



Excellence. For each and every student.

January 2023

Executive Summary

Phase 1 Middle School Program Review



Excellence. For each and every student.




What's next in this 4-Phase Review Process?

In Phase 1 (Envision & Assess) of the review process, nine project teams (involving 70+ staff) began the important work of envisioning what a future middle school model at WPS could look like. Each project team did extensive research and conducted surveys involving staff and parents before formulating their proposed recommendations. This work will serve to inform, guide, and anchor our future work and decision making to ensure a world-class education for each and every learner.

Phase 2 (Plan & Develop) - Stakeholders and staff committees will study proposals and build upon these Phase 1 proposed recommendations to determine what is ultimately best for WPS. Timelines will be driven by various factors such as budget, staffing, facilities and desired student experience.

Phase 3 (Implementation) - Incremental implementation will begin. Timelines will be established based on impact and feasibility.

Phase 4 (Evaluate & Adjust) - Implementation will be monitored for the development of the middle school culture and practices in WPS. Refinements will be made as needed.

		
<p>West Middle School</p> <p>149 Barry Avenue North Wayzata, MN 55391</p> <p>Building: 168,000 sf Site: 26.12 acres</p> <p>Enrollment: 686 students* Teachers: 32.56</p>	<p>Central Middle School</p> <p>305 Vicksburg Lane North Plymouth, MN 55447</p> <p>Building: 308,568 sf Site: 57.84 acres</p> <p>Enrollment: 1,534 students* Teachers: 72.34</p>	<p>East Middle School</p> <p>12000 Ridgemount Avenue Plymouth, MN 55441</p> <p>Building: 151,385 sf Site: 37.75 acres</p> <p>Enrollment: 647 students* Teachers: 31.25</p>

*as of 1/3/2023

For more information, contact Austin Tollerson, Director of Teaching & Learning, Austin.Tollerson@wayzataschools.org, or Dana Kauzlarich Miller, Executive Director of Teaching & Learning, Dana.Miller@wayzataschools.org.

Students in grades 6–8 experience many developmental changes as they transition from childhood into young adulthood. During this time, middle school educators have a unique opportunity to leverage this rapid physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth of their students to set them up for success for the rest of their life. This includes offering a middle school experience that provides the best student-centered facilities, student supports, and curriculum and instruction specifically designed for the unique needs of early adolescents.

In 2021, Wayzata Public Schools (WPS) commissioned the Teaching & Learning Department to conduct an internal review of the district's middle school program. A Program Review Design Team was formed and followed a similar process to the district's curriculum review process. This work was guided by the district's Strategic Road Map and Equity Commitment. Additionally, the Association for Middle Level Education's book, "This we believe: Implementing Successful Middle Level Schools" served as an anchor resource for the process.

The goal of this process is to create an environment, culture, structure, and learning experiences that develop academic and learning skills of each and every middle school student so they may, "thrive today and excel tomorrow in an ever-changing global society." This important work was grounded on several guiding principles:

The Middle School Review should be:

- a candid self-evaluation, documenting current and positive practices supported by research.
- aspirational and operational, directed toward improving teaching and learning and contributing to the overall quality of the middle school program.
- based upon developmentally responsive and effective educational practices.
- focused on best practices and responsive to the unique learning needs and programming for each and every learner.

This important work should:

- monitor and pursue congruence between the District's Strategic Road Map, Equity Commitment, and the actual practices of the middle school program.
- inform the larger work of the district such as future budget decisions, facility needs, and the utilization of existing resources.
- result in the realization of measurable academic outcomes and an enhanced social/emotional opportunity for the young adolescent learners for many years to come.

The process was designed to assess all aspects of the current middle school program and envision ways the middle school experience might be modified or improved for the district's nearly 2,900 middle school students. This work is vitally important in making the middle school experience the best it can be for WPS students.

Middle School Program Review Design Team Members

Dana Kauzlarich Miller
Executive Director,
Teaching & Learning

Austin Tollerson, Director
Teaching & Learning

Paul Paetzel, Principal
East Middle School

Mike Rice, Associate Principal
East Middle School

Ryan Carlson, Principal
West Middle School

Kaela Loo, Associate Principal
West Middle School

Jim Bollum, Former Associate Principal, West Middle School

Xavier Reed, Principal
Central Middle School

Julie Johnson, Associate Principal, Central Middle School

Rob Rimington, Associate Principal, Central Middle School

Solveig Harriday, Director
Equity and Inclusion

Cory Knudtson, President
Wayzata Education Association

Phase 1: Envision and Assess

Nine project teams were formed to assess current practices in nine focus areas within Wayzata Public Schools' middle schools. Teams were asked to research, engage stakeholders, and envision what the future middle school model at WPS could look like. These are Phase 1 proposed recommendations from each project team:

Courses of Study Team Leads: Ryan Carlson/Julie Johnson	Bring Arts curriculum and offerings into alignment with MDE Arts requirements	Offer at least one stand alone Health class to strengthen our Health curriculum and better meet state standards	Consider a schedule that allows for a wider variety of exploratory or elective opportunities with more course choice in 8th grade			
Grading/Assessment Team Leads: Julie Johnson/Rob Rimington	Continue with A–U grading system and the use of rubrics. Continue with a weighting breakdown of 100% Summative, 0% Formative for grade calculation	Improve ways to provide timely feedback to students	Revisit the practice of quarter-grading at the middle school level	Regular review of WPS grading practices to allow for consistency, communication and clarity amongst all teachers		
Scheduling Team Leads: Ryan Carlson/Julie Johnson	Middle School bell schedules need to be closer in alignment (specifically to include Advisory and Flex Time)	Consider equalizing class lengths for <i>Core</i> and <i>Encore</i> to ease flexibility in scheduling options including elective offerings, flexible learning time, advisory, etc.	Provide common time for collaboration for all teachers and content areas and student support services across grade levels	Formation of a scheduling committee to look at a potential new schedule that would accommodate Project Team recommendations and opportunities for flexibility in MS programming		
Student Support Team Lead: Mike Rice	Attain and maintain a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1 (ASCA recommendation)	All middle schools should have common and established SEL standards embedded in all curricular areas	Protected time for tiered supports including <i>MyTime</i>	Mental health supports - need to ensure we address growing needs through clearly defined roles (Counselor, Social Worker, Dean)		
Professional Learning Team Lead: Xavier Reed	Strengthen WPS commitment to fostering continuous growth in staff to transform our core values into actions. In an ever-changing society it is essential for all staff to engage in ongoing, embedded, standards-based professional learning to increase our collective efficacy and to ensure learners thrive today and excel tomorrow	Additional monthly PL time should be added to the district calendar to allow for continual PL that grows and develops over the course of the year	Professional learning must be offered to ALL staff who interact with students	Collaboration with Teaching & Learning and building staff when developing professional learning through WPS		
Flexible Learning Time Team Lead: Ryan Carlson	<i>MyTime</i> , or one common name, be used across all 3 middle schools	All <i>Core</i> & <i>Encore</i> teaching staff be involved in teaching <i>MyTime</i>	Offer <i>MyTime</i> daily, ideally for 30-40 minutes	Ongoing PD for <i>MyTime</i> teachers to ensure successful implementation and student support	Use WPS HUB, or common scheduling software, at all 3 schools	
Facilities & Learning Spaces Team Leads: Paul Paetzel/Rob Rimington	Consideration should be given to maintaining similar sized middle schools; continue additional research regarding optimal size for middle schools	Spaces should be flexible and must allow direct supervision of students	Adaptable spaces – to accommodate growth in enrollment	Classrooms should be dedicated to a single staff member, with the flexibility to support a variety of instructional strategies (i.e., movable furniture and walls, flexible technology)	When designing spaces, consider shared spaces with outside user groups and community ed (i.e., secure storage, access to instructional space, school use priorities)	
Out-of-School-Time Programming Team Lead: Cory Knudtson	Improve the process of creating and reviewing new extracurricular activities for students	Improve the way WPS shares information about these extracurricular opportunities with students, parents and school staff	Provide flexibility & opportunities around scheduling and transportation options	Partner with community organizations to expand extracurricular opportunities that appeal to a greater variety of students' interests	When feasible, overnight travel learning experiences can/should be offered as a valuable and enriching part of the middle school experience	Increase 6th grade intramural athletic opportunities
Advisory Time Lead: Paul Paetzel/Rob Rimington	Advisory should meet for a minimum of 20 minutes daily at a consistent time for all 3 grade levels in the building	Based on best practices: 15:1 student/teacher ratio is ideal	All <i>Core</i> & <i>Encore</i> teaching staff be involved in teaching Advisory	Ongoing PD for Advisory teachers to ensure they are well prepared	Establish a 3-year articulated, integrated, schoolwide curriculum that meets the developmental needs of students from 6th through 8th grade	Advisory teachers must establish a commitment to students beyond the advisory class including communicating with other stakeholders throughout the student's middle school experience

More information about Phase 1 of the WPS Middle School Review Process, including teacher and parent survey data and supporting documents from each Project Team, can be found at www.wayzataschools.org/district/teaching-learning.

In Phase 2 of the review process, stakeholders and staff committees will study and build upon these Phase 1 recommendations to plan and develop what is ultimately best for WPS. Timelines will be driven by various factors such as budget, staffing, facilities and desired student experience.