

Elkhart High School

Frequently Asked Questions



ELKHART
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Why are we merging the two current high schools?

Elkhart Community Schools is committed to providing an education that prepares graduates to meet the challenges of today's society, as well as the future. The traditional high school model across the country has used an industrialized model for education for nearly one hundred years. As demonstrated by the change in graduation requirements by the Indiana Department of Education, a change in the delivery model of education is necessary to prepare Indiana students to graduate career and college ready. For many years, Elkhart Community Schools has had a strong focus on preparing students to be career and college ready, but must evolve to expand opportunities for our students to best position them for the highest levels of success after graduation. Many factors were considered when determining the need to combine Elkhart Community Schools' high schools.

- **Community needs:**
 - » The need for skilled workers
 - » Continued technological innovation and advancements in the workplace
 - » This model has the potential to transform our community by supporting the state, regional, and local focus on improvement of quality of life in Elkhart. With Elkhart's mission of being a global community, the district seeks to help raise the educational attainment of the Elkhart population, create an environment that will appeal to diverse companies, create a strong employee base, drive community prosperity, and prepare graduates for a competitive world
- **District needs:**
 - » Combine teaching resources so Elkhart can continue to offer expansive curriculum offerings to meet the needs of all students
 - » Deliver education to all students in a cost effective and efficient manner, optimizing staff and facilities efficiencies, and combining resources that may be underutilized between the high schools
- **Fulfilling the Elkhart Promise: "Every student is known by name, challenged and supported by highly effective staff, and in partnership with the community, will graduate career/college ready and life ready."**
 - » Create a climate of collaboration and problem solving
 - » Develop innovative instructional methods that encourage higher level thinking
 - » Empower students to choose their direction, courses, and Schools of Study based on their individual research and interests, and empower teachers to teach to students' interests as well as their own interests
 - » Provide instruction that will stretch and challenge students so that all students can meet their potential, including our top academic students
 - » Establish an educational setting that matches the experiences students will experience after high school in the workplace and college

What is the vision for the High School?

Elkhart has long been known for its culture of innovation and entrepreneurial spirit. Elkhart Community Schools has a rich history of educating students who have become leaders in the Elkhart community and throughout the world. The vision for Elkhart High School is to prepare all students to become empowered citizens who have the ability to change their community and the world.

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What is the Elkhart High School model?

Elkhart High School is comprised of six **Schools of Study** within one high school. Multiple college and career pathways exist within each School of Study. Students will attend the Freshman Division then select a pathway as they enter their sophomore year. Each School of Study has its own physical location on the high school campus. Building modifications are being customized to meet the needs of each school. Each School of Study has its own administrative and instructional team. Dual credit opportunities are available to students in all Schools of Study.

What are the Schools of Study in Elkhart High School?

The Schools of Study within Elkhart High School are **small learning communities** of students and teachers organized around areas of interest. Students have the opportunity to connect with other students with similar aspirations and with teachers who can make meaningful connections to their plans for the future. The schools will be fully implemented in the fall of 2021 when the high school renovations are complete.

Why is Elkhart High School using this model?

In our rapidly changing world, students need to be prepared for success after high school. Recognizing this, Elkhart Community Schools embarked on a multi-year strategic plan in 2015 to ensure all of our students are college and career ready. We have implemented a systems approach to enhance academic programs at all levels: elementary, middle, and high school. The pathways model has several benefits for our students, including a seamless transition into college and careers, along with integration of existing outstanding academic programs with our successful Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Students will have the opportunity to dig deeper into one program of study based on their interests and will be offered opportunities for job shadowing, apprenticeships, internships, and/or authentic projects with business and community partners.

What are the six Schools of Study?

- Students in the **Arts & Communication** school of study will develop an understanding of creatively expressing and interpreting meaning through words, design, and various media. Career fields include: advertising, audio/visual, cinematography, commercial art/illustration, graphic arts, performing arts, music, web design.
- Students in the **Business and International Relations** school of study will develop an understanding of impacting local and international commerce, cultures, and politics. Career fields include: business management & administration, finance, government & public administration, marketing, sales, entrepreneurship.
- Students in the **Engineering, Technology, and Innovation** school of study will develop an understanding of real-world solutions from conceptualization through completion, through the use of technology, engineering design, and advanced manufacturing. Career fields include: aeronautics, architecture, automotive, CAD, information technology, physics, welding.
- Students in the **Health & Public Safety** school of study will develop an understanding of advancing the physical and social health of individuals and communities. Career fields include: law enforcement, public safety, firefighting, EMT, medicine, nursing, athletic training, mental health, forensic science, radiology.
- Students in the **Human Services** school of study will develop an understanding of improving the quality of human life, through a focus on human development and services. Career fields include: culinary arts, childcare, cosmetology, counseling, education, hospitality management, social work, tourism.
- Students in the **Natural Resources** school of study will explore the science of the world and strive to make a positive impact on the world through scientific inquiry and discovery. Career fields include: agriculture, biology, chemistry, environmental science, food science, geology, horticulture, meteorology, veterinary science.

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How will the Schools of Study work?

Students enter the Freshman Division which provides the foundational skill development for students to transition to the high school. Additional time is provided to explore courses offered in the six Schools of Study. Students spend time discovering their own unique interests as freshmen. Their next step is to select a School of Study for their sophomore through senior years. While students take courses in their “home” school for a portion of their day, they are able to take courses in other areas of interest. For example, a student who takes an English class in the School of Natural Resources learns English content structured within the field of natural resources, but still has an opportunity to take an elective like photography. All students have the opportunity to participate in extra- and co-curricular activities. For example, music and sports programs combine students from all Schools of Study.

What is the Freshman Division?

The Freshman Division provides students with the critical time for transitioning into college and career focused education, while providing them with opportunities for leadership. The Freshman Division provides students the opportunity to focus on general studies, while exploring courses offered by the six Schools of Study.

Are students being forced to choose a career in 10th grade?

Students are not forced to choose a career but are given an opportunity to learn in a way that is meaningful and interesting to them. Providing students with an early glimpse into a field of study and an opportunity for experience-based learning helps them choose a field in which they would like to work and eliminate fields in which they might not want to work. We believe the best time for students to explore career fields is from the safety of their parents’ home, care, and guidance, while being supported by school staff who know them. Often students will graduate from high school, start studying a field in college, then change their minds after a year or two. College is an expensive time for students to change their minds.

What are the benefits of small learning communities?

Research shows small learning communities lead to improved attendance, an increased sense of community, higher graduation rates, and achievement gains for students. A sense of community fosters the growth of personal self-esteem, develops a sense of belonging, and creates positive relationships between students and teachers. Small learning communities continue the level of dedicated care and attention our students experience in elementary and middle school by providing them with teachers and staff who know their names, goals, strengths, and challenges. Small learning communities offer a higher level of collaboration and teamwork, matching the experience students will find in the workplace and college.

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What type of innovative instruction is happening within the schools?

Curricula within the Schools of Study have been developed through cross-subject design teams. Courses are designed to teach students the required standards within the framework and content areas of the School of Study. Instruction is delivered by teachers who are passionate about their subject areas and is supported by industry experts and colleges. Students experience project-based and inquiry-based learning. Students experience hands-on learning through internships, apprenticeships, and collaboration with industry experts and colleges. Each School of Study is supported by an advisory board consisting of community partners to allow for continued collaboration.

What is the administrative support structure in this high school model?

An executive principal provides leadership across all Schools of Study. Administrators and counselors are assigned to each School of Study. These teams foster community and business partnerships that support specific career pathways within each School of Study. This structure provides targeted support for the team of teachers and students within and across each school. The Freshman Division has a principal and two assistant principals, as well as counselors, whose goal is to assist students' transition to high school and prepare for success in the Schools of Study.

What is the implementation timeline for Elkhart High School?

Elkhart High School will operate as one high school with the Indiana Department of Education, the Indiana High School Athletic Association, and the Indiana State School Music Association beginning in fall of 2020. Students in grades 9-12 will remain at their current high school locations (two campuses) during the 2020-2021 school year.

The 2020-2021 school year will serve as a transitional year for the high school. Schedules and classes at the two campuses will be as similar as possible. Students will have an opportunity to engage in pathway-based learning. Depending on the completion of construction, students may have the opportunity to be physically centralized within their School of Study.

All construction will be completed and the transition to Elkhart High School (grades 10-12) at the current Elkhart Memorial campus will be completed in the fall of 2021. The Freshman Division will be located at the current Elkhart Central campus.

What will our community and business engagement look like in the schools?

Currently, each school is comprised of a design team lead by the transition principals. The design teams are developing pathways, curriculum, and an infrastructure in partnership with the community and relevant industry partners to enhance the relevance of the curriculum for each school of study.

A critical aspect of this work is the involvement of community and business partners in developing authentic projects, course work, internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, etc. Once full implementation of this model begins in the fall of 2021, each school of study will have an advisory board consisting of community partners to allow for continued input, interaction, and evaluation of the curriculum and course offerings.

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What are some of the academic similarities and differences between a traditional high school, or the current two high schools, and this innovative model?

Traditional Model	Elkhart High School Model
School Enrollment: 3,400	School Enrollment: 3,400 students (placed into small learning communities)
Grades 9-12: Two High Schools (~1,700 students per high school)	Grades 9: Freshman Division (~900 students located at the current Elkhart Central campus) Grade 10-12: Six Schools of Study (~2,500 students located at the current Elkhart Memorial and Elkhart Area Career Center campus)
Classrooms grouped by department (math, science, etc)	Classrooms grouped by Schools of Study, student interests
Classes based on state standards	The curriculum meets state standards and is infused with the career interests of the school to increase student engagement
Many AP/ACP courses available	Many AP/ACP courses available
Dual Credit/Early College courses available	Dual Credit/Early College courses available
Random selection of elective courses	Elective courses tied to career pathways to create connections as well as provide more relevant courses
Fine Arts, Performing Arts, and World Language options available as electives	Fine Arts, Performing Arts, and World Language options available regardless of a student's School of Study
Less likely to have a consistent teacher for multiple semesters or one year	Highly likely to have a consistent teacher for multiple semesters or multiple years
Little or no community or business engagement in development of courses or experiences for students; struggle to find places for work-based learning experiences	High levels of community and business engagement in development of courses and experiences for students; partnership with businesses for work-based learning experiences
Special Education services coordinated by a teacher of record	Special Education services coordinated by a teacher of record and supervised by a special education administrator dedicated to the secondary schools. Special needs services will continue to be delivered to support students in their School of Study.
Alternative School students serviced in off-site locations	Alternative School opportunities allow students to attend a School of Study part of the day as well as small group instruction. Off-site opportunities still available based on students' needs.