REIMAGINING MIDDLE SCHOOL PROPOSAL & FULL REPORT

June 2023

"We will redesign the middle school experience to offer a developmentally responsive, student-centered education."

-RMS Steering Committee

"I like that you people wanna make our school better. I also like the way you guys care about our opinion and want us to give [our] opinions to make the school better."

-BSD Middle School Student

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PROPOSAL

Introduction

This proposal offers a set of recommendations for consideration by the BSD Superintendent and Executive Team to reimagine the middle school experience in our district's five comprehensive middle schools (Chinook, Highland, Odle, Tillicum, Tyee). The goal of this work is to propose structures and practices that better serve the developmental, social-emotional, and academic needs of our middle school students (see *Figure 1*). The recommendations are based on ten months (August 2022 – May 2023) of iterative work and outreach by the RMS Steering Committee, including evidence-based best practices and extensive input and feedback from our three key middle school stakeholder groups: students, staff, and families.

This proposal serves as the initial document in what we expect will be a series of reports to inspire, guide, inform, evaluate, and monitor the conceptualization, implementation, piloting, and expansion of recommendations for reimagining middle school to better serve our students.

We know from research that middle school is a critical time for personal development and academic growth, and that a positive experience during these years can greatly impact a student's future success. Because of this, it is imperative that we create and sustain middle schools that effectively support the well-being and success of our students (Bishop & Harrison, 2021).

We see the middle school years as a time for young people to begin finding their voice, exploring their interests, and developing longstanding relationships with one another. Students need and want middle schools that are engaging, supportive, and full of belonging and community. We envision middle schools that offer innovative, personalized learning

Figure 1: Visualization of Middle School Students' Needs

opportunities that help students get to know and value themselves, others, and the world, and that are places where they are inspired and empowered to learn and grow. Our goal is for each and every middle schooler to enter high school feeling confident and excited for their next steps.

Our Team

We are proud of our RMS Steering Committee—comprised of 32 staff, students, and parents with representatives from each of the five comprehensive middle schools. The Committee
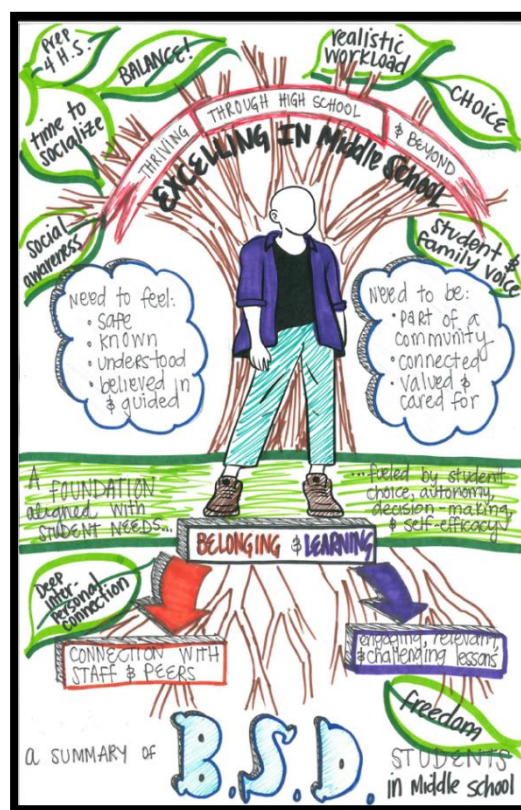
included a diversity of perspectives and experiences, across multiple programs, and worked to elevate the voices of learners who have been traditionally marginalized. Since August 2022, the Committee met 18 times in-person. See *Appendix B* for Steering Committee membership and *Appendix D* for the date of Steering Committee meetings.

The RMS project was initially conceptualized in Spring 2022, based on the general roles identified in *Appendix A*.

Our Process

The RMS Steering Committee utilized the **Equity-Centered Design Thinking** process developed by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford University to plan, design, manage, monitor, and guide our work (see *Figure 2*).
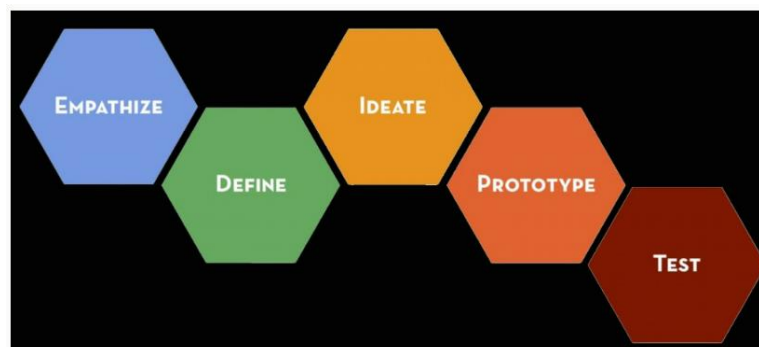

Figure 2: Equity-Centered Design Thinking Process

Equity-Centered Design Thinking includes five phases—which although presented linearly are more iterative in nature—involving overlap and ongoing revisiting of prior phases (see *Figure 3*).
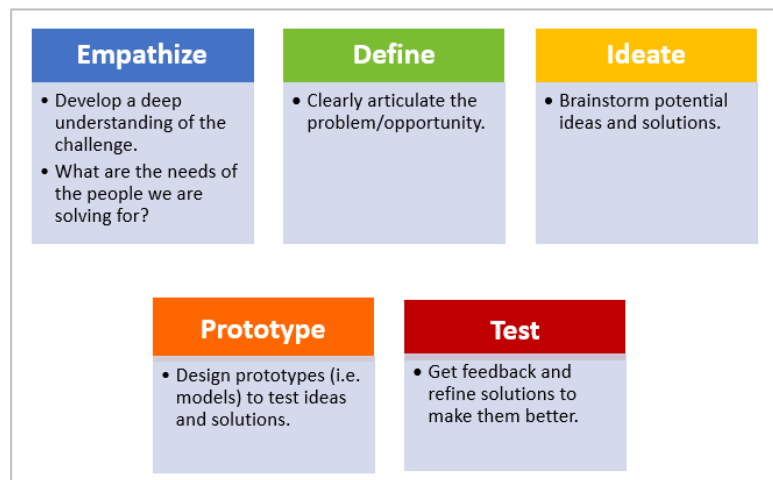
Figure 3: Equity-Centered Design Thinking Process

Stakeholder Engagement

Equity-Centered Design Thinking elevates and prioritizes stakeholder voices and experiences throughout a project's lifecycle, based on the belief that successful solutions cannot be designed and implemented without involving stakeholders at each stage of work.

In this vein, stakeholder engagement took place continuously throughout the RMS project—divided into three "RMS Listening Campaign" rounds (see *Figure 4*). The campaigns focused on students, staff, and families with ties to our five comprehensive middle schools (Chinook, Highland, Odle, Tillicum, and Tyee). Round 1 was about empathizing with middle school students and defining the problems and opportunities to be addressed. Round 2 was about sharing and gathering impressions and ideas about the four draft RMS prototypes for reimagining middle school. Data collected for Rounds 1 and 2 was qualitative and formative, and we used it to inform and help develop the direction and next steps in the project. Round 3 data was quantitative and summative, and we used it to assess stakeholder perceptions of the final prototypes. See *Appendix I* for detailed descriptions of and data from each round.

Round 1
- Empathize & Define
- August - November, 2022
- Qualitative and Formative

Round 2
- Prototype Feedback
- March 2023
- Qualitative and Formative

Round 3
- Prototype Feedback
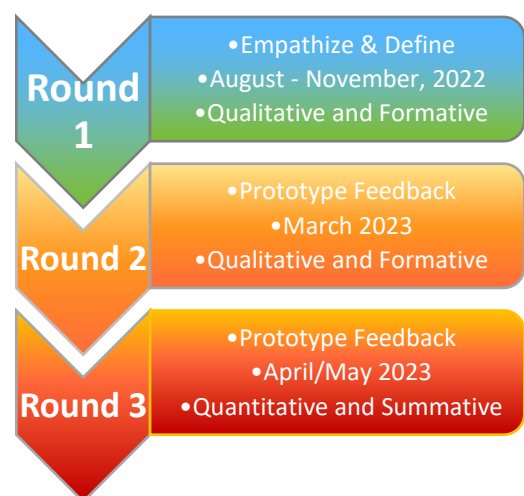- April/May 2023
- Quantitative and Summative

Figure 4: Overview of RMS Listening Campaigns (2022-23)

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Recommended Models
The RMS Steering Committee recommends **two models** that hold great potential for reimagining our comprehensive middle schools: **Advisory/Homeroom** and **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)**, which aligns well with the district's already in-progress Global Competencies curricular initiative. *Scheduling changes will be required to support implementation. The Teacher Teams prototype may be embedded in Advisory and PBL.*

The **Advisory/Homeroom** model aims to create a supportive and inclusive environment for our students by providing designated time for students to connect with a dedicated advisor who serves as a mentor and advocate. This model emphasizes fostering positive relationships, social-emotional development, and character education. By implementing this model, we aim to strengthen our middle school students' sense of belonging and well-being.

The **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)** model focuses on developing students' critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Students will engage in authentic, real-world challenges, where they will apply their knowledge across disciplines to solve complex problems and develop their Global Competency skills. This approach promotes active learning and inquiry-based exploration. We believe that Problem-Based Learning will enhance students' academic motivation and engagement, and in doing so, lead to deeper understanding of content and the development of the skills listed above.

For more detailed information about the model prototypes, please see page 19.

Recommendation #2: Recommended Timeline
We recommend that these models be implemented according to the timeline outlined in *Figure 5*. This timeline provides a clear roadmap for the phased implementation of both models, allowing for a smooth transition and ensuring sufficient time and effort for the preparation, professional development, and stakeholder engagement that will be required to ensure successful implementation.

Recommendation #3: Resource Allocation
We strongly recommend that the necessary resources, infrastructure, and time be allocated to fully support the successful implementation of the models and a smooth and effective transition toward middle schools that more fully support our students. To facilitate this, we propose investing in the following resource areas:
- Extensive Professional Development for Educators and Leaders
- Comprehensive, Evidence-Based Curricula
- Potential Partnership with Organizations
- Research and Literature Review
- Dedicated Staffing Considerations
- Robust, Data-Driven Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

By allocating resources to these key areas, we can provide the necessary support for our educators and students as they learn to do middle school in a new way. We believe that investing in professional development, curriculum, staffing, and evaluation will contribute to the strong foundation and support system that is needed for the transformative middle school experience we envision.
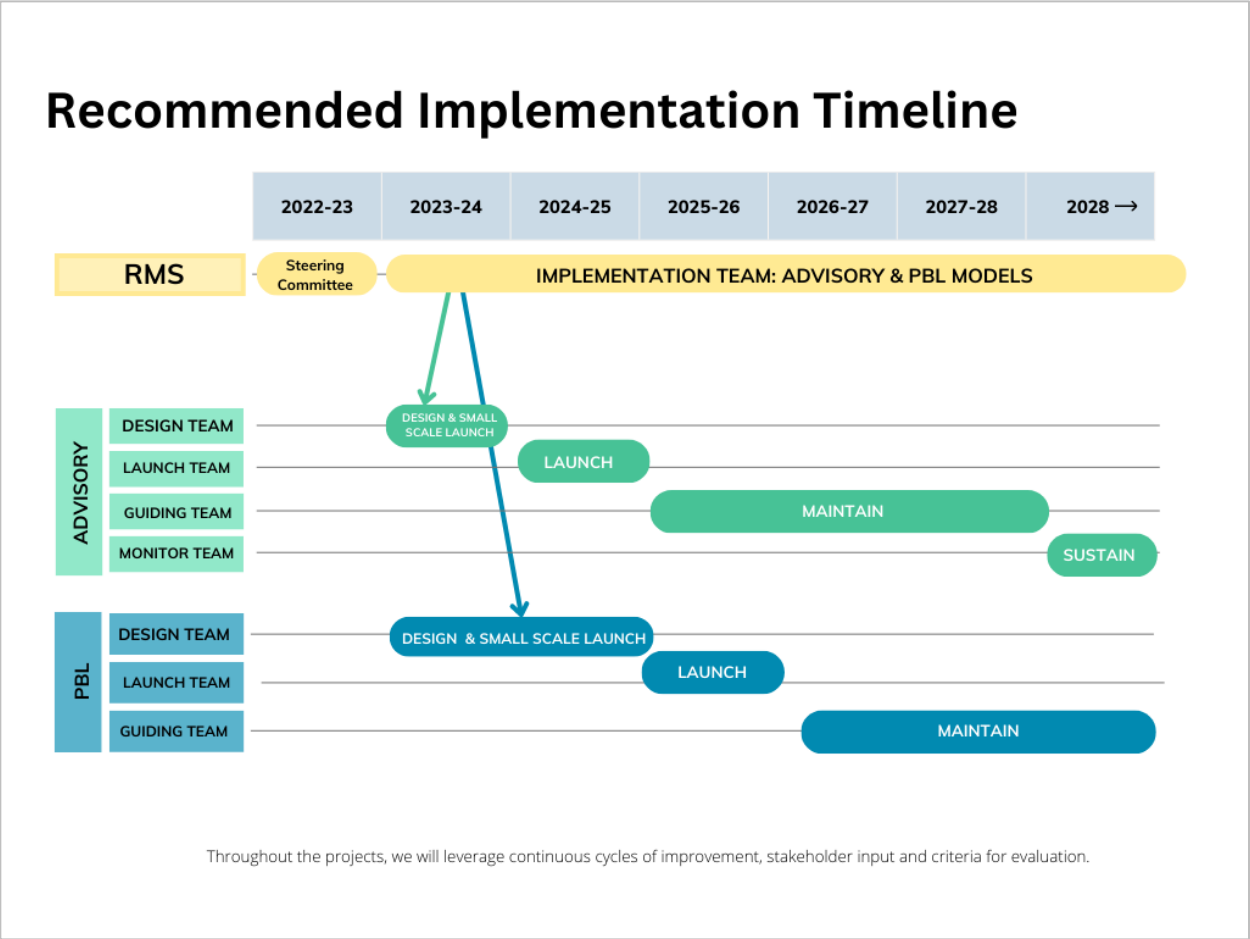
Figure 5: Recommended Implementation Timeline

Next Steps

The RMS Steering Committee recommends the following immediate next steps:

1. Form a dedicated RMS Implementation Team: Establish a team of educators and administrators who will spearhead the development and implementation of Advisory/Homeroom and Problem-Based Learning (PBL). This team should have deep understanding of student needs, curricula, instructional strategies, and how schools function.

2. Identify clear objectives: Determine the specific goals and objectives of the Advisory/Homeroom and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) models. Clearly define the desired outcomes to guide program design, implementation, resource allocation, and evaluation and continuous improvement.

3. Conduct a needs assessment: Assess the specific needs and challenges of our middle school students to identify the specific areas where Advisory and PBL would be expected to make significant, positive impacts. In what ways will student experience and outcomes look different as a result of these programs? Which student populations are expected to benefit and in what ways? Gather feedback from teachers, students, and parents through surveys, interviews, and observations. Use this information to shape the program's content and design.

4. Design frameworks: Develop clear, logical frameworks that outlines how Advisory/Homeroom and PBL will be structured. Determine the frequency and duration of Advisory sessions, the process for selecting and assigning student groups, and the integration of PBL into the curriculum. Define the roles and responsibilities of teachers, advisors, students, school and district leaders, and families/guardians.

5. Adopt and develop resources and materials: Create or curate resources and materials that support the Advisory/Homeroom and PBL models. These may include instructional guides, problem scenarios, rubrics, templates, and examples of successful projects. Ensure that the resources align with the model's objectives and consider the needs of diverse student populations.

FULL REPORT

The Reimagining Middle School (RMS) Committee was developed to make suggestions for a **new, "reimagined" middle school model** based on research and co-designed with stakeholders. This was an opportunity to redesign systems and structures to better serve our middle school students by listening deeply to our students, staff, and families. This was a highly collaborative process where we worked for consensus at each step. Various, diverse stakeholders of students, families, staff, and administrators were co-designers together using multiple layers of input and feedback empathy loops. We utilized and considered evidence-based research (*The Successful Middle School: This We Believe* - Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE)), best practices, and other successful school models to inform our thinking and planning.

This RMS report lists eight needs specific to our BSD middle grades students, identified via Equity-Centered Design Thinking and data collection, as well as through exposure to promising practices at the middle grades, and innovations and systems that support our goal of belonging and proficiency for all. It is important to note that the intention of this document is to provide insight into the needs of middle grades students and to make recommendations on how to address those needs. The framework does not address academic and systemic programs and initiatives that are expected of all PreK – Grade 12 schools. Expectations around content, standards, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), etc., remain in place.

AREAS OF STRENGTH

In the Panorama Fall 2022 Student Survey for Grades 6 – 8, 3,861 students participated, with 3,464 providing written feedback on their current middle school experience. The findings indicated that most students derive pleasure from socializing and building new friendships, and value the guidance and assistance they receive from their teachers and other school staff. The survey further revealed that students appreciate the assortment of elective classes offered, extracurricular activities available, and the diversity of the student body.

AREAS OF NEED

> *All students deserve equal access to high quality programs and initiatives that will address their needs.*

Our RMS focus was on meeting the needs of students. We worked collaboratively to define the problems and opportunities that needed to be addressed. Through consensus, we identified eight opportunities for improvement in students' current middle school experience:

- The need for an increased sense of belonging
- A lack of meaningful connections with peers and adults
- A need for breaks
- A gap between skills taught and those needed for future success

- Irrelevant instruction and use of time
- A lack of interactive learning environments
- Meaningful engagement and empowering student voice
- The transition process between levels does not meet students' needs

We also recognized that every change and decision we make to the system will have consequences, and it is important to be mindful of unintended and unequal impacts on different stakeholder populations.

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Introduction

The Reimagining Middle School (RMS) Committee was established with the purpose of proposing a new, innovative middle school model that is grounded in research and developed in collaboration with stakeholders. To ensure a wide variety of experiences, perspectives, and knowledge within the RMS project, we included participants with different roles (see *Appendix A*). The roles' membership was determined prior to initiating the project (see *Appendix B*). The goal was to redesign existing systems and structures to more fully meet the needs of our middle school students. *Appendix C* provides an overview of why the RMS project is needed. The RMS met for a total of 18 meetings. See *Appendix D* for more details. The process led to the formulation of recommendations.

BSD serves close to 4,000 students across our five comprehensive middle schools (Chinook, Highland, Odle, Tillicum, Tyee). We were unable to formally include Big Picture and International because as BSD "choice schools" they have their own histories, culture, models, and, most importantly requirements. See *Appendix F* for more details.

To better understand the experience and outcomes of these students, the RMS Steering Committee reviewed attendance, academic, and social-emotional data. We found that:

- 31% of our middle school students do not feel a strong sense of belonging
- 30% of our sixth to eighth grade students are currently below standard in English Language Arts proficiency
- 34% of our students in sixth to eighth grade students are currently below standards in Math proficiency

See *Appendix G* for more details.

The Committee embraced a highly inclusive and consensus-driven approach, involving diverse stakeholder groups including students, families, staff, and administrators, who participated in multiple feedback loops and co-design processes. To inform our recommendations, the Committee drew upon evidence-based research, including the "The Successful Middle School: This We Believe" text by the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), as well as best practices and successful school models.
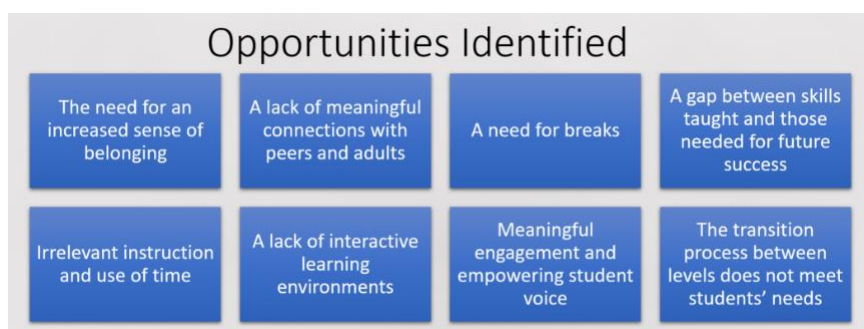

Figure 6: RMS Opportunities Identified for Improving the Middle School Experience

The Equity-Centered Design Thinking process helped the Committee identify eight specific opportunities (needs) for improvement (see *Figure 6*), along with promising practices, innovations, and systems aimed at ensuring proficiency for all students. Procedure 0130P was embedded throughout the process as illustrated in *Appendix E*. The phases in the first column aligned to the Design Thinking process. The second column included success criteria for each phase to ensure thoughtful, collaborative, equity-centered engagement, and co-creation. It is important to clarify that this document primarily focuses on addressing the unique needs of middle school students and does not encompass broader academic and systemic programs and initiatives that are expected across all PreK-12 schools. Core expectations related to content, standards, multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), and similar aspects remain in place.

Areas of Strength

The middle school experience is a critical time for students to develop socially, academically, and emotionally. A positive and enriching middle school experience for students includes many aspects. Socialization and friendship play pivotal roles as students forge connections, make friends, and spend time with peers. The support and guidance provided by teachers and adults are instrumental in creating positive and nurturing learning environments. The availability of elective classes empowers students to explore their interests and personalize their educational journey. Engaging in extracurricular activities, such as clubs and sports, offers students opportunities to pursue passions, develop important life skills, and build meaningful

relationships. In addition, diversity within the school community fosters inclusivity, cultural understanding, and empowers students to thrive.

Figure 7 summarizes five areas of strength identified by students in our five comprehensive middle schools. For more detail, see *Appendix H* for Fall 2022 Middle School Student Survey Themes.

Socialization and Friendship: Our middle school students enjoy the opportunity to socialize, make new friends, and spend time with their peers.

Socialization and friendship are important aspects of the student experience, both academically and socially. When students can socialize and make new friends, they feel more connected to their school community and more confident about their place in it, which enhance their well-being and academic performance.

Spending time with peers promotes the development of pro-social skills, such as communication, empathy, and cooperation. These skills are essential in academic, professional, and personal settings, and help students navigate social situations more adeptly and effectively.

Moreover, socialization and friendship provide a sense of belonging and support, which can be crucial during the challenging and stressful periods of adolescent life. Having a supportive network of friends help students feel more motivated, confident, secure, comfortable, and resilient.

Supportive Teachers and Adults: Our middle school students appreciate the support, guidance, and care they receive from their teachers and other adults in their schools.

Supportive teachers and adults are crucial for creating a positive and nurturing learning environment for students. When students feel supported, guided, and cared for, they are more likely to be motivated, engaged, and successful in their academic and personal pursuits.

Teachers who are supportive take the time to get to know their students as individuals, understand their strengths and areas for growth, and tailor instruction to meet students' unique needs. They also provide feedback and encouragement that helps students build confidence and improve performance.

Figure 7: Areas of Strength of BSD Comprehensive Middle Schools

Elective Classes and Choices: Our middle school students value the variety of and ability to choose elective classes.

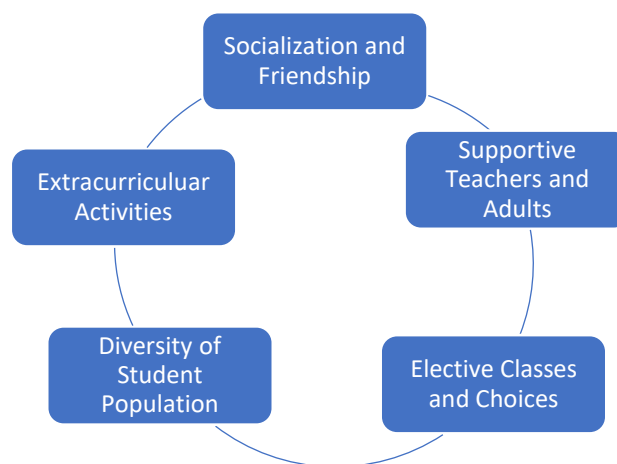Elective classes provide students with the opportunity to explore their interests and passions beyond the core curriculum of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Students can choose which classes to take, and in doing so, pursue subjects that are meaningful and engaging to them and personalize their learning experience during the school day.

The variety of available elective classes helps students develop a sense of identity and belonging. When students choose classes that reflect their interests and passions, they feel more connected to their school community and can develop positive relationships with peers and educators who share their interests.

In addition, elective classes provide students with a sense of autonomy and control over their own learning. By choosing which classes to take and how to approach their assignments, students develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for their own education.

Extracurricular Activities: Our middle school students value the variety of clubs, sports, and other extracurricular activities offered at school, as well as schoolwide events like Spirit Week.

Clubs are a popular extracurricular activity among middle school students, as they allow students to pursue their interests and passions and take on leadership roles outside of the classroom. Clubs can range from academic clubs, such as math or science clubs, to creative clubs, like drama or art clubs, to service clubs, like community service or volunteering clubs. By joining a club, students can meet like-minded individuals who share their interests, and can build positive relationships with peers and adult advisors who can serve as mentors and role models.

Sports are also a popular extracurricular activity among middle school students, as they provide opportunities for students to develop physical fitness, teamwork, leadership, and sportsmanship. Schools typically offer a variety of sports, including traditional team sports, such as basketball and soccer, as well as individual sports, such as track and field or tennis. By participating in sports, students can develop important life skills, such as perseverance, discipline, cooperation, and time management, which can be applied to other areas of their lives.

Diversity: Our middle school students appreciate the diversity of the student body and see it as a positive aspect of their middle school experience.

Diversity within a school community is an important aspect of creating a positive and inclusive learning environment for all students, enhancing the academic experience, and helping students develop social-emotional and global competency skills. When schools have a diverse

student body, students can learn from each other's unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, can develop a greater understanding and appreciation for cultural and linguistic differences, and can promote valuing, respecting, and empowering all student to reach their full potential.

Areas of Need

Through empathy-focused activities, the Committee identified several needs of our middle school students (see *Figure 8*). These areas of need reflect an overall theme: It is imperative that middle schools become more developmentally responsive and student-centered.

The research, data, and programs reviewed and analyzed pointed toward the need to recalibrate our thinking around two key areas: **student well-being** and **academic learning**.
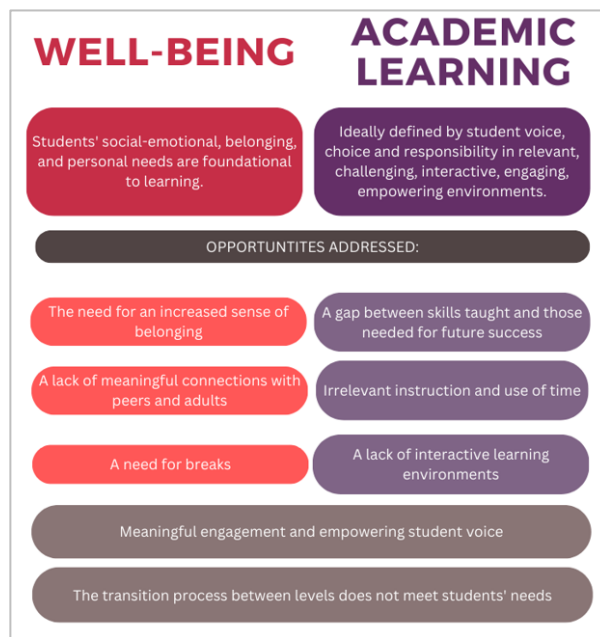

Figure 8: Key Needs of Our Middle School Students

It is essential that our middle schools become more developmentally responsive and student-centered.

Following the "Empathize" and "Define" phases, the Steering Committee moved into the "Ideate" phase of work by co-developing brainstorming prompts that were:
- Based on the student needs we identified by empathizing with our BSD middle schoolers
- Aligned with our RMS Vision
- Written positively in a way that invites action
- Broad enough to ensure many creative ideas
- Avoided suggesting a particular solution

The prompts were crafted in the design-based format of "*How Might We…*" questions. The Steering Committee came to consensus on the following prompt to guide brainstorming:

> *"How might we design a middle school experience that…partners with the greater community to support/provide experiential, expeditionary, project/problem-based learning opportunities (solving real-world problems within the community)?"*

Working in small groups, teams began exploring possible solutions to answer the "*How Might We…*" guiding question. A handful of ideas emerged as ways to potentially transform the middle school experience to more fully meet students' needs:
- Problem-based and hands-on learning
- Teaming teachers and cohorting students
- Block scheduling with some longer class periods
- Advisory / Homeroom

As shown in Figure 9, we used AMLE's Characteristics of Successful Middle Schools (*Culture and Community*; *Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment*; and *Leadership and Organization*) to organize our ideas into "RMS Design Dimensions". After ideas were grouped and sorted, we had almost thirty potential solutions to consider moving forward into the next stage of work: Prototyping.
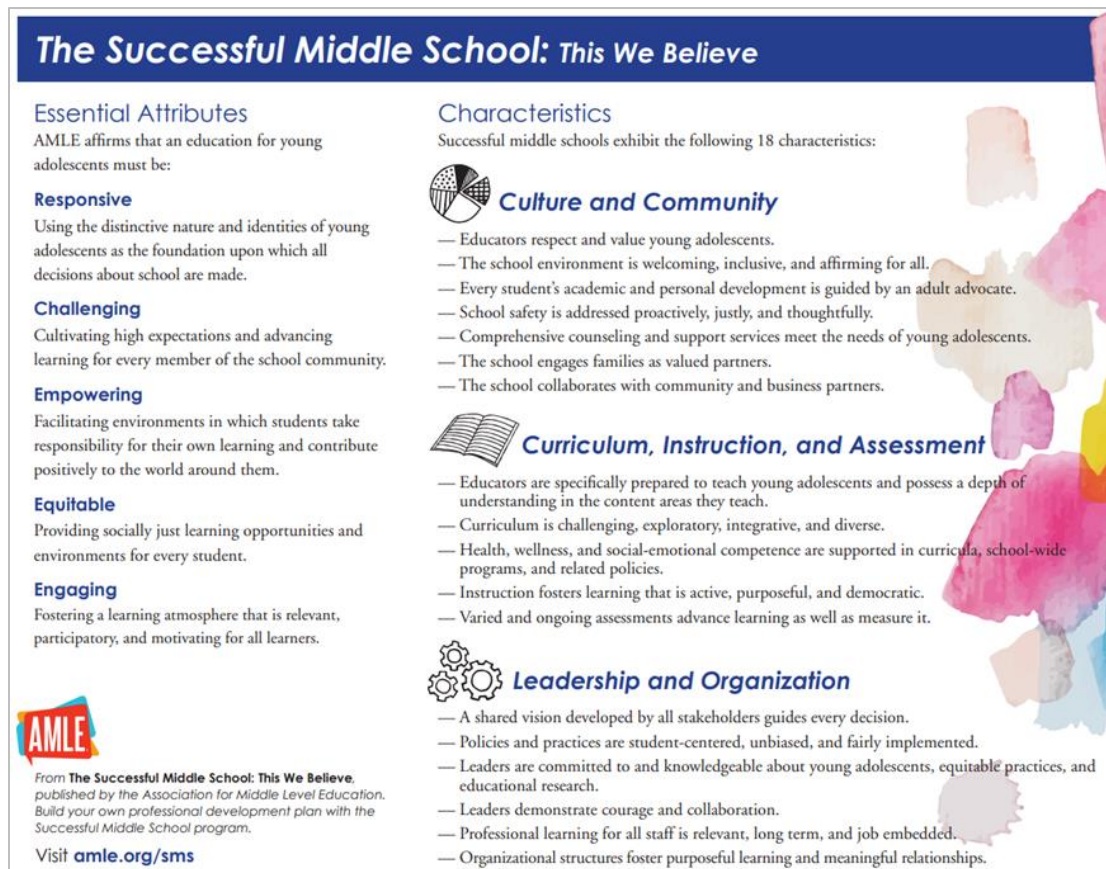
Figure 9: AMLE's The Successful Middle School Summary

Prior to prototyping, the team visited five innovative middle schools (in- and out-of-state) to observe and experience best practices in action. The innovative middle schools visited included:

- Intrinsic Schools- Belmont Campus (Chicago, IL)
- Ellen Fletcher Middle School (Palo Alto, CA)
- Design39 Campus (San Diego, CA)
- Summit Atlas (West Seattle)
- Odyssey Multiage Program (Grades 7-8) (Bainbridge Island, WA)

As part of the Equity-Centered Design Thinking process, the Committee was divided into teams that developed prototypes—or ideas—to address our middle school students' needs. In total, the Committee proposed four potential prototypes (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: RMS Four Prototypes

Each prototype is described in more detail below, including a Critical Criteria review. For more detail about how we included the Critical Criteria within our design-based process, see *Appendix E*.

General Description: An Advisory/Homeroom program serves as an explicit support system to help students develop academically, socially, and emotionally.
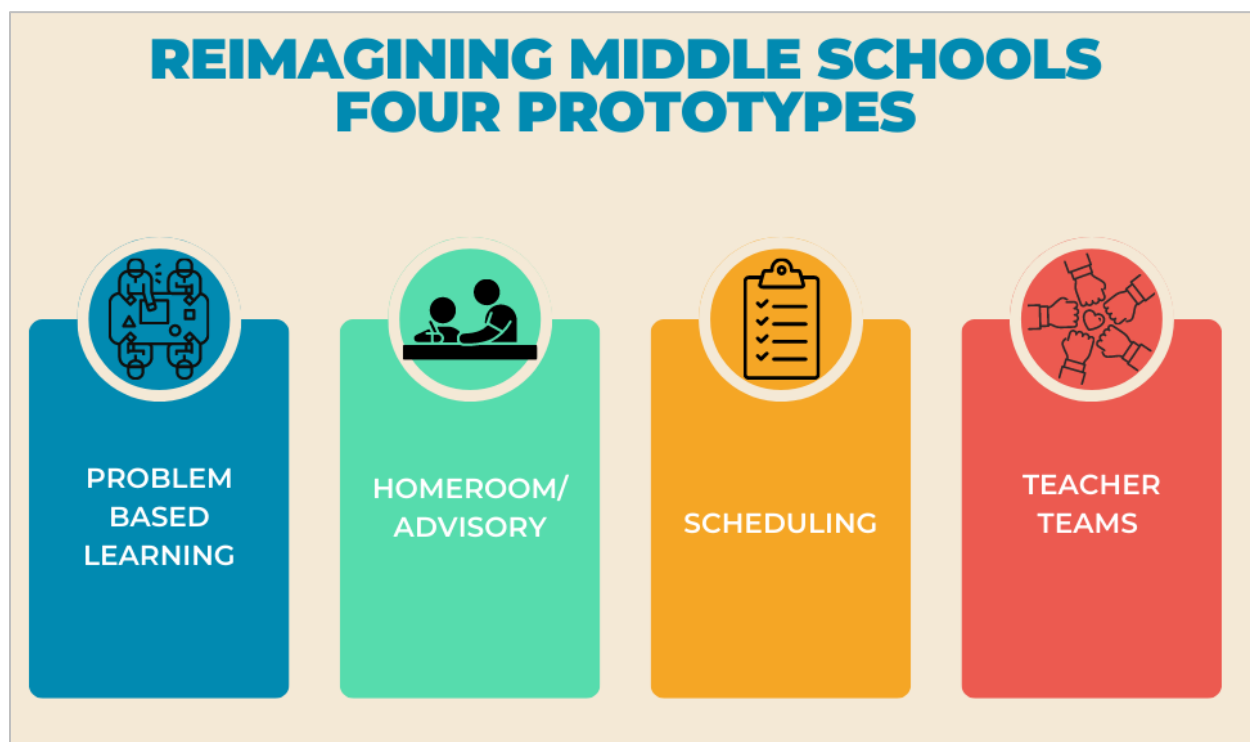
Goal: Each middle school has an "advisory" or "homeroom" program to engage students, build community, ensure each student and family is known and supported by at least one teacher, explicitly teach SEL, bullying prevention, and study skills, and prepare students for transitions (e.g., 6th graders entered middle school, 8th graders exiting middle school). Such a program supports students individually, while promoting a positive overall school culture.

Key Features:

- Help students navigate and thrive throughout the middle grades
- Explicitly teach SEL, bullying prevention, and study skills
- Have a point of contact for families
- Help students strategize about classes and teachers, set academic goals, and belong to a group of peers striving for success

Problems/Opportunities Addressed:

	The need for an increased sense of belonging	A lack of meaningful connections with peers and adults	A need for breaks	A gap between skills taught and those needed for future success	Irrelevant instruction and use of time	A lack of interactive learning environments	Meaningful engagement and empowering student voice	The transition process between levels does not meet students' needs
Homeroom/ Advisory	X	X	X				X	X

Overview of the Critical Criteria Review:

	Students	Families	Staff
Benefits	• Connections with peers and adults • Social Emotional Learning • Academic support • Community building • Develop communication skills and conflict resolution strategies • Increase sense of belonging	• One point person to connect. • Contact for two-way communication	• Connect with a small cohort of students and families. • Staff can support student development of Social Emotional competencies and executive function skills in a dedicate space versus trying to add on to teaching content

Harm/ Barriers	• Students may not connect with their advisor or other students in their advisory/homeroom. • Students may not see the benefit of spending time in Advisory/Homeroom.	• Families might not feel a strong connection to their child's advisor.	• Staff will be assigned an advisory which means additional workload.
Risk Mitigation	• Provide ongoing training that is based on research/evidence curriculum. • Thoughtful student placement will be critical and should be monitored. • Include specific steps to address relationships challenges. • Age-appropriate adjustment of lessons based on grade level.	• Provide professional development about advisory/homeroom to ensure that they know how to establish strong relationships with families as well as students. • Invite families and students to be part of the planning process.	• Provide staff with training, materials, ongoing support, etc. • Mitigate additional workload. • Partner with BEA to create a memorandum of understanding and/or contract language. • Create a list of non-negotiables, standards addressed, and opportunities for teacher choice. • Support staff, such as para educators, will support students during advisory.

Prototype Details: An adult advisor meets regularly during the school day with a group of students to provide academic and social-emotional mentorship and support, create personalization within the school, and facilitate a small peer community of learners.

Key Benefit:
- Provide dedicated time for social-emotional learning
- Closely monitor students' academic progress
- Have a point of contact for small groups of families
- Teach study skills and provide executive functioning support
- Involve students in preparation – have them create lessons
- Provide buildings with a 0.4 FTE release for two (0.2 FTE each) to plan and implement advisory curriculum/model

Structure:

- 4 days per week (M, T, Th, F)
- 35 minutes per session
- Periods 1-7 reduced from 50 mins to 45 min
- After 1st period
- All teachers facilitate an advisory: 15-18 students per advisory
- Cohort looping

Routines and Cadence:

- Daily: Check-In
- Monday: "Motivation Monday" Goal Setting/Study Skills
- Tuesday: "Time to Work Tuesday" Homework Support
- Thursday: "Thoughtful Thursday" SEL Lesson
- Friday: "Fun Friday" Choice Activities/Game Day

Additional Opportunities:

- Help students strategize about classes and teachers, set academic goals, and belong to a group of peers striving for success
- Supports student-led conferences
- Embedded service projects
- 6th grade advisory groups could be based upon WEB orientation groups
- Follows already existing schedule change guidelines
- Provide flexibility for schools to address relevant topics
- Opportunity to invite parent and community collaboration and partnership: topical speakers, thematic units utilizing local parent and community partner areas of expertise, increasing opportunities for family and community engagement

Logistics to Consider:

- This prototype will require a schedule change to current bell schedule.

General Description: To provide a bridge from elementary to middle school and provide a strong foundation for secondary education, teachers need to be able to consistently collaborate in order to promote a strong sense of community and instructional coherence. Teacher teams promotes this intentional focus on student needs through collaboration.

> Teachers: Provided with a core group of colleagues who teach and support a shared cohort of students.
> Students: Provided with more consistency in routines, norms, procedures, etc. in their core classes.

Goal: To promote a strong sense of community and instructional coherence by having a set of core subject educators dedicated to their assigned students' middle school learning and success who collaborate frequently and effectively on instruction, assessment, routines, and student well-being.

Key Features:

- Smaller communities characterized by stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships are formed when teachers regularly work together and trust one another.
- Enhanced teaching and learning via a set of educators collaborating frequently and effectively on instruction, assessment, routines, and student well-being.
- Ability to support individual student needs as a group, especially for students receiving services like those provided in the Multi-Language Learner (MLL) program, Advanced Learner (AL) program, and students with IEPs or 504s.

Problems/Opportunities Addressed:

	The need for an increased sense of belonging	A lack of meaningful connections with peers and adults	A need for breaks	A gap between skills taught and those needed for future success	Irrelevant instruction and use of time	A lack of interactive learning environments	Meaningful engagement and empowering student voice	The transition process between levels does not meet students' needs
Teachers Teams		X			X			X

Overview of the Critical Criteria Review:

	Students	Families	Staff
Benefits	Students will have four classes (core subject areas) that will have consistent routines. Students will notice that teachers collaborate "behind the scenes" to foster healthy relationships and deeper learning. Students will notice teachers offering support in an intentional way across the four classes.	A team behind every child enables streamlined communication between school and home.	Enable educators to collaborate and serve students through MTSS structures. Common planning time that has specific weekly agendas to help guide the work. Support for new teachers.
Harm/ Barriers	By having consistent routines and teacher teams, students may miss out on experiencing different teaching styles and approaches. Exposure to diverse teaching methods can help students develop adaptability and critical thinking skills. It also allows them to connect with a variety of educators who can provide different perspectives and expertise.	Having the same teacher teams across multiple classes might limit the diversity of perspectives and expertise available to families. Different teachers bring unique experiences, teaching philosophies, and knowledge, and the absence of such diversity may hinder a well-rounded educational experience for students and their families.	Collaboration with three other colleagues that they may not currently work closely with. Administrators may need to shift who they observe (many are by departments now) to these newly formed teams. Incorporating elective teachers in this collaborative model. Teacher may feel an initial loss of autonomy/control of their classroom.
Risk Mitigation	Encourage interdisciplinary projects that involve collaboration between different subject areas. This provides an opportunity for teachers to co-teach and expose students to different teaching methods and approaches.	Actively involve parents/guardians in the educational process by seeking their input and feedback. Encourage open lines of communication and regular parent-teacher conferences to facilitate discussions on student progress and provide a platform for sharing diverse perspectives and insights.	Significant support and professional development will be necessary to ensure teachers are able to work together productively and use time effectively and efficiently. Communication protocols, methods and systems will need to be very well organized.

Prototype Details:

Currently:

- Students have no clear transition from elementary to secondary.
- Students must navigate up to seven systems (routines, expectations, rules, workload expectations, homework, grading, etc.).

- Student occasionally get mixed messages with academic skills (e.g., different reading and writing expectations in each class).
- Teachers try to support student on their own without knowing how students are doing in other classes.
- Teachers communicate with parents and families without knowing who else has reached out and what was discussed.
- There are few intentional academic connections across core subject areas.
- It is a challenge to be consistent with behavioral, academic and social-emotional supports.

In this Teacher Teams Model:

- Small group of teachers (core subject areas) will share all the same students
- Time and support for collaboration during the school day
- Act as a sounding board for teachers trying new things
- Streamline executive function instruction and practice
- Consistent expectation and rules across classes
- Co-construct and leverage learning experiences
- Common language and utilization of academic skills
- Cross-curriculum lessons and units
- Common calendar to support students
- Common grading structures
- Efficiently communicate with families
- Deeper understanding of student needs

Logistics for consideration:

- How are elective teachers and other specialists included and supported in this model?
- How can other staff support and be included and supported in this model (counselors, special education educators, para educators, etc.)?
- How will physical spaces need to be modified to best support teams?
- What professional development is needed for this to be successful?
- How do we build a schedule?

General Description: Problem-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional method where students ask compelling questions and figure out how to answer them. PBL promotes active student engagement in local and global issues and personally meaningfully projects, and in doing so, develops students' critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. PBL provides opportunities for group work, research, and life-long learning. Teachers serve as facilitators and guides (Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning, n.d). PBL aligns well with the district's already in-progress Global Competencies curricular initiative.

Goal: Students work on a project for an extended period of time that answers a complex question focused on solving local and/or global issues and they demonstrate their knowledge and skills through a public product or presentation for an authentic audience.

Key Features:
- From teacher-centered to student-centered: PBL is meant to be an engaging, student-centered, "real world" instructional approach that prioritizes students—student inquiry, student investigation, and students coming up with solutions.
- Students work on a project for an extended period of time.
- Projects are interactive, collaborative, and empowering.
- Students learn standards-based knowledge, skills, and dispositions in a deep, experience-based way because they apply their learning to personally meaningful topics.
- Students are active learners, which strengthens their motivation, engagement, and deeper understanding of content.
- Inquiry-based and highly engaging and effective for learning, since students feel intrinsically motivated to learn about and help solve pressing, relevant local and global issues and there are different entry points for differentiation by ability level.
- Depending on the goals, projects can be done individually or in groups.

Problems/Opportunities Addressed:

	The need for an increased sense of belonging	A lack of meaningful connections with peers and adults	A need for breaks	A gap between skills taught and those needed for future success	Irrelevant instruction and use of time	A lack of interactive learning environments	Meaningful engagement and empowering student voice	The transition process between levels does not meet students' needs
Problem Based Learning				X	X	X	X	

Overview of the Critical Criteria Review:

	Students	Families	Staff
Benefits	• Engagement • Critical thinking • Real-world connections • Creativity	• Families and community could become more involved in the projects/problems so that the learning can be meaningful for and connected to the larger community.	• Educators would shift to facilitating learning through coaching students. • Cognitive load would shift to students.
Harm/ Barriers	• If students are not given opportunity to choose or weigh in on the problem or project, it could feel inauthentic to them. • Some students prefer more traditional prefer paper and pencil tests to show learning.	• No change or harm from current model.	• Many educators would need to shift their practice.
Risk Mitigation	• Solicit student voice in this work for it to truly be meaningful for them. • Allow multiple ways for students to express learning; PBL offers multiple means of expression and flexibility by providing choice.	N/A	• Provide substantial professional development and ongoing support for educators. • Provide time and space in for adult collaboration, calibration, and learning.

Prototype Details:

- All PBL projects will be aligned to academic standards.
- Students will be measured individually on their own academic learning.
- PBL will provide flexibility for students by promoting variety and multiple modalities and types of interaction.

Year 0 (2023-24)

- Purposefully selected teachers (e.g. science *or* social studies) across the five comprehensive middle schools participate in a pilot to begin learning about the ways in which they implement PBL and how their students benefit.

Year 1 (2024-25)

- All middle school students will experience at least one PBL unit (e.g. science *or* social studies).
- All staff will engage in extensive, ongoing, job-embedded professional development on the foundations of PBL.

- Schools assess what is working what is not working through data-driven evaluation and continuous cycles of improvement.

Year 2 (2025-26)

- Students will experience additional PBL opportunities.
- Staff will begin to consider and plan for cross-curricular PBL projects (e.g. one PBL project that is taught in both science *and* social studies).
- Build on learnings from Year One.

Logistics for consideration:

- How to best measure successful student and staff growth and learning?
- How to provide differentiation to students with variety of needs?
- Extensive, ongoing, job embedded professional development will be necessary to train educators how to teach in a PBL method and to develop units to be used across middle schools.

General Description: We define a modified block schedule as students attending all seven classes on Mon/Tues/Fri *for 50 minutes* each, and attending periods 2, 4, and 6 on Wednesday, and periods 1, 3, 5, and 7 on Thursdays *for 90 minutes* each.

Goal: To deepen student learning by increasing the time spent in classes and reducing transitions/interruptions and stress.

Key Features:

- Classes meet four times per week, instead of five.
- On the block days, the schedule better supports opportunities for deeper relationships, student learning, and flexible use of time.
- Reduces the number of class transitions per week, especially on Wednesdays.
- Strengthens the transition from middle school by aligning to current high school schedule.

Problems/Opportunities Addressed:

	The need for an increased sense of belonging	A lack of meaningful connections with peers and adults	A need for breaks	A gap between skills taught and those needed for future success	Irrelevant instruction and use of time	A lack of interactive learning environments	Meaningful engagement and empowering student voice	The transition process between levels does not meet students' needs
Scheduling	**X**			**X**			**X**	**X**

Overview of the Critical Criteria Review:

	Students	Families	Staff
Benefits	Adopting a modified block schedule with fewer and longer class periods can enhance student learning by increasing focused learning time, reducing interruptions, and minimizing transitions and stress. Longer class periods can help students build relationships with their peers and teachers, think critically, and complete assignments with support during the school day. This approach may benefit students who struggle to complete homework at home and provides access to resources that	Families can benefit from seeing their children more deeply engaged in class content. Additionally, they may receive critical feedback from their children if they are struggling to engage or build interest in a particular class.	Longer class periods would allow teachers to delve deeper into content, provide support, and develop stronger relationships with students. Counselors and support staff can also utilize the longer periods to check in with students. This approach allows for more flexible use of time, could increase teacher collaboration, and aligns

	may not be available otherwise.		with the current high school schedule.
Harm/ Barriers	Potential for mental and physical exhaustion, difficulty adjusting to a new schedule, challenges for students with attention or learning disabilities, a reduction in variety of learning experiences, potential limitation of classes and exposure to subjects, difficulty fitting in after-school activities, challenges for students with family or work responsibilities, and the need for additional teacher training and support. If classes are not engaging enough, students could become bored.	With longer class periods, students may experience more academic stress and pressure to perform, which could impact their mental health and well-being. This could also be a concern for families who are supportive of their child's academic success but who may not have the resources to support them at home.	Risk of increased workload and burnout due to the need for longer lessons and more material preparation. Additional training and professional development may also be necessary, which can be time-consuming and costly.
Risk Mitigation	It will be important that educators are trained on how to utilize a longer class period to keep students engaged and productive.	The need for regular feedback from families to understand and mitigate challenges faced students may experience with this new schedule.	It will be important to provide significant, ongoing support, including professional development and coaching, to ensure that teachers are able to use time effectively and efficiently. Require teachers to know how meaningfully engage students.

Prototype Details:

Sample Schedule – Modified Block

Monday/Tuesday		Wednesday BLOCK		Thursday BLOCK		Friday	
Period	*Time*	*Period*	*Time*	*Period*	*Time*	*Period*	*Time*
1	50 min	2	90 min	1	90 min	1	50 min
2	50 min	4	90 min	3	90 min	2	50 min
3	50 min	6	90 min	5a (Flex)	90 min 2nd Lunch -30 min	3	50 min
4	50 min			5b (Flex)	90 min 1st Lunch - 30 min	4	50 min
5a (Flex)	50 min 2nd Lunch – 30 min			7	90 min	5a (Flex)	50 min 2nd Lunch – 30 min
5b (Flex)	50 min 1st Lunch – 30 min					5b (Flex)	50 min 1st Lunch – 30 min
6	50 min					6	50 min
7	50 min					7	50 min

Logistics for consideration

- Professional development for staff to teach in a block schedule.
- The future RMS Implementation Team is encouraged to creatively and critically explore the use of "Flex" time to fully support student needs.

Stakeholder Engagement

Round 1 Listening Campaign

Round 1 focused on empathizing with our middle school students and collectively understanding and defining the problems and opportunities that needed to be addressed ("Empathize" and "Define" phases of design thinking) to more fully meet our middle schoolers' needs. This knowledge helped guide the work of the RMS Steering Committee and led to ideas to make BSD middle schools more developmentally responsive and student-centered.

Round 1 of the RMS Project gathered detailed, qualitative, formative feedback from middle school students, staff, and families in the form of surveys, listening circles, and outreach visits. The data collected highlighted the need for improved student well-being and academic learning environments and guided the direction and next steps in the project. The RMS Steering Committee identified eight opportunities for improvement and developed a vision for a developmentally responsive, student-centered education. The project then moved into the "Ideate and Prototype" phase, which involved continued interaction with stakeholders and data collection.

Round 2 Listening Campaign

Building on what we learned in Round 1, Round 2 focused on sharing and promoting understanding of four "scrappy" draft prototypes or ideas for reimagining middle school with a selection of middle school stakeholders, to gather their reactions and feedback. This part of the RMS work included the "Test", "Ideate", and "Prototype" phases of design thinking. The RMS Steering Committee needed to know what stakeholders thought about the prototypes to clarify, strengthen, and improve the prototypes. The intention was to gather high-quality—not high quantity of—detailed, formative stakeholder feedback that would lead to productive, data-informed revisions of the prototypes, before they were shared with the broader BSD community during Round 3.

Approximately 250 middle school staff, families/guardians, and students were involved In Round 2 of the project, which took place in March 2023. The RMS Steering Committee conducted 18 outreach visits to gather feedback on the prototypes. These visits included interactions with staff, families/guardians, and students from various groups such as Multilingual Learners, Special Education students, Black Student Union students, Leadership Class students, Advanced Learning students, and Student Advisory Committee students. Each visit began with a presentation of the four prototypes, followed by collection of written feedback from stakeholders using prompts that encouraged positive feedback, ideas for improvement, and questions for exploration. Around 700 comments were collected, and the feedback was analyzed and shared with each prototype team. The teams received a summary document with stakeholder reactions, likes, concerns, wonderings/questions, and suggestions. Additionally, an overview of stakeholder sentiment about each prototype was provided to the RMS Steering Committee. This feedback helped the prototype teams identify areas that were valued by stakeholders, as well as areas for refinement, which were then incorporated into the Committee's final recommendations.

Round 3 Listening Campaign

Building on what we learned in Rounds 1 and 2, Round 3 focused on sharing and promoting understanding of the four refined prototypes—or ideas—for reimagining middle school and gathering quantitative feedback via a four-question survey from as broad a range of

stakeholders as possible. Round 3 returned to the original focus of RMS and asked stakeholders how well each prototype would improve the middle school experience—based on the problems and opportunities identified in Round 1. Round 3 feedback was summative and was used to: 1) inform what stakeholders valued and help the RMS Steering Committee prioritize the final RMS recommendations, and 2) help guide the future work of the 2023-24 RMS Implementation Team.

More specifically, Round 3 consisted of a descriptive video about the four proposed prototypes (Advisory/Homeroom, Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Scheduling, Teacher Teams) and a "Make Middle School Better" survey that asked stakeholders to assess the extent to which each of the prototypes would improve the middle school experience for students. The survey was completed by 2,925 stakeholders, including 2,249 students, 553 family members/guardians, and 123 staff members.

High-level survey results for **Advisory/Homeroom**:
- 44% of survey respondents had a favorable perception of Advisory/Homeroom
- 26% had a neutral (not negative or positive) perception
- 24% had an unfavorable perception
- 6% reported not knowing if Advisory/Homeroom would improve the middle school experience for students
- As a group, family members/guardians felt most positively toward Advisory/Homeroom (67% favorable), followed by staff (51% favorable), and then students (38% favorable).

High-level survey results for **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)**:
- 43% of survey respondents had a favorable perception of Problem-Based Learning
- 28% had a neutral (not negative or positive) perception
- 23% had an unfavorable perception
- 6% reported not knowing if Problem-Based Learning would improve the middle school experience for students
- As a group, family members/guardians felt most positively toward Problem-Based Learning (70% favorable), followed by staff (42% favorable), and then students (37% favorable).

High-level survey results for **Scheduling**:
- 38% of survey respondents had a favorable perception of Scheduling
- 21% had a neutral (not negative or positive) perception
- 35% had an unfavorable perception
- 6% reported not knowing if Scheduling would improve the middle school experience for students
- As a group, family members/guardians felt most positively toward Scheduling (56% favorable), followed by staff (46% favorable), and then students (33% favorable).

High-level survey results for **Teacher Teams**:

- 37% of survey respondents had a favorable perception of Teacher Teams
- 29% had a neutral (not negative or positive) perception
- 25% had an unfavorable perception
- 9% reported not knowing if Teacher Teams would improve the middle school experience for students
- As a group, family members/guardians felt most positively toward Teacher Teams (64% favorable), followed by staff (55% favorable), and then students (30% favorable).

See *Appendix I* for more details.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Recommended Models
The RMS Steering Committee recommends **two models** that hold great potential for reimagining our comprehensive middle schools: **Advisory/Homeroom** and **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)**, which aligns well with the district's already in-progress Global Competencies curricular initiative. *Scheduling changes will be required to support implementation. The Teacher Teams prototype may be embedded in Advisory and PBL.*

The **Advisory/Homeroom** model aims to create a supportive and inclusive environment for our students by providing designated time for students to connect with a dedicated advisor who serves as a mentor and advocate. This model emphasizes fostering positive relationships, social-emotional development, and character education. By implementing this model, we aim to strengthen our middle school students' sense of belonging and well-being.

The **Problem-Based Learning (PBL)** model focuses on developing students' critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving skills. Students will engage in authentic, real-world challenges, where they will apply their knowledge across disciplines to solve complex problems and develop their Global Competency skills. This approach promotes active learning and inquiry-based exploration. We believe that Problem-Based Learning will enhance students' academic motivation and engagement, and in doing so, lead to deeper understanding of content and the development of the skills listed above.

For more detailed information about the model prototypes, please see page 19.

Recommendation #2: Recommended Timeline
We recommend that these models be implemented according to the timeline outlined in *Figure 5*. This timeline provides a clear roadmap for the phased implementation of both models, allowing for a smooth transition and ensuring sufficient time and effort for the preparation, professional development, and stakeholder engagement that will be required to ensure successful implementation.

Recommendation #3: Resource Allocation
We strongly recommend that the necessary resources, infrastructure, and time be allocated to fully support the successful implementation of the models and a smooth and effective transition toward middle schools that more fully support our students. To facilitate this, we propose investing in the following resource areas:
- Extensive Professional Development for Educators and Leaders
- Comprehensive, Evidence-Based Curricula
- Dedicated Staffing Considerations
- Robust, Data-Driven Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

By allocating resources to these key areas, we can provide the necessary support for our educators and students as they learn to do middle school in a new way. We believe that investing in professional development, curriculum, staffing, and evaluation will contribute to the strong foundation and support system that is needed for the transformative middle school experience we envision.
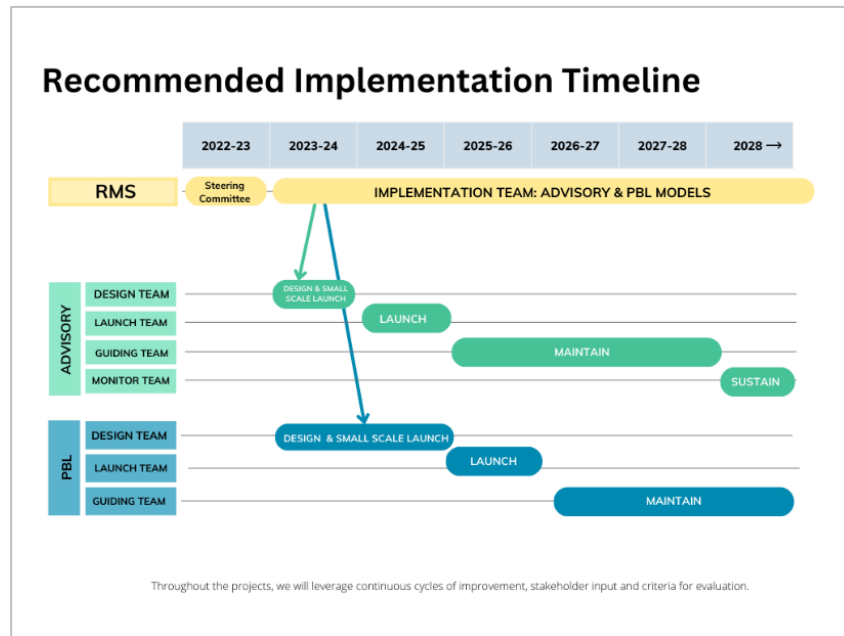

Figure 5: Recommended Implementation Timelines

Next Steps

The RMS Steering Committee recommends the following immediate next steps:

1. Form a dedicated RMS Implementation Team: Establish a team of educators and administrators who will spearhead the development and implementation of Advisory/Homeroom and Problem-Based Learning (PBL). This team should have deep understanding of student needs, curricula, instructional strategies, and how schools function.

2. Identify clear objectives: Determine the specific goals and objectives of the Advisory/Homeroom and Problem-Based Learning (PBL) models. Clearly define the desired outcomes to guide program design, implementation, resource allocation, and evaluation and continuous improvement.

3. Conduct a needs assessment: Assess the specific needs and challenges of our middle school students to identify the specific areas where Advisory and PBL would be expected to make significant, positive impacts. In what ways will student experience and outcomes look different as a result of these programs? Which student populations are expected to benefit and in what ways? Gather feedback from teachers, students, and parents through surveys, interviews, and observations. Use this information to shape the program's content and design.

4. Design frameworks: Develop clear, logical frameworks that outlines how Advisory/Homeroom and PBL will be structured. Determine the frequency and duration of Advisory sessions, the process for selecting and assigning student groups, and the integration of PBL into the curriculum. Define the roles and responsibilities of teachers, advisors, students, school and district leaders, and families/guardians.

5. Adopt and develop resources and materials: Create or curate resources and materials that support the Advisory/Homeroom and PBL models. These may include instructional guides, problem scenarios, rubrics, templates, and examples of successful projects. Ensure that the resources align with the model's objectives and consider the needs of diverse student populations.

Implementation Planning

A RMS Implementation Team needs to be formed. The Implementation Team will develop a plan based on the approved recommendations. Like the work of the RMS Steering Committee, implementation designs and plans will be based on research and stakeholder engagement and will phase in proposed changes over time, through a thoughtful, well-defined, realistic piloting and evaluation process.

The Implementation Team will be tasked with producing a report that is guided by:
- A design-based process that includes data and evaluation and centers stakeholder expertise and feedback
- Research (academic literature and the experiences of other districts/schools)
- Reasonable timeline and expectations

Required Resources

The success of the proposed Advisory/Homeroom and PBL models depends in large part on the quality of the implementation support, which itself relies upon the following:

- **Comprehensive Curricula:** The models should have comprehensive, research-based curricula that address students' developmental, academic, and social-emotional needs. Curricula should be age-appropriate and responsive to changing needs and concerns.

- **Professional Development:** Educators should receive comprehensive training and ongoing professional development and coaching to equip them with the skills and knowledge they need to properly implement the models and effectively support students. This will likely require additional compensation for educators' participation in trainings.

- **Staffing:** It's important to have leaders who effectively coordinate and monitor the models. These leaders will help the five comprehensive school develop a shared vision, create a positive and inclusive school culture, promote student success, and support the ongoing professional development of educators. It will be important for existing staff in the Teaching and Learning department to align their work with developing and implementing the Advisory/Homeroom and PLB models.

Estimated Investment

	2023-24	2024-25 Advisory launch	2025-26 PBL launch	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29
RMS Implementation Meetings	$25,000	$25,000	$25,000	$20,000	$15,000	$10,000
Designing Advisory Model & Adopting Curriculum	$15,000	$169,750 (T&L 7511 budget)	$31,080 (T&L 7511 budget)	$33,300 (T&L 7511 budget)	$35,520 (T&L 7511 budget)	$37,740 (T&L 7511 budget)
Designing PBL Model	$15,000	$50,000	$40,000	$40,000	$40,000	$40,000
Professional Development	$60,000	$135,000 (8 hours cert training)	$150,000	$60,000	$60,000	$60,000
Total (excludes 7511)	**$115,000**	**$210,000**	**$215,000**	**$120,000**	**$115,000**	**$110,000**

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement Criteria

To determine whether the models proposed are effective and well-received by stakeholders in practice, we will need to establish clear goals and outcomes and regularly assess progress towards the goals. The following data sources and metrics can be used to inform progress and success:

- **Student Feedback:** Collecting student feedback via surveys, focus groups, and interviews from students provides valuable insight into their experiences and outcomes.
- **Academic Performance**: Analysis of student academic performance can provide one measure of program effectiveness. Data could include student grades and test scores from before, during, and after implementation.
- **Attendance Rates**: Regularly tracking student attendance rates can provide insight into the impact of the models on one important measure of student engagement. If attendance rates improve after the implementation of the program, it may be an indication of the program's effectiveness.
- **Disciplinary Records**: Tracking disciplinary records can help determine whether the model might be contributing to reduced disciplinary incidents, especially for traditionally underserved student groups, and a more positive overall school culture.
- **Feedback from Families/Guardians**: Gathering feedback from families and guardians can provide another type of insight. Surveys, focus groups, and meetings can be used to gather feedback about the program's impact on their child's overall experience in middle school.

- **Feedback from Educators and Staff:** Collecting feedback from educators and other school staff can help determine model effectiveness. Educators and staff can provide feedback on the quality of the models, the usefulness of the training they receive, and the support they need to effectively instruct and support their students.

By regularly assessing and analyzing these factors, the district will be able to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of the Advisory/Homeroom and PBL models and make necessary adjustments to improve student experiences and outcomes.

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Appendix A: RMS Roles

To ensure a wide variety of experiences, perspectives and knowledge were located within the RMS project, initial staffing ideas included the following:

Role	Role Description
Project Sponsor	"Typically, the project sponsor is a senior executive in an organization (often at or just below the board level) who is **accountable for the success of the project**, in terms of its business outcomes and benefits." ([Source](#)) "Leaders need to give steering committee members the tools to perform their duties by setting standards and **clear goals**." ([Source](#))
Steering Committee (SC) Chair	This role organizes and leads the work of the Steering Committee and the Core Team, and liaises with the Project Sponsor, Project Manager, and Researcher to ensure the overall project goal is accomplished. The SC Chair is responsible for project deliverables, milestones, timeline, tracking and updating of progress.
Core Team	Guides the work by developing the project charter; creating a detailed project timeline; planning and facilitating Steering Committee meetings; bringing draft proposals for feedback to the larger group.
Steering Committee[1] (Including smaller Core Team)	"The purpose of the…steering committee is to help the sponsor deliver the outcomes and realize the benefits." ([Source](#)) Steering Committee members will be responsible for leading and gathering feedback from their own "role alike" advisory groups (middle school principals, middle school students, middle school parents/families, curriculum developers, central office directors, high school student, high school teacher).
Project Manager (PM)	"In the broadest sense, project managers (PMs) are responsible for **planning, organizing, and directing the completion of specific projects** for an organization while ensuring these projects are on time, on budget, and within scope." ([Source](#)) This will be a big project with high visibility and lots to manage. It is important to assign a project manager to help ensure project success and timeliness.
Researcher/Evaluator	In the planning phase of the project, this role provides **research, design, and "success metrics" leadership and support** to the SC Chair and SC. In the implementation phase of the project, this role **leads the design, execution, and analysis of formative and summative evaluations** to determine project progress, success, and areas for continued improvement.

Appendix B: RMS Steering Committee Membership

Role	Name(s)
Project Lead	Melisa Macias, Director of Teaching & Learning
Project Sponsors	Eva Collins, Deputy Superintendent Sharon Kautz, Executive Director, Teaching & Learning
Project Management	Melanie McGee, Director of Project Management
Core Team	Melisa Macias, Director of Teaching & Learning Wendy Powell, Curriculum Developer, Secondary, SEL Drew O'Connell, Director of Student Life Darren Down, MTSS Coach Anna Van Windekens, Research Scientist
Steering Committee	7 Parent representatives 5 Students 5 Teachers 4 Administrators 4 School Staff 7 Central Office Staff 32 total members
Level 2	102 (Students, staff, central office staff) *Due to overwhelming interest in serving on the Steering Committee, and our desire to include all voices that want to be heard, we have designed a Level 2 group of members that will work closely with the Steering Committee at select points throughout the process. This is a way to bring even more perspectives to the table.*

Appendix C: Why Form RMS?

Why Form RMS?

Students, in partnership with staff, families, and the larger Bellevue community, will imagine a new kind of middle school where young people engage in innovative, personalized learning experiences both in and out of school, to capitalize on and build their cognitive and social emotional capabilities.

- **Covid-19-** The Covid-19 pandemic has challenged almost every aspect of how we think about education and pushed us to think about how we can better serve our students, particularly those who have been traditionally marginalized.

- **Global Issues:** A time in history when our world is dealing with enormous challenges and at a time when the opportunities created by those challenges have never been greater. Our students are the ones who will bring solutions to environmental concerns, global warming, conservation of natural resources, racial and gender inequalities, role of technology and development of alternative energy sources, etc.

- **Child Development:** Early adolescence is defined generally as ages 11 to 15 and grades six to nine. These students experience significant biological, cognitive, and social-emotional changes during this period of their lives. Research on positive youth development outlines how middle schools can help young people navigate the changes of early adolescence and build on their innate strengths to become confident, purposeful, healthy, thriving adults and members of society.

- **Identity and Social:** During the middle school years, our students will be navigating these challenges of adolescence while also continuing to grow in to their identities. It is important that we support all of our students in feeling empowered in their identities, through experiencing sense of belonging in their school communities.

The middle school years represent an opportunity for young people to find their voice, discover and develop their interests, and develop longstanding relationships. This effort will imagine a new kind of middle school where young people engage in innovative, personalized learning experiences, both in and out of school, to capitalize on and build their cognitive and social emotional capabilities. We have an opportunity to improve the school culture, build more trusting relationships with students, and empower them to take greater ownership of their learning.

Together, we can create a dynamic and powerful force to advance new ways of thinking about how our BSD students will reimagine their middle school experience!

Appendix D: RMS Steering Committee Meeting Dates

1. 8/17/22
2. 9/8/22
3. 9/20/22
4. 10/3/22
5. 10/20/22
6. 11/3/22
7. 11/17/22
8. 12/8/22
9. 1/12/23
10. 2/2/23
11. 2/7/23
12. 3/9/23
13. 3/23/23
14. 4/6/23
15. 4/20/23
16. 5/4/23
17. 5/18/23
18. 6/1/23

Appendix E: Critical Criteria

Procedure 0130P will be embedded throughout the process as illustrated in the table below. The phases in the first column align to the Design Thinking process. The second column includes success criteria for each phase to ensure thoughtful, collaborative, equity-centered engagement, and co-creation.

Design Phase	Success Criteria
Empathy	- Do we understand the needs of students? (0130P) - Have we observed a middle school student? - Did we talk to a diverse set of middle school with proximity to the problem? (0130P) - Did we create a safe space for honest sharing? - Have I asked questions about students' needs? - Have I shadowed a student? - Have I interviewed a student? - Did we listen to and learn from middle school students? (0130P)
Define	- Is the problem statement focused on middle school students? - Who are the students impacted (intentionally or unintentionally)? (0130P) - Did we identify the challenge? - Did we examine research and data? - Do we understand context & identity root cause? (0130P) - Did we reflect on personal experiences?
Ideation	- Are different perspectives heard during the process? (0130P) - How does/could this promote opportunities or access for those who have been historically excluded? (0130P) - How can this benefit all students equitably? (0130P) - Did we engage community to generate solutions? (0130P) - Did we define success and barriers/mitigations? (0130P) - Did we generate ideas that would lead to success/overcome barriers?
Prototype	- Is this aligned to the district's mission, vision, values? - How does this result in preventing, reducing, or removing barriers to more equitable outcomes? (0130P) - Have provisions been made to provide necessary supports (training, resources, time) for implementation? (0130P)
Test (Feedback and Revise)	- Based on what was learned from completing this review, have we made changes? (0130P) - How were implementation plans adjusted to ensure key relevant issues will not be missed? (0130P)

Appendix F: Why Choice Schools Were Not Part of This Project

Why are Bellevue Big Picture School and International School not formally included in RMS?
Big Picture and International are not formally included because as BSD "choice schools" they have their own histories, culture, models, and, most importantly—requirements. For example, Big Picture is required to follow a [specific model.](#) We also recognize that parents/family members and students have purposefully selected into these choice schools for the unique educational experiences they provide. While not formally included, the Reimagine Middle School committee is committed to engaging with Big Picture and International to learn from them and share what we learn with them.

Appendix G: BSD Data

Bellevue School District Data - Enrollment, Social-Emotional, Academics data

With 3,955 students currently enrolled across our five comprehensive middle schools (Chinook, Highland, Odle, Tillicum, Tyee), these schools represent twenty percent of all BSD student enrollment. As shown in Figure 11, school-level enrollment ranges from a low of 650 students at Highland Middle School to a high between 834-901 students at Chinook, Odle, and Tyee Middle Schools (April 2023 Enrollment Data).
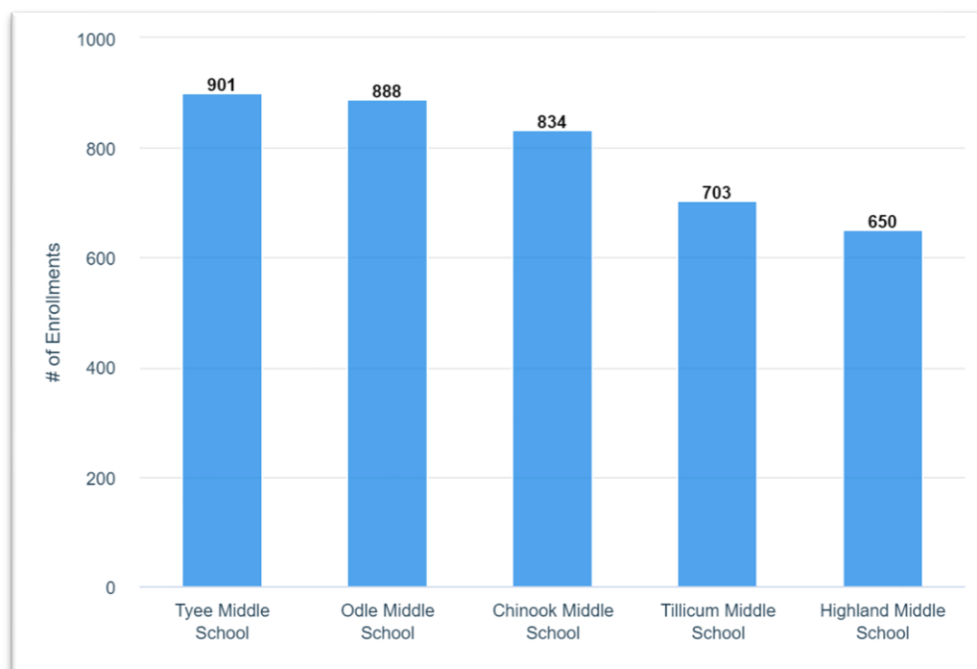
Figure 11: Enrollment Data by School, April, 2023

Social-Emotional

As shown in the Figures 12 & 13, district Panorama survey data tell us that in Fall 2021, 69% of our middle school students had a favorable **sense of belonging**[1] at school. Several groups reported smaller proportions of students with favorable responses:

- 64% favorable: Students receiving Special Education services and low income

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[1] Sense of Belonging: A domain comprised of 11 individual questions on the district's annual Panorama survey that captures "The extent to which students feel that they are valued members of their school's community."

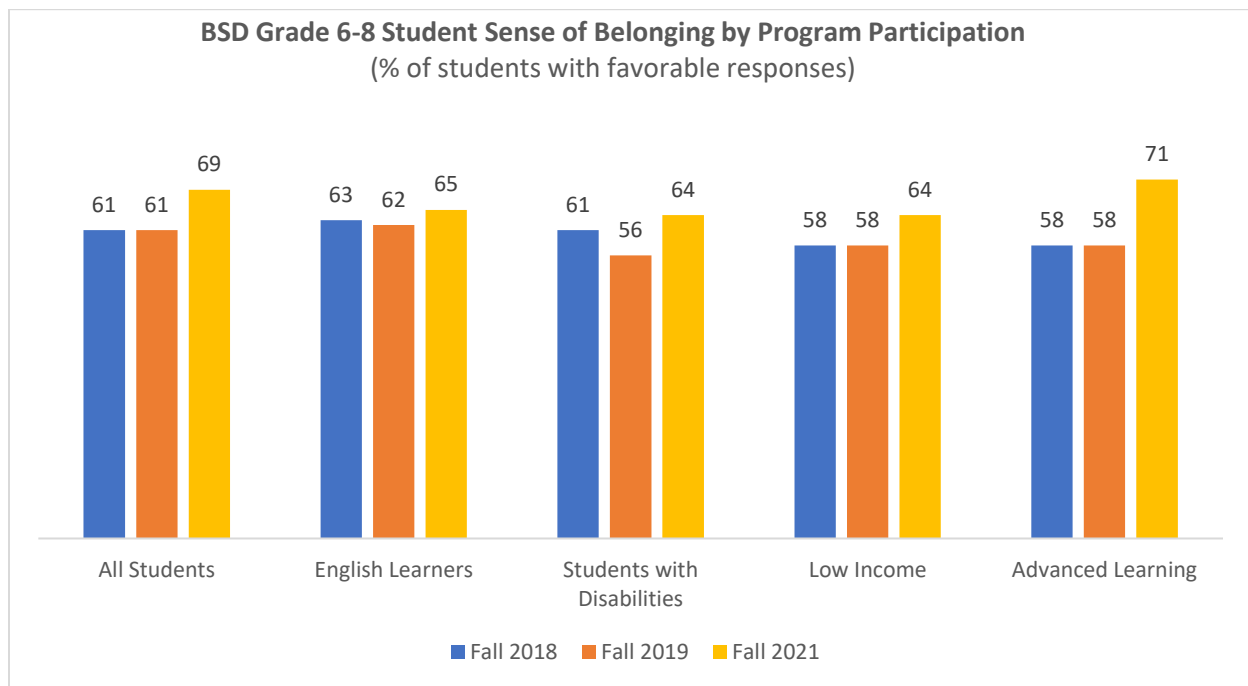- 65% favorable: Black students and students receiving English language learner services
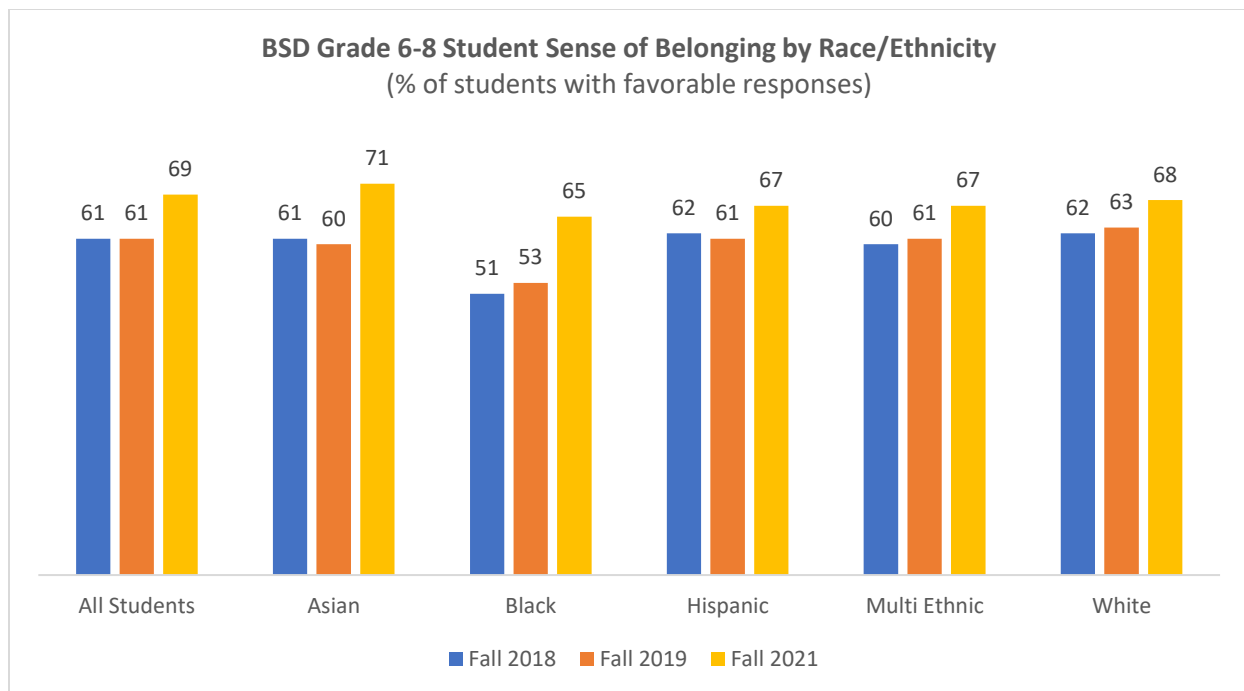
BSD Grade 6-8 Student Sense of Belonging by Program Participation
(% of students with favorable responses)

	All Students	English Learners	Students with Disabilities	Low Income	Advanced Learning
Fall 2018	61	63	61	58	58
Fall 2019	61	62	56	58	58
Fall 2021	69	65	64	64	71

Figure 12: Panorama Sense of Belonging Data, by Program

BSD Grade 6-8 Student Sense of Belonging by Race/Ethnicity
(% of students with favorable responses)

	All Students	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Multi Ethnic	White
Fall 2018	61	61	51	62	60	62
Fall 2019	61	60	53	61	61	63
Fall 2021	69	71	65	67	67	68

Figure 13: Panorama Sense of Belonging Data, by Race/Ethnicity

Academics

Washington students take state and federal tests to assess their learning and that of the educational system. The Smarter Balanced assessments (SBA) in English language arts (ELA) and math are given to students in grades 3-8 and 10. The SBA Proficiency Levels graph (see Figures 14 & 15) below illustrate how students performed by grade level and subject area.

For the Spring 2022 ELA SBA:

- 65% of 6th graders met or exceeded standards.
- 74% of 7th graders met or exceeded standards.
- 75% of 8th graders met or exceeded standards.
- In other words, approximately a quarter of our middle school students did not meet ELA standards.

For the Spring 2022 math SBA:

- 63% of 6th graders met or exceeded standards.
- 66% of 7th graders met or exceeded standards.
- 68% of 8th graders met or exceeded standards.
- In other words, approximately a third of our middle school students did not meet math standards.

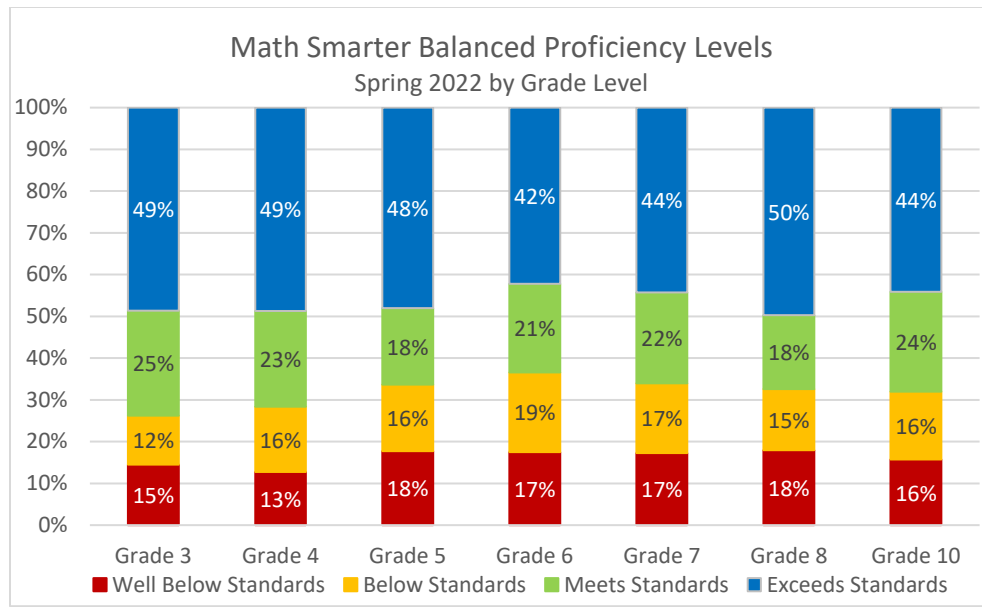English Language Arts Smarter Balanced Proficiency Levels
Spring 2022 by Grade Level

Grade	Well Below Standards	Below Standards	Meets Standards	Exceeds Standards
Grade 3	12%	16%	20%	52%
Grade 4	15%	13%	20%	52%
Grade 5	13%	11%	26%	50%
Grade 6	17%	17%	33%	32%
Grade 7	14%	12%	33%	41%
Grade 8	11%	14%	33%	42%
Grade 10	5%	8%	28%	59%
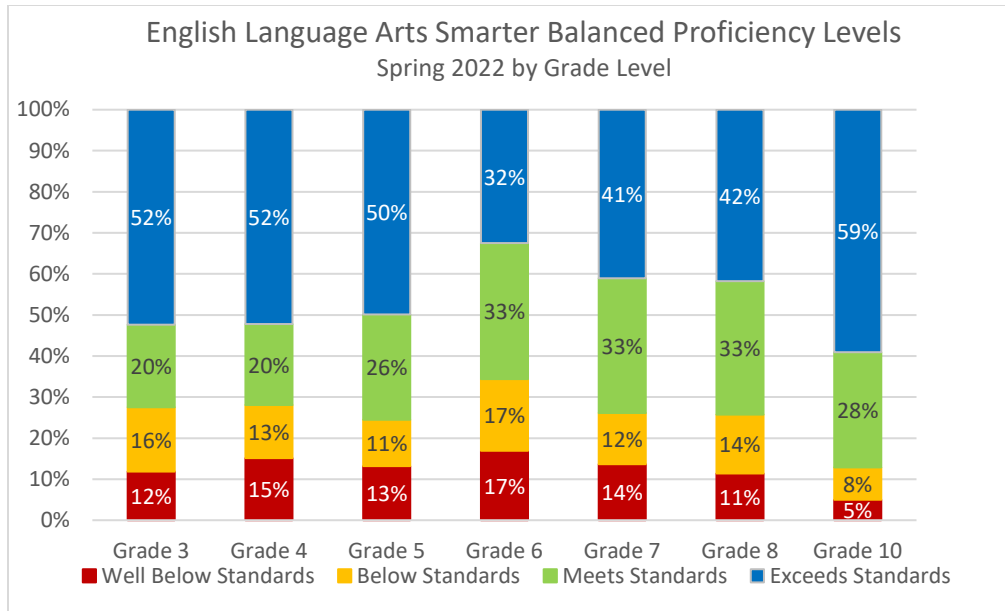
Figure 14: ELA Smarter Balanced Proficiency Levels 2022

Figure 15: Math Smarter Balanced Proficiency Levels 2022

As the data show, our middle schools are doing some things really well for some students, and there are pockets of excellence. At the same time, we are not meeting the needs of all our students; and we have not yet systematized this excellence. Even our students who are doing well academically may be struggling in other ways (e.g., high-achieving students who struggle with anxiety and/or depression).

Appendix H: Fall 2022 Middle School Student Survey Themes

Source: Panorama Fall 2022 Student Survey – School (Grades 6-8): 3,861 students took this survey, and 3,464 responded to the question, ***"What do you like about your current middle school experience?"*** **(Five comprehensive middle schools)**

Response themes and students' quotes are mentioned below.

Socialization and Friendship:

"I know some students that are my friends from other outside activities so I have a supporting friend group to help me in this middle school experience. I also have friends from last year so I don't feel left out or alone".

"My friends are the reason why i actually get up early in the morning and go to school".

Supportive Teachers and Adults:

"I like how I am able to form relationships with teachers. I also like how teachers give some opportunities to kids who doesn't speak up as much. I am more confident in speaking my first language Japanese. At school, I don't speak much but at Japanese School I speak a lot. I see how teachers give opportunities which I like because sometimes people just need a little push to speak up".

"i like how nice the teachers are and if i need something the teacher will sit down with me at tutorial and explain what I'm doing that is not right".

Elective Classes and Choices:

"I like the variety in different elective classes because it gives students advanced options to learn by taking coding and robotics classes that might usually be unavailable. I also love being able to see my friends during lunch, even though most of them have 2nd lunch while I have 3rd lunch".

"I like the way that classes fit together in a way that allows for enough time to get classwork and homework done in class. I also enjoy the electives that we have which allows students to choose based on their hobbies and things they like to do".

Extracurricular Activities:

"I enjoy that there are a lot of opportunities (for example, clubs) for students to expand and grow their interests, especially compared to elementary school".

"I like the fact that there are so many electives to choose from and that you also have after school sports and clubs to ensure that a student gets a bit of everything. What I mean is academic studies and non-academic studies".

Diversity:

"I like that there are many different classes with many different people coming from all around, having different backgrounds and different experiences so we can learn with each other, trying to make it".

Appendix I: RMS Stakeholder Engagement

Listening Campaign #1

Description of Round 1: Round 1 took place from August to November 2022 and included middle school students, family members/guardians, staff, and RMS Steering Committee Level 1 and Level 2 members. We used surveys, listening circles (focus group interviews), and outreach visits to gather feedback directly from stakeholders. We also drew on other data, such as administrative data (e.g., student attendance), a student panel, and shadowing of current middle school students. Round 1 data was primarily open-ended and qualitative in nature and was driven by two guiding questions for middle school stakeholders to think about and respond to:

- "What do you like about the current middle school experience?"
- "What would you include in the design of your dream middle school?"

As shown in Figure 16, we gathered feedback from students, staff, and families—prioritizing data collected from our students (three student data sources) in this first round of stakeholder feedback.
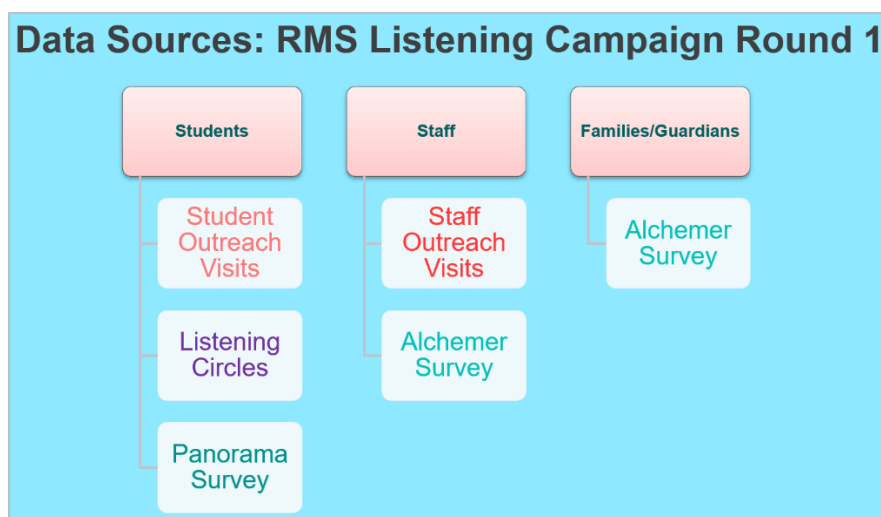
Figure 16: Data Sources for Round 1 of RMS Listening Campaign

Student Outreach Visits:

RMS Core Team members visited their assigned middle school to interact directly and naturally with students during one day's lunch periods (e.g., one Core Team member attended Odle's three lunch periods on October 11, 2022). We approached tables of students and asked if we could ask them a couple of questions (guiding questions listed above) about their middle school experience. Core Team members recorded notes, which were then analyzed thematically. In total, we visited 14 lunch periods across the five schools and interacted with ~150 students in this way.

Student Listening Circles:

RMS Core Team members partnered with school staff at the comprehensive middle schools to conduct six purposefully selected listening circles to elevate the voices of student populations known to have unique needs, strengths, experiences, and perspectives, and who, at times, are not fully served by our current system:

- Multilingual Learner (MLL) students (Highland)
- Special Education (SpEd) students (Tillicum)
- Black Student Union (BSU) students (Odle)
- AVID Class students (Odle)
- Leadership Class students (Tyee)
- Advanced Learning (AL) students (Chinook)

The Listening Circles were conducted as focus group interviews, with students typically seated in a large circle in a classroom, alongside one or more RMS Core Team member facilitator. The facilitator asked students to reflect on and respond to the two guiding questions ("what do you like…", "…include in the design of your dream middle school"). This format allowed us to gather rich, nuanced data about students' experiences, thoughts, and ideas through asking students to explain the how and why behind their answers, and by listening as students naturally built on and responded to what their peers said. Core Team members recorded notes, which were then analyzed thematically. In total, we interacted with ~80 students (and approximately seven educators) in this way.

Student Panorama Survey:

The two guiding questions were included on the Fall 2022 Student Panorama Survey. Most students at the five comprehensive middle schools opted to responded to these open-ended questions. For example, 2,860 of 3,894 students (73%) wrote an answer to the "design of your dream middle school" question, which were then analyzed thematically.

Staff Outreach Visits:

Just like the Student Outreach Visits described above, RMS Core Team members visited their assigned middle school to interact directly and naturally with staff via a drop-in format for approximately two hours on a pre-determined day (e.g., one Core Team member stationed themselves in the school's staff lounge from 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM on October 17, 2022). We asked staff the two guiding questions and engaged in thoughtful conversations to learn more about their experiences and perspectives, and the reasoning behind their answers.

These visits provided an opportunity for staff to get to know more about the RMS Project and speak with at least one RMS Steering Committee member—helping to build collective understanding of and support for our work. Core Team members recorded notes, which were

then analyzed thematically. In total, we held five visits (one per school) and interacted with ~54 middle school staff members (8-16/school) this way.

Staff and Families/Guardians Alchemer Survey:

Using a brief, anonymous, online survey on the Alchemer platform, we gathered written responses to the two guiding questions from middle school staff members and families/guardians of current middle school students. We also welcomed responses from families/guardians of current 9th grade students at Bellevue, Interlake, Newport, and Sammamish High School who were interested in taking the survey, since they represent the perspectives of families who have already gone through a BSD comprehensive middle school. In total, 71 BSD middle school staff members responded to the survey, with at least 10 staff respondents per middle school. There were 585 family/guardian respondents with a current BSD middle school student and 89 family/guardian respondents with a current 9th grader. Survey responses were analyzed thematically.

Additional Data Sources Used during "Empathize" and "Define" Phase **(August – November 2022)**

In addition to these data sources where we directly asked stakeholders to provide their feedback and ideas (outreach visits, listening circles, surveys), we also relied on several other data sources to inform the "Empathize" and "Define" phase, including:

- BSD Historical Administrative Data from Five Comprehensive Middle Schools (student attendance, grading survey, etc. (*see Appendix G*)
- "Outline of a Middle School Student" visual (completed by RMS Steering Committee members and then thematically analyzed)
- Middle School Student Panel (10 student participants)
- "Shadow a Middle School Student" (~72 hours total, nine purposefully selected students were shadowed for a day by a RMS Steering Committee member)

Outcomes of and Learnings from Round 1:

Two key areas of need for middle school students emerged from the "Empathize" and "Define" phase:

1. **Well-Being:** Students' social-emotional, belonging, and personal needs are foundational to learning. Middle school students want to belong and be valued members of their school community. To make this a reality, students need sufficient, intentional time and opportunities throughout the day to socialize, build deep, meaningful relationships with

peers and school staff, as well as take care of their personal needs (e.g., bathroom, water, food, movement, relaxation, etc.).

2. **Academic Learning:** Ideally defined by student voice, choice, and responsibility in relevant, challenging, interactive, engaging, empowering environments. Middle school students want choice and autonomy in their academic learning. They need learning that is accessible, important, relevant, interactive, engaging, and empowering. They want to feel excited, inspired, and challenged to learn, grow, and be responsible. They want to feel like their learning is going somewhere—that it serves a purpose and is preparing them for their future.

With these student needs in mind, the RMS Steering Committee focused on collaboratively defining the problems and opportunities to be solved. We reached consensus on the following eight opportunities for improving the middle school student experience:

1. Students do not have enough meaningful connection to/with peers and adults.
2. Students want and need a strong sense of belonging at school.
3. Students experience irrelevant instruction and use of time in class.
4. There is a disconnect between the skills students are being taught and the skills they need to succeed in the future.
5. Students need to be meaningfully engaged and able to use their voices.
6. Students lack interactive learning environments.
7. The middle school day and classes are not typically structured in a way that empower students and promotes ownership of their own learning.
8. Students need break time during the school day.
9. There is currently no bridge to support 5th grade students as they transition into middle school.

The RMS Steering Committee also acknowledged that for every action and decision we take to redesign our comprehensive middle schools, there will likely be reactions which may lead to potential unintended consequences affecting many people.

Moving from understanding students' needs and defining opportunities, the RMS Steering Committee collaboratively created the following vision for our work together:

Reimagining Middle School (RMS) Vision:

"*We will redesign the middle school experience to offer a developmentally responsive, student-centered education.*"

We aim for a middle school education that:

- Is rooted in relationships.
- Meets students where they are by promoting positive social interactions and meeting students' social-emotional needs.

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- Focuses on ensuring relevant, meaningful, productive learning environments and academic interactions.
- Serves as a supportive bridge between elementary and high school.

Ideate and Prototype (November 2022 - February 2023)

Although not part of a formal "Listening Campaign", ongoing interaction with stakeholders and collection and use of data continued between November 2022 and March 2023. This part of the RMS work focused on the "Ideate" and "Prototype" phases of design thinking and included:

- *October/November 2022*: AVID classes' "RMS Design Challenge" student projects
    - RMS Steering Committee members were able to learn from the perspectives and creative solutions and ideas of middle school student leaders and to consider incorporating this into our future prototypes. For example, the design challenge resulted in themes around:
        - Use of time at school
        - Food (hunger and health) at school
        - Academics
        - Building student engagement and sense of belonging
        - Career exploration

- *November 2022*: Empathy Panel Interview with school leaders and educators from Big Picture and International Schools
    - Hearing from and asking questions directly of leaders and educators at our district's two secondary choice schools informed RMS Steering Committee members' understanding of how these unique schools operate, especially in terms of levers for reimagining middle school like community-building, student leadership, scheduling, and project-based learning.

- *January 2023*: RMS Steering Committee members completed survey to identify our collective top choices to move into prototyping stage
    - Survey results and table discussions of the results led to the RMS Steering Committee's four prototypes ("Top Solutions for Reimagining Middle School"):
        - Advisory/Homeroom
        - Problem-Based Learning (PBL)
        - Scheduling
        - Teacher Teams with Student Cohorts

- *January/February 2023*: 10 RMS Steering Committee members conducted visits at a total of five innovative out-of-state and local middle schools:
    - Design39Campus (San Diego, CA)
    - Ellen Fletcher Middle School (Palo Alto, CA)

- o Intrinsic School Belmont (Chicago, IL)
- o Odyssey Multiage Program (Bainbridge Island, WA)
- o Summit Atlas (West Seattle, WA)

Listening Campaign #2

Description of Round 2: Round 2 took place in March 2023 and included interaction with approximately 250 middle school staff, families/guardians, and students. Members of the RMS Steering Committee conducted a total of 18 outreach visits where we presented and gathered written feedback on each of the prototypes:

- Five Staff Outreach Visits (one at each of the five middle schools) where we interacted with ~75 total staff members. These visits were planned in partnership with school leaders and BEA representatives. In a couple of cases, to capture additional nuance and detail about staff perspectives, Steering Committee members recorded notes from the conversations that emerged during these visits.
- Seven Family/Guardian Outreach Visits (one at each of the five middle schools plus two virtual sessions) where we interacted with ~100 total family members/guardians. These visits were planned in partnership with school PTSA leaders and school leaders.
- Six Student Outreach Visits where we interacted with ~75 students. We revisited several of the same Listening Circle groups that we interviewed in October 2023:
  - o Multilingual Learner (MLL)/Dual Language (DL) program students
  - o Special Education (SpEd) students
  - o Black Student Union (BSU) students
  - o Leadership Class students
  - o Advanced Learning (AL) student
  - o Student Advisory Committee (SAC) students (current BSD high schoolers)

We started each visit with a formal, approximately 20-minute presentation of the four prototypes. Then, we asked the stakeholders in attendance to share written, open-ended feedback—either on pieces of paper or through a brief, anonymous online survey—using these prompts:

- "'I Like …' provides positive feedback about the prototype."
- "'I Wish …' offers ideas on how the prototype can be changed or improved."
- "'I Wonder …' invites you to share your questions and new ideas that could be explored as we revise the prototypes."

Figure 17 shows the data collection methods used by stakeholder group:

RMS Listening Campaign Round 2 (March 2023): Stakeholder Feedback on Four Prototypes			
	Staff	Families	Students
Survey (Microsoft Forms)	✔	✔	
Handwritten Comments	✔	✔	✔
Recorded Notes (from conversations during Outreach Visits)	✔		

Figure 17: Round 2 Data Collection Methods

In the end, approximately 700 comments about the prototypes were collected from the 250 stakeholders who participated in Round 2:

- Advisory/Homeroom = 160 comments
- Problem-Based Learning (PBL) = 160 comments
- Scheduling = 207 comments
- Teacher Teams = 178 comments

Outcomes of and Learnings from Round 2:

Stakeholder comments were carefully analyzed and thematically organized before being shared back with each prototype team. Each prototype team received a four-to-five-page document that summarized stakeholder feedback on that prototype. For example, the Teacher Teams prototype team received a document organized into the following sections:
- Summary of stakeholder reaction to the Teacher Team prototype (e.g., proportion of respondents who seemed to: feel favorably, feel unfavorably, or felt otherwise; See Figure 19 for more detail.)
- LIKES: What do stakeholders like about Teacher Teams?
- CONCERNS: What concerns stakeholders about Teacher Teams?
- WONDERINGS & QUESTIONS: What wonderings and questions do stakeholders have about Teacher Teams?
- SUGGESTIONS: What suggestions do stakeholders have about Teacher Teams?

As an example of what the prototype teams received, Figure 18 shows a snippet of the "Suggestions" section of the Teacher Teams feedback summary document, which includes several themes. Each theme was supported by stakeholder feedback comments, which provided Steering Committee members with more detail and nuance as they considered what revisions to make to enhance and strengthen their prototype.

Teacher Teams with Student Cohorts (p. 11)

SUGGESTIONS: What suggestions do stakeholders have about Teacher Teams with Student Cohorts?

- Consider **how cohorting could look different across the grade levels** in a way that supports students' growing independence and preparation for high school.
  - "I love cohorts. Suggest more for 6th grade as transition year--lessen as move into 7th/8th."; "I like the cohorts for 6th graders only (slow transition from elementary to middle school)."
- Consider designing for **intentional integration between traditionally separated student groups** (e.g., General Education and Advanced Learning), as well as **avoidance of tracking**.
  - "I like this idea, but wish that there are more intentional mingling of students from different groups: between Gen Ed and Advanced Learning students. I heard that the cohorts would primarily be based on the four required subjects. Students are already separated into GE and AL in these four required subjects. I am afraid that if the cohorts are established within the GE vs. AL groups, this would further the separation between students. Instead, I'd like to see more INTEGRATION between students from GE and AL."; "Here at Tillicum, we would have a problem with (additional) cohorting because we already have cohorting (Spanish dual language program, Chinese dual language program); about half the kids (at Tillicum) have this experience (of already being 'cohorted') and half don't."
- Consider creating an intentional structure/cohort to support the specific needs of **Newcomer English Learner (EL) students**.
  - "I wish that brand new ELL students with no prior English language experience would have a 1-semester cohort (or the remainder of their first partial semester) solely focused on language learning before being thrust into the chaos of traditional middle/high classes. For example, rather than learning Algebra, the student would be learning math terminology and how to count verbally and written, read/understand math directions, story problems, etc."
- To serve students more consistently and effectively and to include all teachers (not just core teachers) in the model, consider **adding a Special Education teacher** to each Teacher team and think about how elective teachers will interact with/be part of teacher teams.
  - "You could promote even more success by assigning special education teachers to one grade level teacher team."; "Elective teachers would benefit from having a consistent team to address student concerns with..."

Figure 18: Snippet of "Suggestions" Section of Teacher Teams Feedback Summary Document

In addition to the detailed qualitative summary report, the RMS Steering Committee was provided with an overview of how the Round 2 stakeholders appeared to feel about each of the prototypes (see Figure 19*)*. Although Round 2 data was not intended to measure how favorable or unfavorable stakeholders felt about the prototypes and the percentages are only estimates based on a simple sentiment analysis of comments—this helped the Committee understand how the prototypes were landing with stakeholders and have an idea of their general levels of enthusiasm, resistance, indifference, or confusion. For example, at least a third (33-43%) of all stakeholder comments were either mixed in nature (recognized both favorable and unfavorable aspects of the prototype), were neutral (not positive or negative), or did not indicate the individual's overall stance on the prototype. This told the Committee that more clarification and detail was likely needed to get these stakeholders onboard with the prototypes, which could be explored using the stakeholder feedback summary document.

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RMS Listening Campaign Round 2 (March 2023): Stakeholder Feedback on Four Prototypes

	Seem to Feel Favorably (% of participants)	Seem to Feel Unfavorably (% of participants)	Provided Mixed Feedback, Felt Neutrally, or Did Not Indicate Overall Stance (% of participants)
Advisory/Homeroom (N=160 participants)	61%	6%	33%
Scheduling (N=207 participants)	40%	22%	38%
Teacher Teams (N=178 participants)	48%	13%	38%
Problem-Based Learning (PBL) (N=160 participants)	47%	11%	43%

Figure 19: Round 2 Stakeholder Reactions by Prototype

Prototype groups used the stakeholder feedback summary document to identify and inform the areas of their prototype in need of refinement. Identified and agreed upon refinements were then incorporated into the Committee's prototype recommendations.

Listening Campaign #3

Purpose of Round 3: Building on what we learned in Rounds 1 and 2, Round 3 focused on sharing and promoting understanding of our four refined prototypes or ideas for reimagining middle school and gathering quantitative feedback via an anonymous, four-question survey from as broad a range of stakeholders as possible. Data collection for Round 3 emphasized the original focus of RMS: improving the middle school experience to better meet student needs by being more developmentally responsive and student-centered and finding solutions to the problems and opportunities identified during Round 1. Round 3 feedback was used to: 1) inform what the RMS Steering Committee prioritized and how we presented RMS recommendations to BSD leadership, and 2) help guide the future work of the 2023-24 RMS Implementation Team.

Description of Round 3: Round 3 surveying took place for one week—from April 25 – May 2, 2023. The Microsoft Forms "Make Middle School Better" survey was available in seven languages and included a link to a 10-minute video created by the RMS Steering Committee that introduced and described each prototype: Advisory/Homeroom, Problem-Based Learning (PBL), Scheduling, and Teacher Teams. The key question asked of stakeholders was, "Do you think this prototype (idea) will improve the middle school experience for students (when implemented well)?" (see Figure 20*).

Figure 20: Key Question on Make Middle School Better Survey

In addition, the survey asked respondents to identify their role (student, family member/guardian, staff member), their school, and their race/ethnicity.

The RMS Steering Committee, in partnership with school-based staff and the BSD Communications Department, engaged in extensive messaging and outreach to invite students,

staff, and families/guardians to take the survey. The survey was shared via email, School Messenger, and other communication channels to:

- All students and staff at the five comprehensive middle schools (Chinook, Highland, Odle, Tillicum, Tyee)
- Families/guardians of students in grades 5-9, with special emphasis on those in grades 6-8. (Those in Grade 5 were included since they have children who will be entering middle school in the next few months and those in Grade 9 were included since they have children exited middle school within the last year.)

In addition, the school-specific outreach efforts in Figure 21 were made to encourage and motivate staff, students, and families to participate in the survey. As with Rounds 1 and 2, we worked to ensure that the survey results included the perspectives of student populations known to have unique needs, strengths, experiences, and perspectives, and who, at times, are not fully served by our current system (e.g., Multilingual Learner students, Special Education students, etc.).

Survey Outreach Sessions	Tillicum	Odle	Tyee	Highland	Chinook	Combined
Staff Outreach Visits	• Staff Lead: Alicia	• Staff Lead: Kalena	• Staff: Jessi and Gabe	• Staff Lead: Thea	• Staff Lead: James	
Targeted Students Outreach Groups	• Science Lead: Tracy and Yusra • MLL Lead: Nellie • Special Education Lead: Drew (4.28.2023	• Math Lead: Dan • MLL Lead: Nellie • AVID and BSU Lead: Drew	• Science Lead: Gabe • AVID Lead: Drew	• Social Studies Lead: Tori • Dual Language and Leadership class Lead: Drew • MLL Lead: Nellie	• Advisory/ Social Studies Lead: Scott	
Families/Guardians Outreach Visits	• Guardians Lead: Dee • PTSA Lead: Melisa • Newsletter Lead: Dee	• Guardians Lead: Courtney • PTSA Lead: Melisa • Newsletter Lead: Joe	• Guardians Lead: Valeri • PTSA Lead: Melisa • Newsletter Lead: Byron	• Guardians Lead: Beka and Anissa • Dual/MLL Lead: Mariela • PTSA Lead: Melisa • Newsletter Lead: Susan	• Guardians Lead: G • PTSA Lead: Melisa • Newsletter Lead: James	• Mary's Place Lead: Marcus

Figure 21: Round 3 Additional Survey Outreach Efforts

Outcomes of and Learnings from Round 3:

Survey results were analyzed and visualized to understand and draw conclusions about:
- Who responded to the survey? How representative were survey respondents of our larger stakeholder populations of interest (students, staff, and families/guardians at the five comprehensive middle schools)?
- What was stakeholder perception of the potential of each prototype to improve the middle school experience for students? And did perceptions differ by role group (student, staff, family member/guardian)?

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Survey Respondents and Representation

- Who responded to the survey? How representative were survey respondents of our larger stakeholder populations of interest (students, staff, and families/guardians at the five comprehensive middle schools)?

The survey was completed by 2,925 stakeholders. As shown in Figure 22, just over three quarters (77% or 2,249) of respondents identified as students, compared to 19% (or 553) who identified as family members/guardians, and 4% (or 123) who identified as staff members.
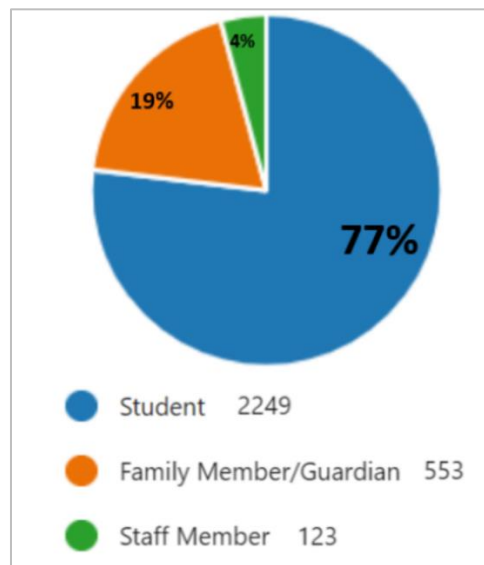
Figure 22: Survey Respondents by Stakeholder Group

Each of the five comprehensive middle schools was represented by at least 300—and generally more than 500—respondents (see Figure 23).
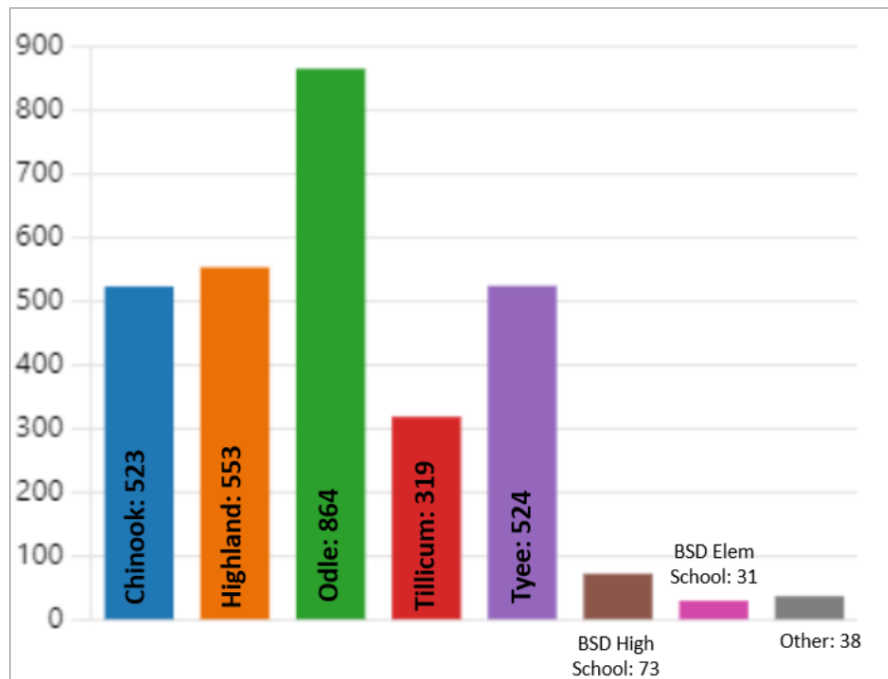
Figure 23: Survey Respondents by School

Figure 24 presents survey response rates by stakeholder group. The majority (57%) of students, slightly more than a quarter (28%) of staff members, and 15% of family members/guardians across the five comprehensive middle schools took the survey.
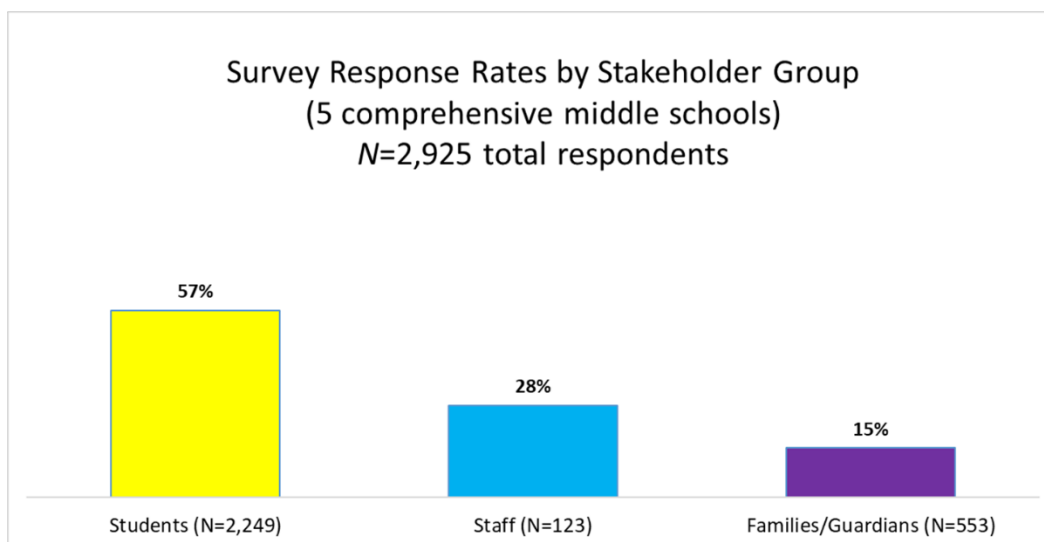
Figure 24: Survey Response Rates by Stakeholder Group

As previously noted, students comprised the majority (77%) of survey respondents. Figures 25 and 26 illustrate how representative student respondents were of their larger school and racial/ethnic populations. This helps us understand the extent to which respondents are like the broader school communities and the different racial/ethnic populations of our middle school

students. Overall, responses from Chinook, Highland, and Tyee students are within five percentage points of those schools' total student populations (e.g., 20% of student responses came from Highland students, and Highland students make up 16% of the total student population of the five comprehensive middle schools) and Odle and Tillicum are within ten percentage points of their schools' student populations. Odle and Highland were somewhat overrepresented on the survey, compared to Chinook, Tyee, and Tillicum, which were somewhat underrepresented.
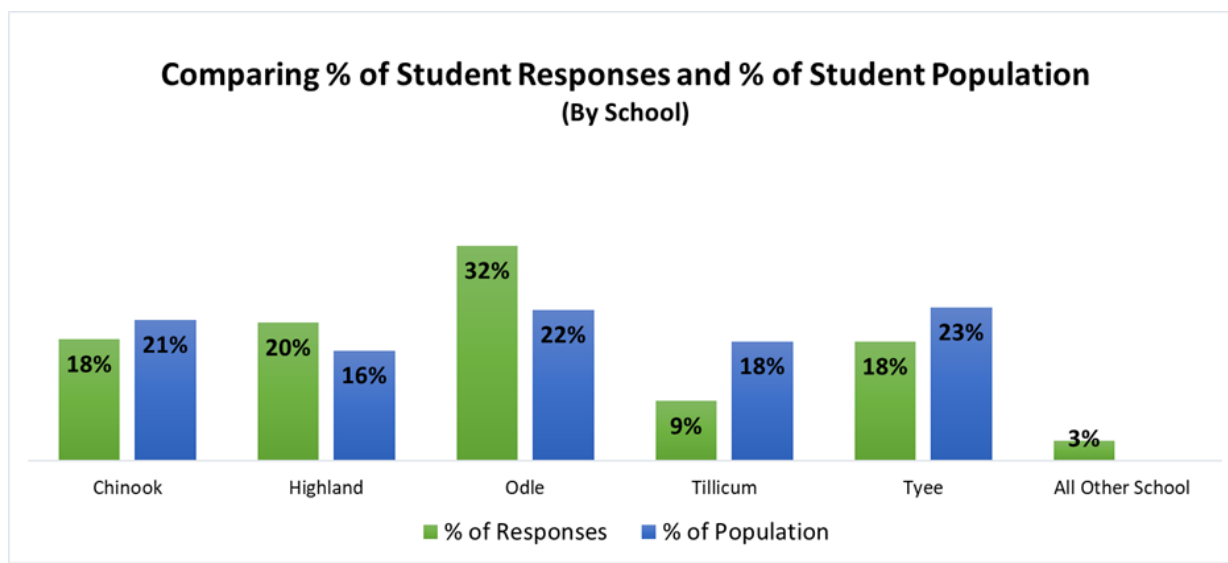
Figure 25: Representativeness of Student Respondents by School

Understanding how representative student respondents were of larger racial/ethnic populations was more challenging, since 21% of student respondents selected "Other" or "Prefer Not to Answer" when asked to identify their race/ethnicity. However, overall, racial/ethnic populations were well-represented in those who responded to the survey, with no more than a seven-percentage point discrepancy between respondent and population percentages:

- 39% of student respondents identified as Asian, compared to 45% of students at the five comprehensive middle schools
- 18% of student respondents identified as White, compared to 25% of students at the five comprehensive middle schools
- 11% of student respondents identified as Hispanic or Latino, compared to 16% of students at the five comprehensive middle schools
- 5% of student respondents identified as Multiracial or Biracial, compared to 10% of students at the five comprehensive middle schools
- 4% of students identified as Black or African American, compared to 4% of students at the five comprehensive middle schools
- Although small in total number, American Indian/Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students were both well-represented in the survey
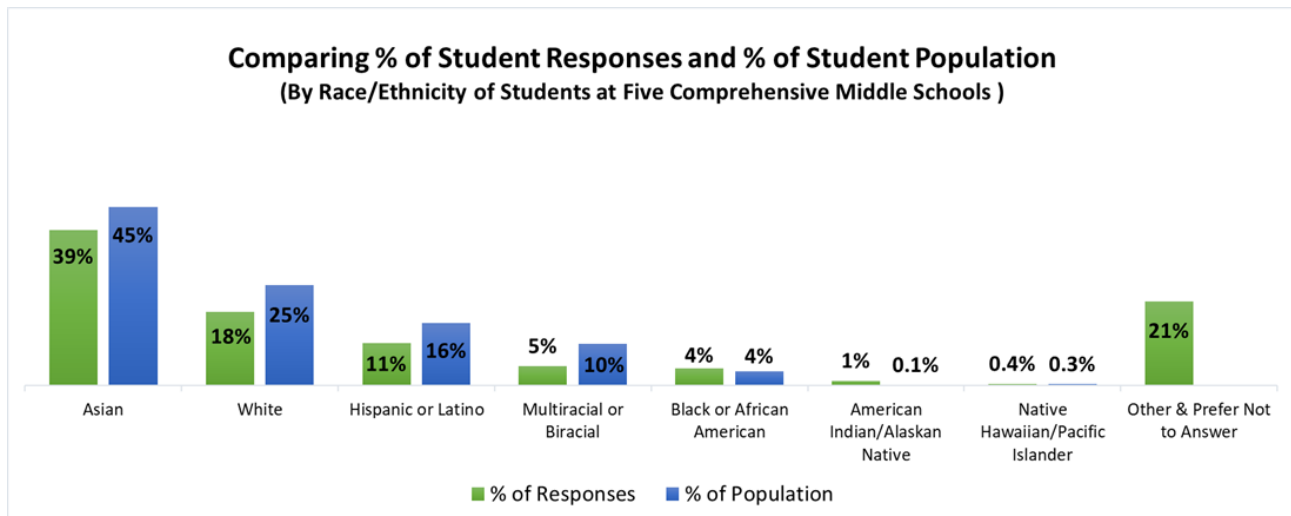
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Figure 26: Representativeness of Student Respondents by Student Race/Ethnicity

After students, family members/guardians made up the next largest proportion of survey respondents (19%). Figure 27 illustrates that families/guardians were well-represented across each of the five schools, with no more than a four-percentage point discrepancy between respondent and population percentages:

- 17% of family/guardian respondents came from the Chinook community, compared to 21% of middle school family members/guardians who have a student at Chinook.
- 15% of family/guardian respondents came from the Highland community, compared to 16% of middle school family members/guardians who have a student at Highland.
- 22% of family/guardian respondents came from the Odle community, compared to 23% of middle school family members/guardians who have a student at Odle.
- 18% of family/guardian respondents came from the Tillicum community, compared to 17% of middle school family members/guardians who have a student at Tillicum.
- 19% of family/guardian respondents came from the Tyee community, compared to 23% of middle school family members/guardians who have a student at Tyee.
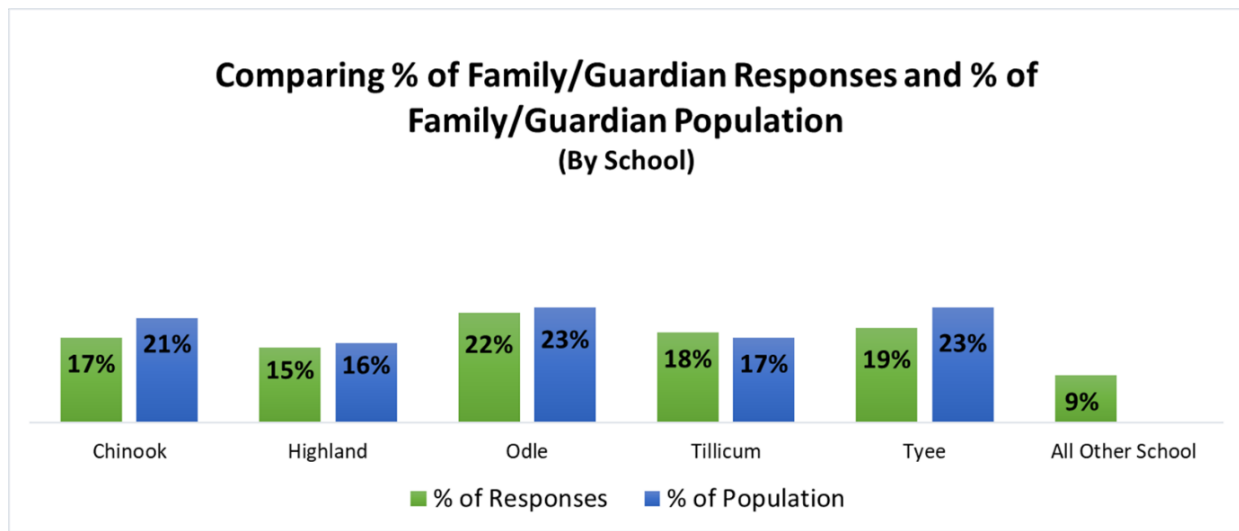
Figure 27: Representativeness of Family/Guardian Respondents by School

As expected based on their relative total numbers, staff comprised the smallest proportion of survey respondents (4%). Figure 28 shows that staff were well-represented across most of the five schools:

- 21% of staff respondents came from Chinook, compared to 20% of middle school staff who work at Chinook.
- 8% of staff respondents came from Highland, compared to 22% of middle school staff who work at Highland.
- 22% of staff respondents came from Odle, compared to 20% of middle school staff who work at Odle.
- 15% of staff respondents came from Tillicum, compared to 19% of middle school staff who work at Tillicum.
- 20% of staff respondents came from Tyee, compared to 19% of middle school staff who work at Tyee.
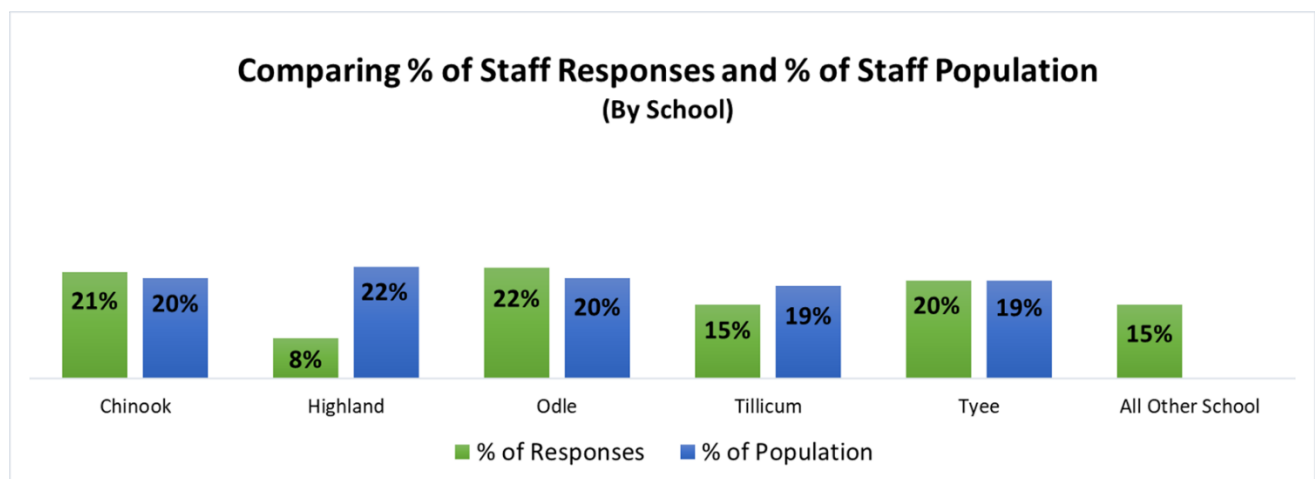
Figure 28: Representativeness of Staff Respondents by School

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Based on these analyses, survey respondents appear to accurately represent the five school communities, and, for students—racial/ethnic populations. One area of concern is whether the lower family/guardian survey response rate (15%) suggests missing perspectives from family members/guardians who did not take the survey and who may differ in important ways from those who did. However, overall, representation analyses indicate that survey results can be trusted to represent stakeholder perspectives across role group (student, staff, families/guardian), school community (Chinook, Highland, Odle, Tillicum, Tyee), and, for students—racial/ethnic groups.

Stakeholder Perception of Prototypes

- What was stakeholder perception of the potential of each prototype to improve the middle school experience for students? And did perceptions differ by role group (student, staff, family member/guardian)?

To gauge stakeholder perception, the survey asked: "Do you think this prototype (idea) will improve the middle school experience for students (when implemented well)?" Stakeholders who had an unfavorable or negative perception of a prototype chose "Not at all" or "Mostly not", compared to those who had a neutral perception ("Neutral"), a favorable or positive perception ("Mostly yes" or "Definitely yes"), or who felt they didn't know enough to respond to the question ("I don't know").

Survey results for Advisory/Homeroom are presented in Figures 29 and 30:
- 44% of survey respondents had a favorable perception of Advisory/Homeroom
- 26% had a neutral (not negative or positive) perception
- 24% had an unfavorable perception
- 6% reported not knowing if Advisory/Homeroom would improve the middle school experience for students
- As a group, family members/guardians felt most positively toward Advisory/Homeroom (67% favorable), followed by staff (51% favorable), and then students (38% favorable).
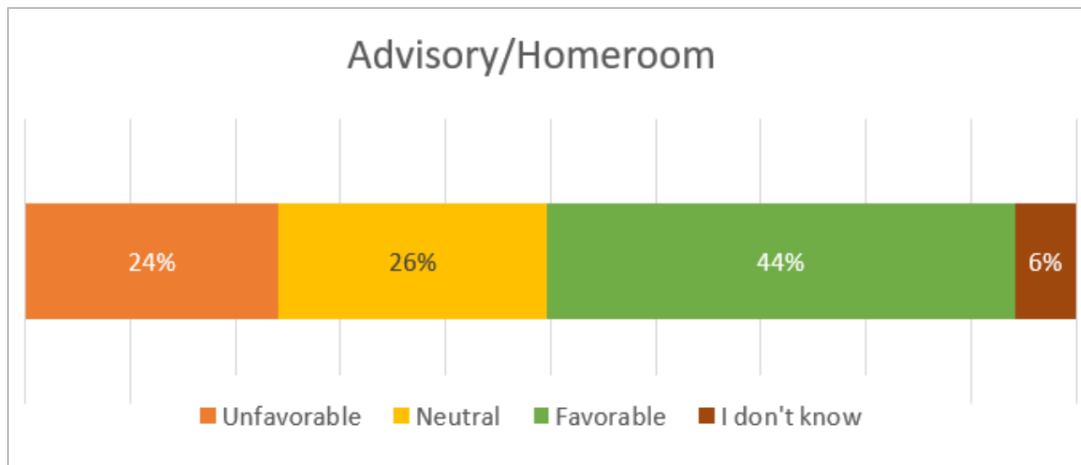
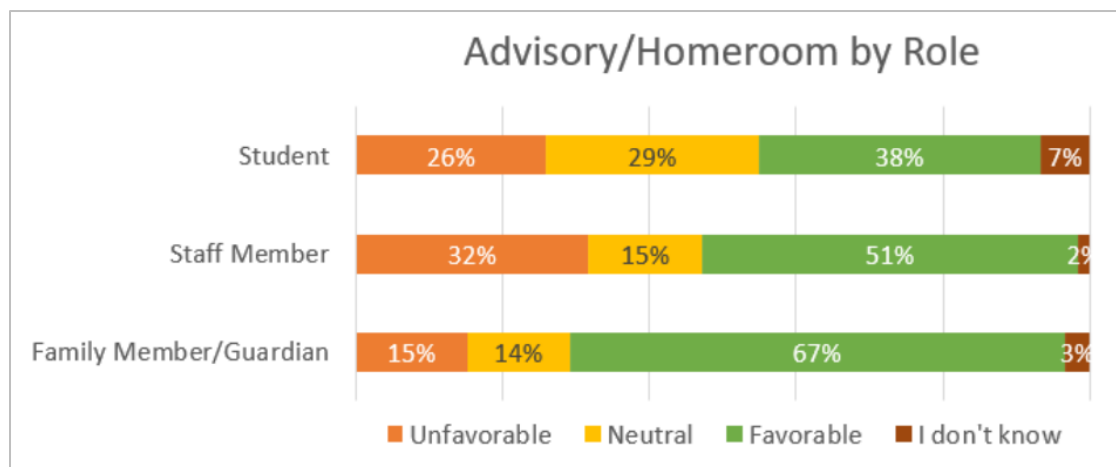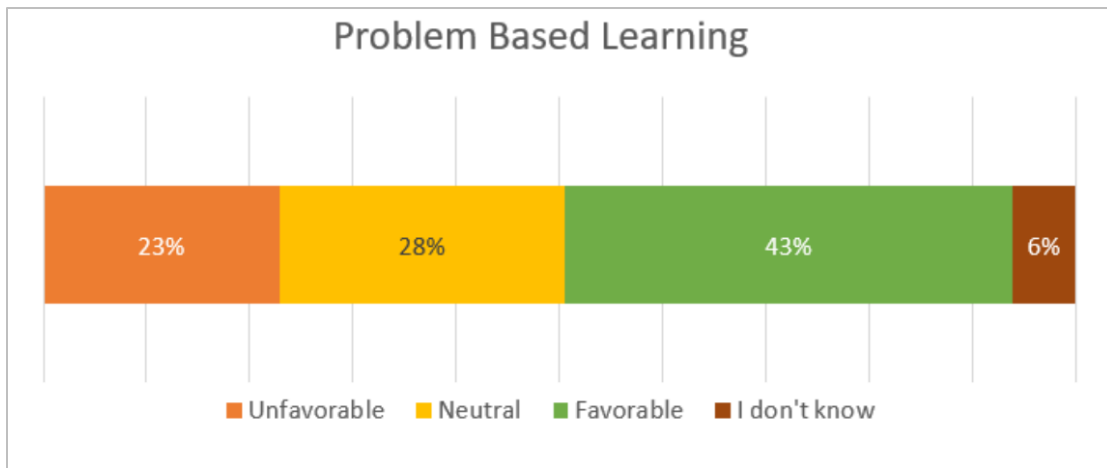*Figure 29: Stakeholder Perception of Advisory/Homeroom*

Figure 30: Stakeholder Perception of Advisory/Homeroom by Role Group

Survey results for Problem-Based Learning (PBL) are presented in Figures 31 and 32:
- 43% of survey respondents had a favorable perception of Problem-Based Learning
- 28% had a neutral (not negative or positive) perception
- 23% had an unfavorable perception
- 6% reported not knowing if Problem-Based Learning would improve the middle school experience for students
- As a group, family members/guardians felt most positively toward Problem-Based Learning (70% favorable), followed by staff (42% favorable), and then students (37% favorable).

Figure 31: Stakeholder Perception of Problem Based Learning
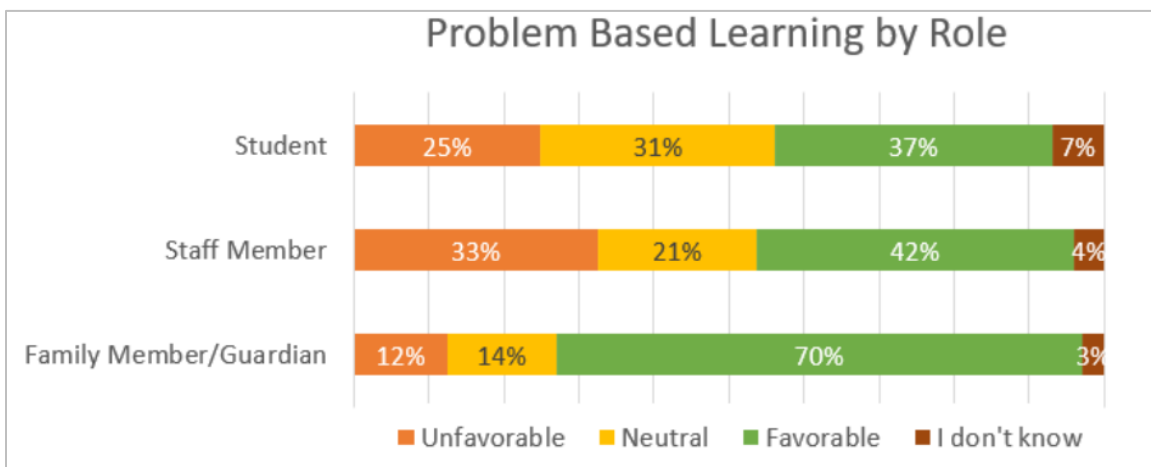

Figure 32: Stakeholder Perception of Problem Based Learning by Role Group

Survey results for Scheduling are presented in Figures 33 and 34:
- 38% of survey respondents had a favorable perception of Scheduling
- 21% had a neutral (not negative or positive) perception
- 35% had an unfavorable perception
- 6% reported not knowing if Scheduling would improve the middle school experience for students
- As a group, family members/guardians felt most positively toward Scheduling (56% favorable), followed by staff (46% favorable), and then students (33% favorable).
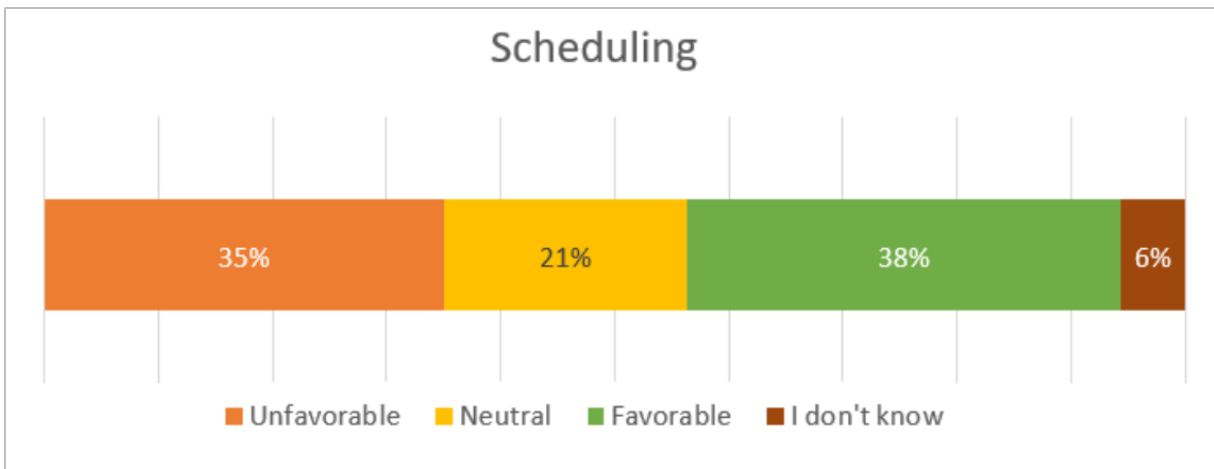
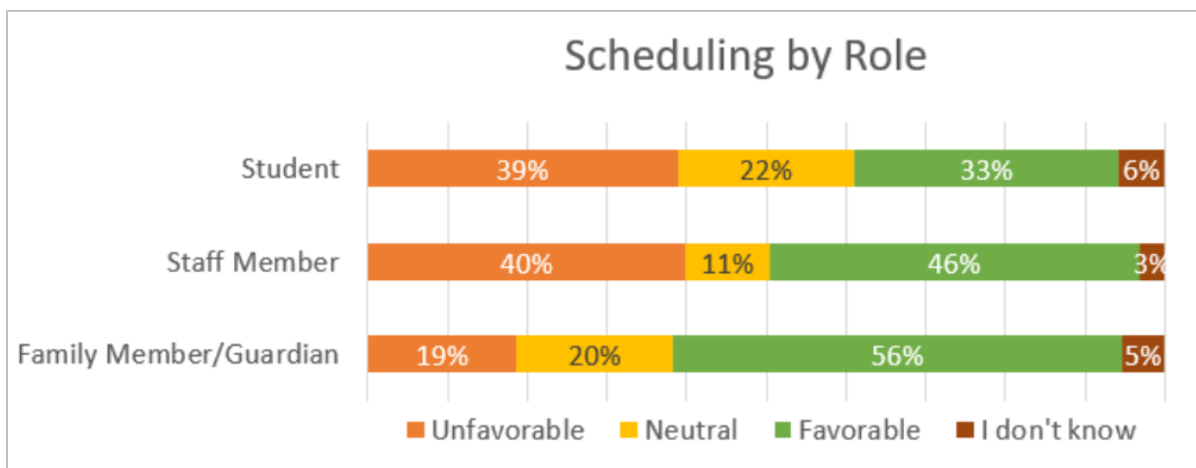*Figure 33: Stakeholder Perception of Scheduling*

Figure 34: Stakeholder Perception of Scheduling by Role Group

Survey results for Teacher Teams are presented in Figures 35 and 36:
- 37% of survey respondents had a favorable perception of Teacher Teams
- 29% had a neutral (not negative or positive) perception
- 25% had an unfavorable perception
- 9% reported not knowing if Teacher Teams would improve the middle school experience for students
- As a group, family members/guardians felt most positively toward Teacher Teams (64% favorable), followed by staff (55% favorable), and then students (30% favorable).
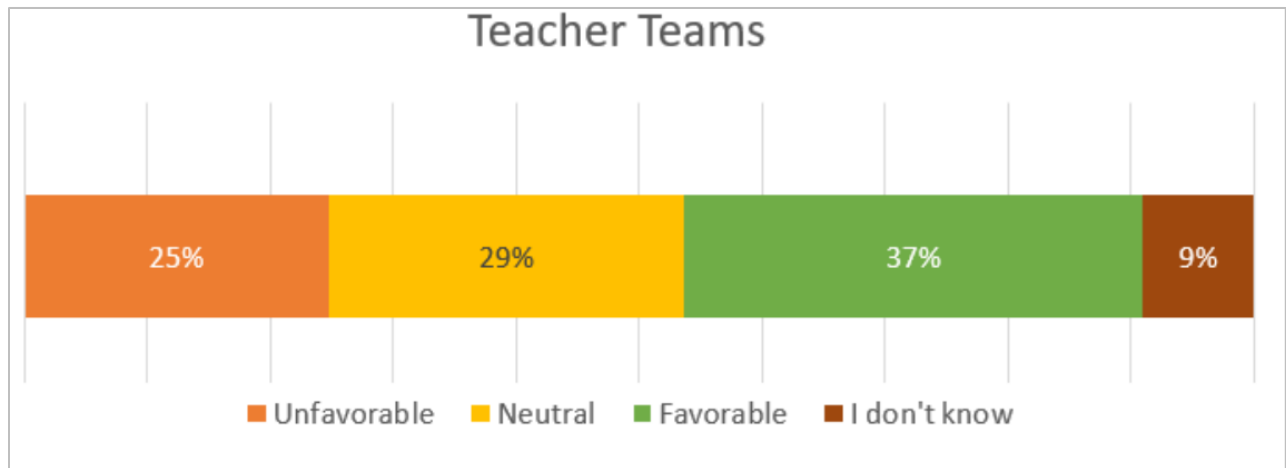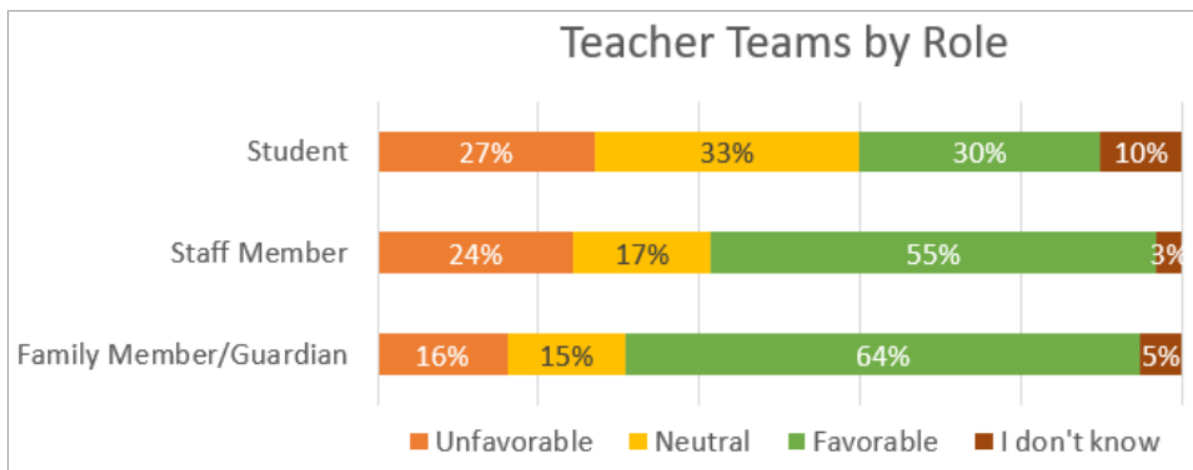
Figure 35: Stakeholder Perception of Teacher Teams

Figure 36: Stakeholder Perception of Teacher Teams by Role Group

A summary of stakeholder perception of the prototypes is presented in Figure 37:
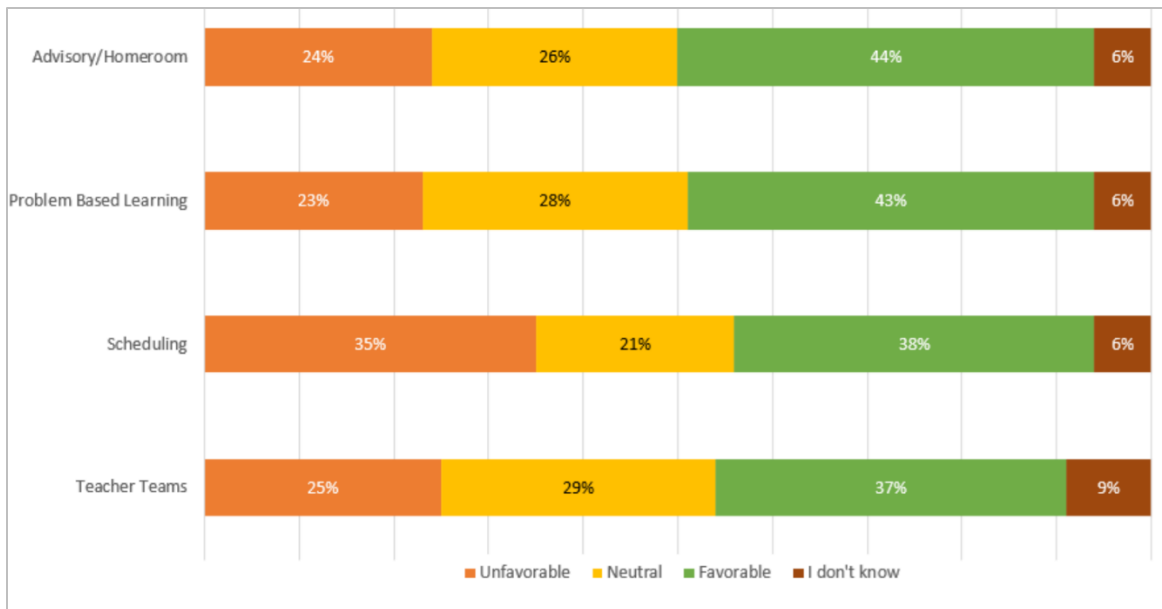

Figure 37: Summary of Stakeholder Perception by Prototype

Appendix J: RMS Steering Committee Members

Member	School	Stakeholder Group
Gabe Adams	Tyee	Staff
Anissa Bashey	Highland	Family/Guardian
Courtney Baxtron	Odle	Family/Guardian
Sahaj B	Odle	Student
Dee Bryant	Tillicum	Staff
Jessi Cassidy	Tyee	Staff
Susie Challancin	Chinook	Staff
Noelle C	Tillicum	Student
Thea Clarkson	Highland	Staff
Kalena Crafton	Odle	Staff
Darren Downs	ESC	Staff + Core Team
Tom Duenwald	ESC	Staff
Scott Gregorich	Chinook	Staff
Hasini J	Odle	Student
Tori Knight	Highland	Staff
Giovanni L	Highland	Student
Regen Lorden	ESC	Staff
Melisa Macias	ESC	Staff + Project Lead
Valeri Makam	Tyee	Family/Guardian
Gaurav Malhotra	Chinook	Family/Guardian
Ishaan M	Bellevue HS	Student
Drew O'Connell	ESC	Staff + Core Team
James Peterson	Chinook	Staff
Nellie Pogosian	ESC	Staff
Wendy Powell	ESC	Staff + Core Team
Dan Sakaue	Odle	Staff
Mariela Stockdale	Highland	Staff
Diego S	Tillicum	Student
Susan Thomas	Highland	Staff
Gargi Trichel	ESC	Staff
Anna Van Windekens	ESC	Staff + Core Team
Danielle Virata	Odle	Staff
Mathew Wright	Bellevue HS	Staff