

# RMS (Reimagining Middle Schools) Committee Steering Meeting Summary

September 20th

- **Inclusive welcome** - Reviewed objectives, norms and roles for today's meeting. The parking lot was introduced.
- **Setting the Stage** - Talked about how to assume beginner mindset. We introduced an empathy map to take notes during the panel and "walk and talk" activity.
- **Panel** - We introduced Drew and our MS students. Students responded to the following questions:
  - What do you like about middle school?
    - Can be more independent than elementary school.
    - Variety of classes.
    - Having classes with friends.
    - Free choice
    - Options with classes
    - Access to clubs and activities
    - Having tutorial available

- Inclusive environment
- Access to counselors when needed, can send emails
- Lunchtime can go outside into the courtyard or library
- What's missing that needs to be included? What do you need?
  - Having to give less commitment and time to after-school activities. Basketball for example 5 days a week and eliminates the option to join other clubs and takes away homework time.
  - More time for passing period. Problems going upstairs, getting to locker, and still getting to class on time.
  - More time for tutorial, only 25 minutes, and if too many students can get help.
  - Maybe having certain days for certain things- two days for sports, two days for ASB, so we don't have to make choices that limit options

- Jubilee practices need to be longer than 45 minutes.
- More options for sports.
- Some students don't participate, always the same students answering.
- If have to go to the tutorial, but don't have an after-school activity, you have to go to homework club and be silent, even if you don't have homework.
- More tutorial time. For example, in Band we have playing tests but can only play one at a time and can take a long time for everyone to finish.
- There should be Teams chat for middle schoolers. Though some did not use it appropriately, there were others that did.
- Get everyone engaged, not everyone participates. I have a teacher who uses candy as an idea.

- When COVID happened, the snack bar closed. Now, we have a vending machine that gets stuck and takes our money sometimes.
- I wish it was easier to create clubs or propose your own ideas. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, we proposed a club and were handed a form and told we had to get 12-15 students and find a teacher with no help or guidance.
- Share 1-3 words, how do you feel about middle school?
  - Good, not bad, but not good every day
  - I think we are here to learn, but sometimes it's more difficult than it needs to be
  - Exciting, constantly thrown into new situations, fun being able to interact with classmates and friends, challenging and have already seen major increase in difficulty of classes.

- Fun, sometimes too fun.
- Good and no good.
- It's fine and fun, I feel comfortable, but sometimes I feel tired, and it's the same problems every day
- I think they can make some subjects more interesting like Robotics and Orchestra but others like Spanish and some others not very interesting.
- Mediocre, sometimes exciting and engaging but on other days, like if have a really big test, not that exciting.
- Give us fewer tests, like Star test at beginning of the year, then I had a test or quiz for different classes nearly every day the last two weeks. Too many tests.
- How do you want to feel about middle school?
  - I want to feel excited to go to middle school, and also want to feel challenged to help me learn.

- Pretty much the same thing.
- I agree, I want to feel excited, every day is kind of the same, not really teachers' fault kind of students' fault.
- Be less stressed, yesterday morning had to write an essay for the teacher, and it was kind of hard.
- I agree, less stressful, I just wake up, and I don't want to go.
- I want to feel safe and feel good about going to middle school.
- I want to feel excited and ready for middle school every day. How I feel already.
- I want to feel comfortable and excited.
- In your wildest dreams, if you could wave a magic wand, what do you wish middle school would have?
  - Snack bar.
  - More field trips.
  - Field trips and field day.

- For short days, instead of waking up at the same time and ending earlier, wake up later and end later.
- Longer lunchtime.
- More snacks and field trips.
- More ways to interact with friends.  
Don't have any classes with my best friends and haven't for the last two years.
- More flexibility.
- Thinking about your sense of belonging, what could or should we do to increase the sense of belonging for students in our schools?
  - Homeroom during the first and second day of school, go there and meet other people and go to all the classes and then go back to homeroom and do fun activities.
  - We have something called Next, 8<sup>th</sup> period, and go there and meet other students and then go back to classes.

- More ways for new students to get to know the school. Hard to make friends with 7 periods. Orientation day for 6<sup>th</sup> grade, but that is just one day.
- Different homeroom teachers each year.
- Teachers talking to students personally. Always the same group of students who aren't paying attention but feel like if the teachers talk to the students, the students will say the teachers are too strict but need to try and talk to them anyway.
- I don't really know.
- I don't really have any thoughts on this.
- Make advisory, when we have to do work my teacher makes it really fun, and when we don't have to work, we can do whatever we want. Lessons should focus more on socializing.



- First maybe 3 days of school should focus on connecting with classmates.

5:15PM: Students joined tables for the next activity.

- **Walking and Talking** - We created mixed groups to engage in a conversation with level 2 and students.
- **Reflection-** We debrief as a whole group about what is something we heard that we want the whole group to experience? We completed the student outlines.

Whole group debrief:

- Think back to our panel – What did you hear?
- What did you hear from your walk-&-talk?
- What is something you HEARD that you want the whole group to experience?

- Struck by how hard the students are committed to learning and wanting to feel challenged, but also want to be able to see their friends. They need time to be kids. Not looking for school to be easier, but more enjoyable.
- I agree. These students are interested in being engaged, but constraints of time may give some subconscious stress. I kept hearing more passing time, more tutorial time, they want time to do well without feeling it's super tight. Hear that tutorial is hard to get questions answered when 20 other students are there. I also heard a lot about friends and would love to hear their ideas for how schools can be more welcoming when students are new.
- That was a great bunch of students. What I heard overall, was that they were all very invested in their own success. Balance between social

and academics. A few take aways were give us more choices, doesn't take much to give us a better experience, but just a few minor small things.

- Hearing their concerns and the chance to talk is honestly something we miss. An informal form of communication, Teams chat for example, is one way for these kids to actually communicate. Having 1:1 with teachers with large classes is something to work on.

- ***Nuts and Bolts*** - We reviewed next steps which included:
  - Next Meeting Location: Tillicum Middle School
  - Reading: Chapter 3, pages 45-50 on Leadership and Organization
  - What is coming up: WE EMPATHIZE
    - Several team members will shadow students during the school day.

- Fishbowl activity for committee members who shadowed a student.
- October meeting change: October 6 moved to October 3
- **Optimistic Closing** - We reflected on themes heard during the meeting.

Take 2-3 minutes at table, based upon what you heard from the panel, think about one theme that stands out to you and that you will continue to think about.

- Themes:
  - Deeper interpersonal connection opportunities
  - More time to socialize
  - Socialization and student choice
  - Teacher student relationships
  - A better balance between rigor and social life
  - Time for social interaction and choice
  - Greater choice and autonomy

- Engaging classes
- Freedom and preparation and responsibility that comes with freedom
- More realistic workload for students
- Student choice, options, and learning by experiences, field trips
- Increasing social awareness in real world instead of on computers and online
- More conversations like this- hearing from other students- as parents can feel we know it all and the kinds of solutions students were giving were so easy and simple