GRADE CONFIGURATION STUDY
Stakeholder Feedback

Dr. Robert J. Roelle, *Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction*
Marco Pochintesta, Superintendent of Schools

Board of Education
February 26, 2019

Stakeholder Feedback

- Focus Groups
  - Faculty - Middle School, High School, Elementary
  - Community – One evening and one morning
  - Students – 8th graders, during lunch

- Survey
  - Based on most common focus group topics
  - Gauge stakeholder support, preferences, and priorities

Focus Groups

#1. Current Structure: 5th and 8th Grades
- *Advantages, challenges, opportunities for improvements*

#2. Elementary: (3) K-5; Middle: 6-8; High 9-12
- *Advantages, challenges*

#3. Elementary: K-1; 2-3; 4-5; Middle: 6-8; High 9-12
- *Advantages, challenges*

#4. Elementary: (1) K-1 School; (2) 2-5 Schools; Middle: 6-8; High 9-12 (elementary faculty only)
- *Advantages, challenges*

Focus Groups - Themes

- Scheduling/Grade Structure
- Support Services
- Academic Supports
- Social / Emotional Supports
- Articulation/Communication
- Grading Practices

- Home/School Communication
- Extra-Curricular
- Lunch/Recess
- 8th Grade
- Non-Building Specific
- Miscellaneous

Survey information

- Two Informational Questions
  - current school affiliation
  - primary role as a member of the Pearl River School Community

- Forty Likert Scale questions (Strongly Agree, Somewhat agree, etc.)
  - Based on focus group categories/themes (measures reliability)
  - Advantages/Disadvantages

- Two Rating Tables - Priority Ranking of Improvements (5th & 8th)

- Two configuration preference questions
  - models you would support (multiple selections permitted)
  - rank the models, in order of preference

Survey information

- Email invitation - unique URL
  - One survey per email
  - Limits multiple submissions

- 3,335 invitations sent
  - Pre-K - grade 12 parents
  - All faculty & staff
  - Community members

- 790 Completed the Survey
  - Pearl River Parents: 601 (76.08%)
  - Pearl River Faculty/Staff Members: 187 (23.67%)
  - Pearl River Community Members: 49 (6.20%)
  - Not a current resident or faculty/staff member: 5 (.63%)

Results

Advantages & disadvantages of having 5th graders in PRMS

Summary:

Medium to high level of agreement between the **advantages** and the **disadvantages** from the focus groups

Advantages of having 5th graders in PRMS

Q3. Students enjoy greater independence and flexibility (changing classes/teachers, etc.)
   63% Agree/Strongly Agree   **24% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **13% Neutral**

Q4. Students have greater access to more advanced curricula & content specific teachers
   66% Agree/Strongly Agree   **21% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **13% Neutral**

Q5. Students have greater social/emotional opportunities/support (Meet students from other schools, access to guidance counselor, etc.)
   55% Agree/Strongly Agree   **32% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **14% Neutral**

Q6. Students have greater access to extracurricular activities (clubs, activities, instrumental music, etc.)
   71% Agree/Strongly Agree   **17% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **13% Neutral**

Disadvantages of having 5th graders in PRMS

Q7. 5th grade students lack the maturity/readiness for middle school
      67% Agree/Strongly Agree   **24% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **9% Neutral**

Q8. Middle school academic expectations are out of alignment with developmental level of 5th graders
      55% Agree/Strongly Agree   **31% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **14% Neutral**

Q9. Middle school lacks individual parent/teacher conferences
      63% Agree/Strongly Agree   **19% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **18% Neutral**

Opportunities for improvement: 5th Grade at PRMS

Statement	Highest/ High	Medium Priority	Low/ Lowest
Provide additional supports for students who have social/emotional needs (social skills groups, guidance check-ins, etc.)	75.07%	18.64%	6.30%
Better coordinate tests, quizzes, homework, projects, etc. across the grade (to avoid overloading students on any one day/night)	75.00%	17.05%	7.95%
Dedicate meeting time for 4th and 5th grade teachers to bridge curriculum and to learn about incoming 5th grade student needs.	71.80%	20.26%	7.95%
Add parent/teacher conferences for middle school students	69.36%	17.56%	13.07%
Add subject specific (math, ELA/writing, etc.) support classes to the PEP rotation	68.00%	22.88%	9.12%

Opportunities for improvement: 5th Grade at PRMS

	Highest/ High	Medium Priority	Low/ Lowest
Provide "extra help" before and/or after school (not during student lunch period)	66.20%	21.34%	12.47%
Redesign/modernize Middle School Technology courses (engineering, coding, etc.)	60.20%	28.37%	11.43%
Organize team building and mixing opportunities for students prior to the start of 5th grade	51.73%	32.35%	15.92%
Create a "Humanities" block (ELA & Soc. Studies with 1 teacher) and a "STEM" block (Math/Science with 1 teacher) for 5th graders	45.19%	32.29%	22.53%
Develop a transitional grading program between the elementary report card and the middle school report card	35.77%	30.00%	34.23%
Implement a standards-based report card for 5th grade (elementary style)	34.92%	28.61%	36.46%

Advantages & Disadvantages of having 8th graders in PRHS

Summary:

Medium to high level of agreement with the **advantages** from the focus groups

High to very high level of agreement with the **disadvantages** of the focus groups

Advantages of having 8th graders in PRHS

Q11. Students have access to advanced courses and a greater variety of courses/electives

      63% Agree/Strongly Agree   **22% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **14% Neutral**

Q12. Students transition and experience the high school learning environment one year earlier from when most of their courses appear on their official high school transcript

      55% Agree/Strongly Agree   **33% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **12% Neutral**

Q13. Students have greater access to extracurricular activities (clubs, activities, athletics, technology, etc.)

      60% Agree/Strongly Agree   **24% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **16% Neutral**

Disadvantages of having 8th graders in PRHS

Q14. 8th graders are prematurely exposed to mature social behavior (social media, mature conversations, illicit conduct/substances, etc.)

78% Agree/Strongly Agree   14% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   8% Neutral

Q15. 8th graders are not developmentally (emotionally/intellectually) ready for the academic expectations of high school (workload, homework, honors courses, pressure/anxiety, etc.)

70% Agree/Strongly Agree   21% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   9% Neutral

Q16. 8th graders are permitted to participate in high school (9-12) social and extra-curricular events (homecoming events, clubs, activities, etc.)

65% Agree/Strongly Agree   20% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   16% Neutral

Disadvantages of having 8th graders in PRHS (cont.)

Q17. 8th graders do not have separate facilities from the rest of the students in grades 9-12 (lockers, class locations, locker room, lunch room, etc.)

68% Agree/Strongly Agree   18% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   14% Neutral

Q18. Modified sports program (7th & 8th graders) requires daily busing between the middle school and high school for practices, meetings, etc.

64% Agree/Strongly Agree   15% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   21% Neutral

Opportunities for improvement: 8th Grade at PRHS

	Highest/High Priority	Medium Priority	Low/Lowest Priority
Incorporate more social/emotional supports for 8th graders	69.92%	22.59%	8.50%
Isolate 8th graders from 9-12 graders during PE (Locker Rooms)	68.36%	17.92%	13.98%
Schedule an 8th grade only lunch period	68.20%	19.54%	13.03%
Dedicate an "8th grade only" wing in the high school (classrooms, lockers, etc.)	67.98%	18.93%	13.98%
Create 8th grade only events (dances, homecoming, etc.)	65.26%	21.46%	14.56%
Schedule students into "teams" of 8th grade only teachers	56.63%	25.89%	17.98%
Incorporate parent/teacher conferences for 8th grade parents	56.09%	23.73%	20.55%
Create 8th grade only electives	55.80%	26.24%	18.73%
Investigate rotating schedule options (rotating order)	41.41%	37.18%	21.92%

Advantages & Disadvantages of having (3) K-5 Schools; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Summary:

Very high level of agreement with the <u>advantages</u> from the focus groups.

Low level of agreement with the <u>disadvantages</u> from the focus groups.

Advantages of having (3) K-5 Schools; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q20. It gives 5th and 8th graders an additional year to mature and prepare for the transition to middle school (for 5th graders) and high school (for 8th graders)

75% Agree/Strongly Agree   16% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   9% Neutral

Q21. It opens up additional classrooms in the high school and relieves crowding concerns at the high school

74% Agree/Strongly Agree   16% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   9% Neutral

Q22. It is more inline with the elementary, middle school, and high school model of most school districts

73% Agree/Strongly Agree   12% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   16% Neutral

Advantages of having (3) K-5 Schools; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q23. It creates better differentiation opportunities for 5th grade in the elementary school (FLEx Period)

66% Agree/Strongly Agree   13% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   21% Neutral

Q24. It provides continuity for the Modified Sports Program (Grades 7 & 8)

71% Agree/Strongly Agree   9% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   20% Neutral

Q25. The schools/ages of the students are grouped based on more appropriate levels of development (socially, emotionally, intellectually) than the current grade span structure

78% Agree/Strongly Agree   12% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   10% Neutral

Disadvantages of having (3) K-5 Schools; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q26. Younger students (K-2 in the elementary and 6th graders in the middle school) are (potentially) prematurely exposed to more mature social behavior

        35% Agree/Strongly Agree   45% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   20% Neutral

Q27. Some current teachers/staff members will have to transfer to different schools in the district

        34% Agree/Strongly Agree   37% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   29% Neutral

Advantages & disadvantages of having:
K-1, 2-3, 4-5; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Summary:

Mixed (low/medium/high) level of agreement with the <u>advantages</u> from the focus groups.

Medium/high level of agreement with the <u>disadvantages</u> from the focus groups.

Advantages of having K-1, 2-3, 4-5; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q28. Possible consolidation of elementary class sections (reduce number of sections with less impact on class size)

42% Agree/Strongly Agree   31% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   27% Neutral

Q29. Better coordination of curriculum, delivery of instruction and general school experience across each grade level of the school district

57% Agree/Strongly Agree   27% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   17% Neutral

Q30. Schools are appropriately grouped by developmental level

61% Agree/Strongly Agree   24% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   16% Neutral

Advantages of having K-1, 2-3, 4-5; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q31. Consolidation of special programs (Special education, English Language Learners, etc.)

       52% Agree/Strongly Agree   **24% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **24% Neutral**

Q32. All students travel together as a cohort from Kindergarten until graduation (more opportunities for mixing and making different friends)

       51% Agree/Strongly Agree   **28% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **20% Neutral**

Disadvantages of having K-1, 2-3, 4-5; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q33. Possible increase in transportation costs at the elementary level

59% Agree/Strongly Agree   **14% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **27% Neutral**

Q34. The increase in number of transitions

68% Agree/Strongly Agree   **16% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **16% Neutral**

Q35. Greater possibility of having multiple siblings in different schools

69% Agree/Strongly Agree   **13% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **18% Neutral**

Q36. Less time in each school to develop and benefit from a strong school/community connection

69% Agree/Strongly Agree   **17% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **14% Neutral**

Advantages & disadvantages of having (1) K-1 school and (2) 2-5 elementary schools; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Summary:

Low/medium level of agreement with the <u>advantages</u> from the focus groups.

Medium/high level of agreement with the <u>disadvantages</u> from the focus groups.

Advantages of having (1) K-1 school and (2) 2-5 elementary schools; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q37. Programs, services, training and enrichment can be targeted to the age range better than the other suggested models.

      50% Agree/Strongly Agree   23% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   27% Neutral

Q38. Classes can be balanced evenly and equitably (class size, services, special education, English language learners).

      54% Agree/Strongly Agree   20% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   25% Neutral

Q39. The K-1/2-5 split will be more developmentally appropriate than the other suggested models.

      44% Agree/Strongly Agree   27% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   29% Neutral

Advantages of having (1) K-1 school and (2) 2-5 elementary schools; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q40. The K-1 building can be fully focused on the specific and unique social, emotional, and learning needs of early learners.

59% Agree/Strongly Agree   19% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   23% Neutral

Q41. More differentiation opportunities/flexible groupings across a larger number of sections, per grade.

46% Agree/Strongly Agree   22% Disagree/Strongly Disagree   31% Neutral

Disadvantages of having (1) K-1 school and (2) 2-5 elementary schools; (1) Middle School: 6-8; and (1)High School: 9-12

Q43. There will be an additional school transition added to the K-12 continuum.
      56% Agree/Strongly Agree   **16% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **27% Neutral**

Q44. Children will (possibly) separate from classmates for grades 2-5.
      65% Agree/Strongly Agree   **14% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **21% Neutral**

Q45. Greater possibility of having multiple siblings in different schools
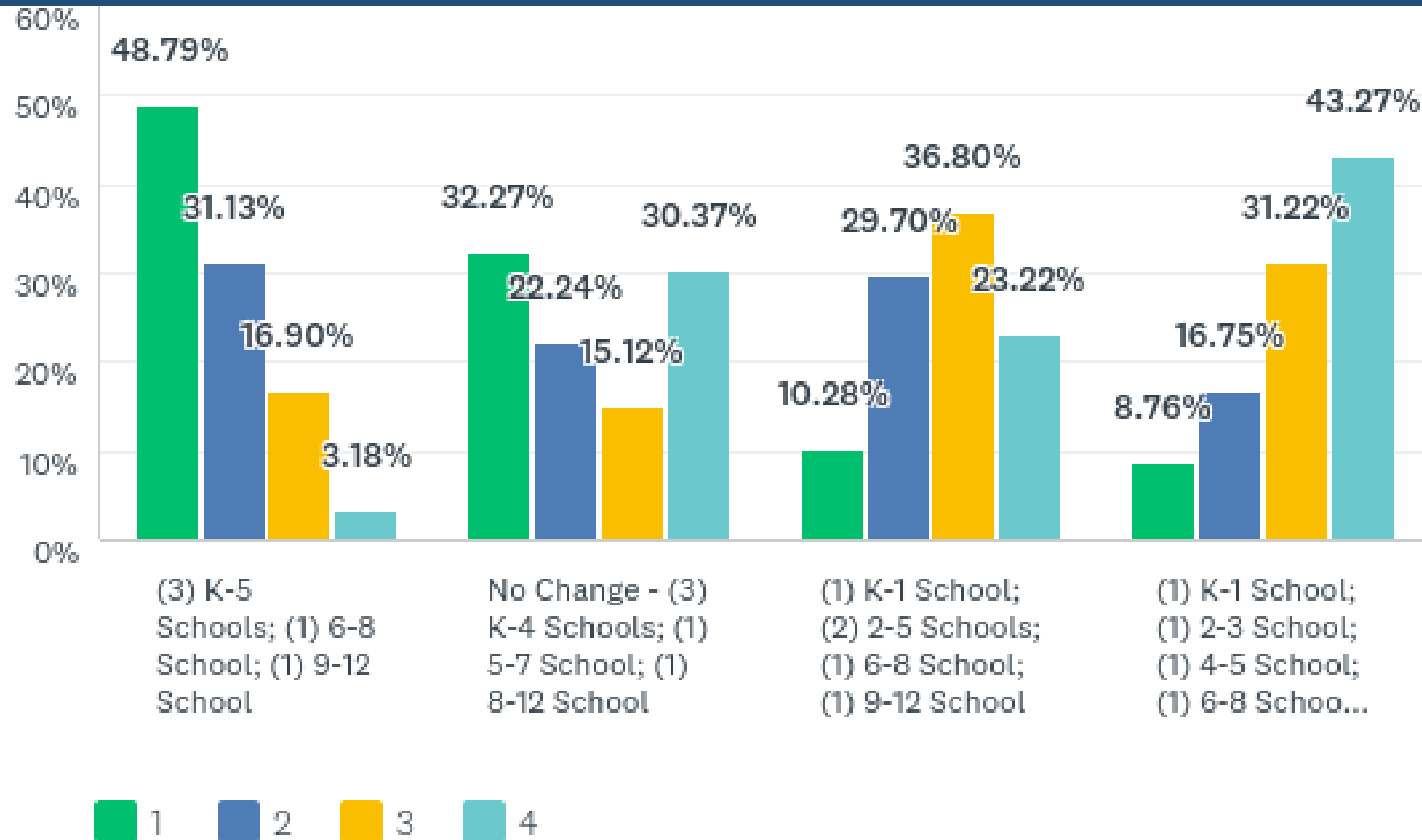   **62% Agree/Strongly Agree**   **13% Disagree/Strongly Disagree**   **25% Neutral**

Stakeholder support & preferences

- Models you would support (multiple selections permitted)

- Rank the models, in order of preference

Q47: Please indicate which of the following models you would support for the Pearl River School District (All respondents)
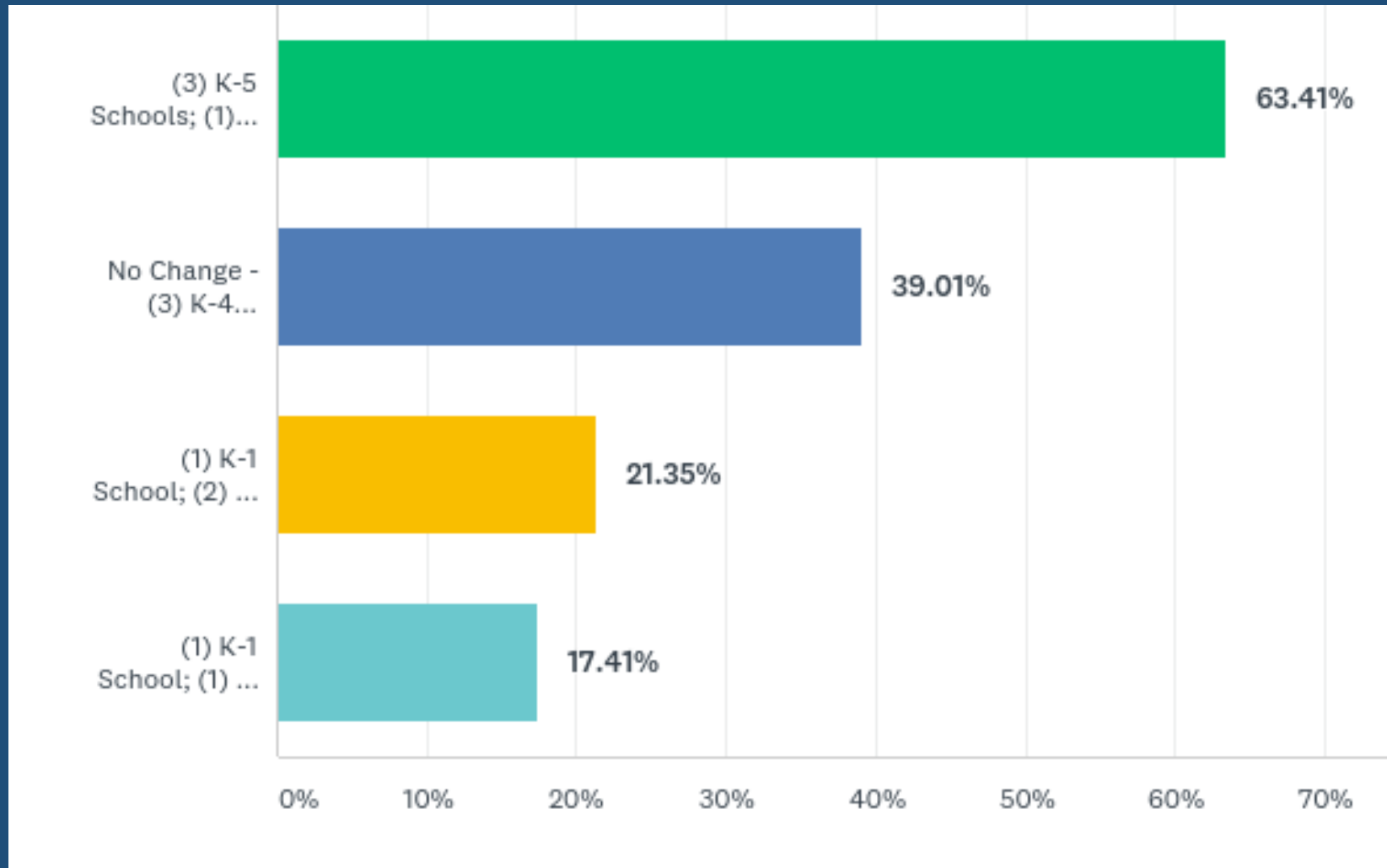
Q48: Please rank the following models, in order of preference (1 - First Preference; 4 - Last Preference) (All respondents)

Legend: 1, 2, 3, 4

(3) K-5 Schools; (1) 6-8 School; (1) 9-12 School
- 1: 48.79%
- 2: 31.13%
- 3: 16.90%
- 4: 3.18%

No Change - (3) K-4 Schools; (1) 5-7 School; (1) 8-12 School
- 1: 32.27%
- 2: 22.24%
- 3: 15.12%
- 4: 30.37%

(1) K-1 School; (2) 2-5 Schools; (1) 6-8 School; (1) 9-12 School
- 1: 10.28%
- 2: 29.70%
- 3: 36.80%
- 4: 23.22%

(1) K-1 School; (1) 2-3 School; (1) 4-5 School; (1) 6-8 Schoo...
- 1: 8.76%
- 2: 16.75%
- 3: 31.22%
- 4: 43.27%

Recommendations

Recommendations:

- **Recommendation 1:**

  ○ Narrow scope – explore K-5; 6-8; 9-12 option in more detail
  ○ Conduct Feasibility Study: Financial impact, space utilization, enrollment projections, possible timeline

- **Recommendation 2**: Study "Opportunities for Improvement" in current building (grade 5 – PRMS; grade 8 – PRHS)

  ○ Identify high priority areas from survey for potential implementation

  ○ Create preliminary plan with implications, costs, timeline, etc.