math classes.
* There will be three lunch periods and 6th graders will mostly be grouped together and not mixed with the older grades during lunch
* Outdoor lab will likely be held in late January. To accommodate the number of students, Bell will send students to both Outdoor Lab facilitates and will need to break 6th graders into groups that will go in two separate weeks. King Soopers gift cards can be used to start raising money for your child’s Outdoor Lab tuition ($350).
* Bell was looking at moving its start time up by 20 minutes next year, but due to the complexity of the bus schedule, the start time will stay the same in 2018-2019 (7:25 a.m. start and 2:10 p.m. end). A districtwide task force is studying later start times throughout the district.
* . Bell has switched from a STEM lottery to a wheel elective model for next year that will allow all 6th graders to have STEM exposure. Students will still need to apply for STEM in 7th grade.
* Bell was able to make some changes that now allow 6th graders to take two electives next year. Several new electives will be offered, including Spanish. Registration has been completed for most students.
* Bell is exploring ways to introduce project-based learning in more of its classes. This model is used in the STEM program but Bell would like to expand it.
* The first day of school will be for 6th and 7th graders only (no 8th graders) to allow students time to take tours of the building, practice their lockers, and get comfortable in their home rooms and their new environment.

The committee is not planning to meet formally again, but Principal DeAndrea will send updates to area principals as needed, and I will share any important information with you.

Bell has been successfully teaching 6th graders since 2013 when Mitchell Elementary students moved to Bell to alleviate capacity issues at Mitchell. Bell’s staff is excited and making great progress toward being ready to welcome all of their new 6th-grade students from Golden’s articulation area elementary schools.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Educationally Yours,

Karen Brown

Principal