

Reimagining Middle School Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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What is Reimagining Middle School (RMS)?

Reimagining Middle School (RMS) is a project focused on the district's five comprehensive middle schools (Chinook, Highland, Odle, Tillicum, Tyee) and led by the RMS Committee to develop suggestions for a **new, "reimagined" middle school model** that is based on research, co-designed with stakeholders, and may include:

- A more engaging and relevant academic program
- The integration of SEL instruction and relationship-building into the school day
- MTSS tiers/system of support
- Global competency principles
- Equitable grading practices
- Smoother school-level transitions for students and families

The RMS Committee's **implementation plan** will be based on research and stakeholder engagement and that phase in the changes over time and through a thoughtful, well-defined, realistic piloting and evaluation process.

Why is this work taking place?

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.

- **Identity and Social:** During the middle school years, our students will be navigating these challenges of adolescence while also continuing to grow into 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.

- **Innovation:** 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.
- **Pathway:** The middle school years offer a unique opportunity to serve students as they transition from elementary to high school by helping them become competent and confident individuals who feel a sense of agency and are proud of who they are, are optimistic about their future, feel connected to those around them, and are prepared to succeed in our ever-changing world.
- **Covid-19:** The 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.

Who are the Committee Members?

Who is on the RMS committee?

Role	Name(s)
Project Lead	Melisa Macias, Director of Teaching & Learning
Project Sponsors	Eva Collins, Deputy Superintendent Sharon Kautz, Executive Director, Teaching & Learning
Core Team	Melisa Macias, Wendy Powell, Anna Van Windekens, Drew O Connell, Aaron Miller
Steering Committee	7 Parent reps

	5 Students 5 Teachers 4 Administrators 4 School Staff 7 Central Office Staff 32 total members
Level 2	96 (students, staff, central office staff)

How were the members selected?

The Reimagining Middle School Committee is a 32-member group composed of parents/guardians, teachers, principals, classified staff and students. In May 2022, the Reimagining Steering Committee solicited applications from members of the community who were interested in serving on the Reimagining Middle School Committee. The core team reviewed applications and conducted meetings with school administrators. The core team recommended who was going to join the RMS Committee under level 1 and level 2 membership. Invitations were sent to members in June 2022. The Steering Committee strived to appoint individuals who reflected different programs (General Education, Multilanguage, Special Education, Advanced Learning, 504), racial diversity, language representation and different role assignments in Bellevue School District.

What is the project Framework?

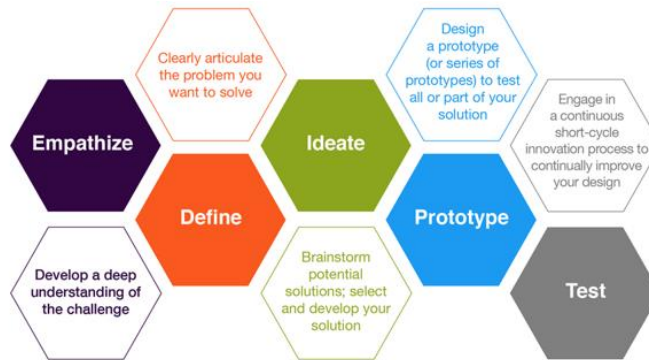
What methodology are we using to engage in the process? Why this framework?

We selected Equity- Centered Design Thinking for the following reasons:

- **Product-Centered vs. Human-Centered Design**- tries to flip this product-centered process, and instead develops solutions through a strong, consistent focus on the human perspective
- **Inclusive Design**- Inclusive Design calls for understanding disabilities as a mismatch of experiences rather than a health condition. It views disabilities on a spectrum: they can be situational (e.g., not being able to hear at a loud concert), temporary (e.g., having a broken arm), or permanent (e.g., being born

low vision). And when you identify and design to solve for these mismatches of experiences, you make your solution more inclusive

- **Participatory Design-** works to involve all stakeholders (e.g., guardians, staff, partners, administrators, students, etc.) in the design process as a means to better understand students’ needs
- **Asset-Based Community Development Design-** “Needs-based” approaches often frame communities in a negative light, casting their members as dependents with deficits and potentially undermining community leadership. The framework focuses on identifying and amplifying the assets a community already has, which may be underutilized due to resource scarcity or invisible to outsiders due to institutional, cultural, or class bias



What is the **timeline**?

What can we expect to see during the 2022-23 school year?

Phase/Milestone/Deliverable/Action Item	When
Project Initiation and Planning	Spring – Summer 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Research 	Spring 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Appoint key staff (Project Sponsor, Project Manager, Project Lead) and establish Core Planning Team 	Spring 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Send Team to June AMLE Institute 	Spring 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Form the Steering Committee 	Aug/Sep 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Data Dive 	Aug 17

○ Develop Charter and Project Plan	Aug-Sep 2022
Empathize	September 2022
Engage multiple stakeholders to understand middle school students' hopes, dreams, how they want to feel, and what their needs, desires, and wishes are.	
○ Conduct Listening Campaign	Oct 1 – Oct 31
○ Shadow a Student	Sep 21 – Oct 5
Define & Prioritize	October 2022
Collectively define the problems and opportunities	
○ Debrief Shadow Experiences	Oct 6
○ Build Consensus on Problems Identified and Prioritize Desired Characteristics for New Model	Oct 20
Ideation	November 2022
○ Explore Possible Solutions	Nov 3 and 17
Prototype	December 2022 – January 2023
○ Design Model(s)	Dec 8
○ Gather Feedback	Dec - Jan
○ Revise Model(s)	Jan 12
Create Implementation Plan	February - March 2023
○ Develop Implementation Plan for New Model (s)	Feb 2 and 16
○ Gather Feedback	March
○ Revise Implementation Plans	Mar 9 and 23
Recommendation and Implementation Plan Approved	April – June 2023
○ Share Recommendation for Model and Implementation Plan with Executive Team	May 2023
○ Revise Recommendation for Model and Implementation Plan	May-Jun 2023
○ Approval of Model and Implementation Plan	Jun 2023
Prepare Systems and People for Implementation	
○ Develop Course Catalog	Jun-Dec 2023
○ Hire Staff	Jun-Dec 2023
○ Train Staff	Jun-Dec 2023
○ Create Schedules	Jun-Dec 2023
○ Parent Information Night	Jan-Feb 2024
○ Registration	Jan-Feb 2024

Initial OR Full Implementation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Launch new model (small scale or full-scale TBD) 	Fall 2024

What research guides the work?

We are grounding our work using the landmark position paper from the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE): *The Successful Middle School: This We Believe*, now in its fifth edition.

AMLE believes that the true middle school is one that has been planned and organized to address the developmental and cultural needs of students of ages 10 to 14, generally including grades 5-8.

Please visit <https://www.amle.org/the-successful-middle-school-this-we-believe/> to learn more

Why are Big Picture School and International School not formally included?

RMS is focused on the five comprehensive middle schools (Chinook, Highland, Odle, Tillicum, Tye). Big Picture and International are not formally included in RMS 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 RMS committee is committed to engaging with Big Picture and International to learn from them and share what we learn with them.

Where can I learn more about the RMS project?

You can read more about RMS and the work of the committee [here](#).