In the fall of 2022, MB’s fifth grade will become part of the middle school!

Three years ago, we began considering this move as a way to enrich the experience of our 10-11 year-olds, who are developmentally and academically eager for greater challenges and opportunities. As part of MB’s middle school, fifth graders will benefit from a doubling of instructional time in science and gain access to expanded world language opportunities. They will enjoy increased curricular offerings in performing and visual arts, as well as co-curricular competition in athletics, math and robotics. The new curriculum will combine signature elements of the current fifth grade, such as the Math Arcade design project and the civil rights trip to Washington, D.C., with new opportunities for research, writing and public speaking.

MB’s middle school is well known for building a close-knit community around a cohort of expert teachers and a highly personalized advisor program. This supportive environment will nurture fifth graders’ social and emotional development, attend to their need for learning support and provide ample opportunity for recess and learning through play. The program will be structured to foster an emerging sense of independence, self-awareness and an understanding of one’s own learning style.

Providing a four-year sequence in middle school will allow more time for our academic and social-emotional program to take root and more opportunity for students to develop important academic, organizational and social skills. Older students will gain new leadership and mentorship opportunities, younger ones a chance to practice self-advocacy and find their voices. We look forward to knowing and working with students for four years in grades 5-8 as we prepare them for high school and beyond.

MAJOR BENEFITS OF FIFTH GRADE MOVE TO MIDDLE SCHOOL

• Maintain a fifth grade Team Structure to support students’ social, academic and emotional needs with a dedicated team classroom space.
• Create natural social and curricular connections with sixth grade students and teachers.
• Double science instructional time and expand curriculum.
• Offer World Language choice and increased instructional time.
• Provide after-school opportunities for fifth grade students in athletics, art and robotics.
• Create a four-year sequence of the middle school experience to allow more time to develop awareness of learning styles, strengths and liabilities before high school.
• Allow for increased mentoring roles for our older middle school students.
Frequently Asked Questions

When is fifth grade moving?
We plan to fully incorporate the fifth grade into the middle school beginning in the fall of 2022. This provides more than 18 months for MB to thoughtfully work with students, teachers and parents on a transition plan focused on enhancing academic and co-curricular opportunities, as well as the social-emotional development of our fifth graders.

Where will fifth grade be located?
The new fifth grade home will be on the third floor of the West Wing, where our current middle school World Language classrooms are located. Three large classrooms will be dedicated to the fifth grade academic and advisory program. A fourth classroom will be used as a break-out or small group work space. Located on the same floor as the sixth grade, fifth graders will have opportunity to interact and collaborate with their slightly older peers, while seventh and eighth graders are situated on the two floors below. The space will be nurturing and age-appropriate.

What about world language teachers—where are they going?
Bringing fifth grade to the middle school has prompted us to think carefully about the optimal use of MB's various educational spaces. We are currently exploring several possibilities for the location of middle school world languages in spaces that are close, convenient and age-appropriate. We expect to have these details finalized by January 2022.

What are the academic benefits?
The age span from 10 to 14 is critical for students’ academic and social development. Following a model used by many excellent schools, we believe that an uninterrupted, four-year scope and sequence will benefit all students in the middle school. Applying consistent pedagogy, a strong advisory program and a deeply collaborative approach, teachers will carefully fold the fifth grade into MB's highly successful middle school program.

We plan to offer choice for world language to all fifth grade students and more than double the instructional time for world language and science. We will bring music instruction and group opportunities into the school day by offering access to string orchestra, jazz, chorus and wind ensemble.

We plan to offer inter-scholastic, after-school athletic opportunities for interested fifth graders. Student-athletes will proudly represent Moses Brown against other local/regional independent schools! Additionally, we will add fifth graders to our robust academic activities in math, arts, robotics and mock trial.

What does this do to the current MS team structure?
There will be no immediate changes to our middle school structure. Fifth grade will be its own "team" and sixth grade will remain in its current configuration. In the years ahead, as we learn how the middle school program develops as a four-year sequence, we will continue to assess our team structures and adjust as needed.