

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR K-5th GRADE SCHOOL CONFIGURATION STUDY

SEPTEMBER 9, 2026

The Board of Education of the Timpanogos School District held a public hearing on Wednesday, September 9, 2026, at 6:05 p.m. The hearing was held at the Alpine School District Special Education Office in Lindon, Utah.

Board Members Present: President Jennifer Lyman, Vice President Hilton, Guy Fugal, Grace Rex, David H. Smith, Michele Sorensen

Remote: Board member Ada Wilson

Also Present: Superintendent Joseph Jensen, Business Administrator Jason Sundberg, members of the administrative staff, and approximately 82 members of the public.

President Lyman declared the public hearing open to receive public comment on the proposed for K-5th Elementary school configuration study at 6:43 pm.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

President Lyman explained that speakers would have two minutes to comment and asked each speaker to state their name and location for the record. She thanked those attending and stated that the Board would listen to and consider the comments as part of its ongoing study and decision-making process.

Michelle Hoeger – Vineyard

Michelle Hoeger expressed concern about the impact a K–5 configuration would have on the Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program. Although she lives in Vineyard, she said her children attend Orchard Elementary specifically for DLI. Ms. Hoeger explained that the current program provides students with half of their school day in Spanish and half in English. She questioned whether five years of elementary immersion would provide sufficient language exposure and said families have made a significant commitment to participating in the six-year program. Her family drives across town for DLI, and she expressed concern about losing the sixth year of immersion that they expected when making that commitment.

Diana Putnam – Lindon

Diana Putnam spoke about the importance of Orchard Elementary and its DLI program to her family. She shared that she moved from Lehi to be closer to Orchard and described the school as a welcoming community that understands and supports families such as hers. Ms. Putnam explained that she grew up in Mexico and is the primary person in her family who speaks Spanish with her children. She said maintaining their Spanish language skills is an important part of her children's identity and their ability to communicate with extended family. She also described the value of DLI for Spanish-speaking students entering school and said the program creates an environment where children can feel safe and included while learning English. She emphasized that the program benefits both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking students by allowing them to share languages and cultures and build a strong school community.

Lloyd Johansen – Orem

Lloyd Johansen expressed support for keeping sixth grade in elementary school, describing elementary school as a safe environment for students during an important developmental period. She encouraged the Board to carefully examine the reasons for changing grade configurations, including facility capacity, long-term costs, and financial considerations. She specifically cautioned against moving sixth graders into middle school simply because ninth graders may be moved into high school. Ms. Johansen encouraged the Board to base its decision

on what is best for students. She also suggested exploring creative approaches to DLI, including potentially locating multiple language programs at designated schools. Drawing on her experience teaching in Provo School District, she said she appreciated a 7th–8th grade middle school configuration because the two grades were more closely aligned developmentally and avoided a larger maturity gap among students.

Steph Ricks – City Not Stated

Steph Ricks expressed concern about the developmental readiness of younger sixth-grade students who could be entering middle school at approximately 10 or 11 years old. She encouraged the Board to consider students who may not represent the typical or most developmentally mature sixth grader, including students with late birthdays, ADHD, autism, and other individual needs. She specifically discussed how differences in emotional maturity and executive functioning may make a middle school transition more difficult for some students. Ms. Ricks asked that, if the district ultimately decides to move sixth grade into middle school, implementation be delayed for a couple of years. She said advance notice would give families time to prepare and make appropriate decisions for their children rather than changing the expected grade configuration for students already progressing through elementary school.

Elizabeth Kenealey – North Orem

Elizabeth Kenealey expressed appreciation to the Board for listening to the community and encouraged members to slow down and carefully consider keeping sixth grade in elementary school. She said there can be significant developmental growth between the end of sixth grade and the beginning of seventh grade and believes students benefit from that additional year in an elementary setting. She emphasized the value of elementary teachers and staff who know students, their siblings, and their families and can address students' needs from a whole-child perspective. Ms. Kenealey encouraged the Board to place student well-being at the center of its decision, while recognizing other considerations such as athletics and DLI. She also raised concerns about the summer survey process, stating that some community members had difficulty accessing the survey or were unavailable during the summer. She encouraged the district to consider gathering additional input before relying on the survey results.

Kammi Johansen – Orem

Kammi Johansen, a librarian at Cherry Hill Elementary, expressed support for keeping sixth graders in elementary school. Based on her experience working with students from kindergarten through sixth grade, she said sixth graders remain very much elementary age students for most of the school year and often show a noticeable developmental transition only toward the end of sixth grade. She highlighted the leadership role sixth graders play within elementary schools, including mentoring younger students and participating in programs such as Battle of the Books. She also discussed special sixth-grade traditions, including the medieval fair, that younger students look forward to experiencing. Ms. Johansen thanked the Board for undertaking difficult decisions and expressed appreciation for its efforts to thoroughly study robust schools, DLI opportunities, and other issues affecting students.

Amber Schwartz – Orem

Amber Schwartz expressed confidence in students' resilience and shared that she attended schools in Illinois and Texas using the more traditional K–5, 6–8, and 9–12 configuration. Although that configuration worked in her own experience, she said she supports keeping sixth grade in elementary school. Ms. Schwartz said that if the Board ultimately decides to change the configuration, she strongly supports providing families with a couple of years of advance notice before implementation. She said advance notice would allow students, parents, and teachers time to adjust and prepare rather than unexpectedly changing the school students anticipate attending the following year. She also emphasized the positive relationships that develop between younger and older elementary students. Drawing on her son's experience at Orem Elementary, she described the value of mentorships and friendships with older students and said those connections have helped him feel more

comfortable at school. She characterized elementary school as a positive environment where sixth graders can benefit from another year of childhood while also serving as role models for younger students.

Rachel Johansen – Orem

Rachel Johansen, a fifth-grade student at Cherry Hill Elementary, expressed strong support for keeping sixth grade in elementary school. She emphasized the importance of recess and having opportunities to play, saying games and recreation help students learn, develop fairness, and continue growing socially. Rachel also discussed sixth-grade traditions, including the medieval fair, that fifth-grade students look forward to participating in the following year. She expressed concern that students currently in fifth grade could miss those anticipated experiences if sixth grade is moved to middle school.

Britta Harper – Orem

Britta Harper expressed support for keeping sixth grade in elementary school. She shared that she grew up in Arizona with a K–6 elementary, 7–8 junior high, and 9–12 high school configuration and felt that the two-year junior high provided an appropriate transition between elementary and high school. Ms. Harper said the issue would directly affect her fifth-grade daughter, who would be barely 11 years old when entering junior high under a K–5 configuration. She described her daughter as still enjoying toys and childhood activities and said remaining in elementary school for sixth grade allows younger students additional time to mature without feeling pressure to grow up prematurely. She encouraged preserving that additional year of childhood, particularly for younger students.

Gregg Marchant – Orem

Gregg Marchant expressed support for keeping sixth grade in elementary school. He discussed his son's early summer birthday and reflected on his own experiences attending elementary school in Minnesota under a K–6 configuration. He emphasized that many students entering sixth grade are still only 11 years old and need opportunities to play, move, and participate in the more flexible environment provided by elementary schools. Mr. Marchant shared that his son has ADHD and, although academically successful, benefits from the flexibility of an elementary school setting. His primary concern was not whether children are growing up too quickly, but whether younger students are developmentally ready for the structure of middle school, including spending substantially more time sitting in classrooms.

Jon Kirk – Manila Elementary Area

Jon Kirk expressed support for keeping sixth grade in elementary school. He referenced research regarding increases in substance and alcohol use between sixth and eighth grade and said this is a particularly important developmental period for students. Drawing on his own childhood experiences with bullying, he expressed concern about the reduced supervision students may encounter in middle school hallways compared with the smaller and more closely supervised elementary school environment. He also expressed concern about exposing sixth graders at an earlier age to social and sexual situations involving older students. Mr. Kirk emphasized the importance of retaining the additional year of Dual Language Immersion instruction, noting that removing sixth grade from elementary school would eliminate a significant portion of students' elementary immersion experience. He also supported retaining an additional year of recess and physical activity and said the elementary school environment provides sixth graders with valuable opportunities to participate in and appreciate the arts.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Board President Lyman thanked everyone who provided comments regarding the K-5th Elementary School Configuration Study. **Board President Lyman formally closed the public hearing. No action was taken, and the meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.**

BOARD PRESIDENT

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR

Jen Lyman, President:	AYE ☐ NAY ☐	ABSTAIN ☐	ABSENT ☐
Sterling Hilton, Vice President:	AYE ☐ NAY ☐	ABSTAIN ☐	ABSENT ☐
Guy Fugal:	AYE ☐ NAY ☐	ABSTAIN ☐	ABSENT ☐
Grace Rex:	AYE ☐ NAY ☐	ABSTAIN ☐	ABSENT ☐
David H. Smith:	AYE ☐ NAY ☐	ABSTAIN ☐	ABSENT ☐
Michele Sorensen:	AYE ☐ NAY ☐	ABSTAIN ☐	ABSENT ☐
Ada Wilson:	AYE ☐ NAY ☐	ABSTAIN ☐	ABSENT ☐

The MINUTES: ☐ PASSED ☐ FAILED