Exploris Elementary Structure for 2018-2019
Frequently Asked Questions

What are the primary changes?

Rather than multi-age classrooms (K/1, 2/3, 4/5), students will be in single-grade classrooms (K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5). Also, all crew teachers will co-teach. This means that two teachers and their crews will share a classroom, allowing them to collaborate and more flexibly meet the needs of students. Co-teaching is already being implemented in grades 4-8.

Why are we making these changes?

The elementary campus was originally envisioned as multi-age crews. However, as we got into the trenches and were actually teaching in the classrooms, we realized the differences, both academic and developmental, between two grades were larger than expected. As we began to wrestle with this knowledge, we found that research did not reflect academic benefits of multi-age grouping beyond preschool.
In addition, The Exploris School has used a co-teaching model for 20 years. We have found that co-teaching allows our teachers to collaborate with one another. It also allows learning to be more flexible. For instance, one teacher might work with a small group of students, while the other teacher circulates to support students who are working in pairs.

How was this decision made?

The original school charter defined a team approach to instruction.   Co-teaching was implemented successfully over the school's 20 year history. When the elementary school was started the physical space was not imagined in a way to allow all grades to co-teach. At the time it was not affordable to redesign the trailers. The elementary staff began considering this change again over two years ago. Over the course of two years the staff conducted research, held staff forums, and worked in a staff committee to consider the pros, cons, and impacts. The staff committee, with input from the entire staff, recommended these changes be made for next year.

How many students will be in a room?

Each crew will be made up of 19 students with 1 teacher which is a lower student teacher ratio than what currently exists at the elementary. The classroom will be double the size with two crews. This means that there will be 38 students and 2 teachers in the classroom.

Isn't that too many students?

Although 38 students sounds like a lot for one classroom, it will actually allow teachers to meet student needs better because of the additional teacher in the room and the flexibility this affords. Our teachers typically use small group instruction, rather than whole group, so students will rarely be learning as an entire group of 38. These small groups allow teachers to meet the needs of the

entire range of learners including those who need different levels of challenge. The Exploris School has used this model successfully for 20 years.

How will the building be rearranged?

Grades K, 1, and 2 will be in the current K-3 building. We will be removing walls to create double-sized classrooms. Grades 4 and 5 will be in the current 4/5 classrooms. We are building a new classroom for Grade 3. This new classroom will be in the multipurpose room. You may remember that earlier this year, we closed off a portion of the multipurpose room during Community Circle. We found that having Community Circle in a smaller space allowed everyone to hear and participate better.

Will we be admitting more students?

Yes. Most elementary grade levels will grow from 30 students to 38 students.

Will we need to hire more staff?

Yes. We will grow from 10 crew teachers at the elementary campus to 12 crew teachers.

Will every grade level have a teaching partner?

No. Some grade levels will continue to share a teaching partner as they currently do. However, every grade level will have a teaching partner assigned to them.

What other changes can we expect?

We are examining how these changes will impact the Global Arts schedule, Exceptional Children's program, Teaching Partner assignments, and Explorations. This may mean hiring additional staff. A committee of staff members are collaborating with the school administration to make recommendations.