

Fitzgerald Public Schools re-opens Schofield Elementary for the new school year

Re-opening of Schofield Elementary supports elementary grade re-alignment plan and student achievement

WARREN, Mich. – Fitzgerald Public Schools today announced Schofield Early Childhood Center, Westview Lower Elementary and Mound Park Upper Elementary will welcome students this fall under the district's new elementary school grade re-alignment plan.

Head Start, preschool and kindergarten students will attend Schofield Early Childhood Center. First-through third-graders will attend Westview Lower Elementary School and fourth- and fifth-graders will attend Mound Park Upper Elementary. The names of all three buildings were adapted to reflect the ages of the children who will be educated there.

"We are very excited to welcome back elementary students and families for the new school year," said **FPS Superintendent Barbara VanSweden**. "The grade realignment means each elementary school building will be tailored to specific age groups to provide a cohesive and collaborative lesson plan. It also ensures every student continues to learn, grow and succeed in a safe and nurturing environment."

Based on several studies, the reconfiguration offers a number of benefits, including:

- ✓ **Focus on one developmental stage:** The differences between kindergartners and fifth-graders are enormous. In grade-specific buildings, the staff can be experts in all aspects of a narrow age range. This expertise and tight focus can help in everything from lesson planning to management of student behavior.
- ✓ **Staff development and collaboration:** Teachers in grade-specific buildings have been found to grow more skills than other teachers because the staff development can be more specific to their professional needs. Staff are also more likely to collaborate.
- ✓ **Cohesiveness of curriculum:** Research also shows that a curriculum is taught more consistently when all sections of a grade are under one roof.
- ✓ **Building-wide collaborations:** The structure creates the chance for building-wide collaborations, including building-wide book studies, author visits, science experiments, themed celebrations, fitness initiatives, art projects and more.

"Aligning elementary schools by grade supports student achievement and gives teachers an opportunity to tailor their lesson plans to a specific age group," VanSweden said. "Fitzgerald Public Schools is leading the way in providing students with a cutting-edge educational experience that provides students with the one-on-one instruction that meets their needs. I'm looking forward to the continued growth and success of the district through their grade alignment."

VanSweden said her conversations with other school districts also realized an undervalued aspect of the structure. Superintendents from other districts described a stronger sense of community at reconfigured schools as children and their parents all move through their school years together.

Superintendents also reported fewer bumps in the transition to middle school that can occur when all sixth graders are brought together for the first time.

Fitzgerald is ideal for the configuration because it is just the right size and its three elementary buildings are located close together. VanSweden said the transportation director has worked hard this summer to make sure all students get to the right building on time.

“We are grateful for community, board and staff support of re-opening Schofield and the realignment of our elementary schools,” VanSweden said. “We are working with families to make sure this is a smooth transition for everyone and encourage families to reach out to us with any questions they may have as we head into the new school year.”

Community members and families that have questions about the grade realignment can call the Superintendent’s Office at [\(586\) 757-1750](tel:5867571750) or visit fitz.k12.mi.us for more information.

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