



Junior High Education Teaming Model

*Understanding the Option for
Optimal Student Growth*

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Junior High Education Models - Understanding Teaming

Charge: To review whether a teaming model, a more traditional model, or a hybrid model might be the best to serve the educational needs of our students.

- What is Teaming?
- What is the guidance for Junior High Education?
- What do other similar Districts do?
- What do students say?
- What are the Benefits and Challenges to Teaming?
- What should our District consider next?

What is the Junior High Model Vs Teaming?

The junior high model is a traditional model similar to what most would experience at high schools.

- Teachers are organized into departments and may or may not plan cooperatively or cross curricularly
- Class assignments and classmates are not limited by teams
- We are “one school” which includes the entire student body
- This is the model currently used at Sycamore Junior High

Teaming in middle level education can look different depending on the needs of the school. The most basic “team” model is:

- Made up of Core Content Teachers (Math, Science, Socials Studies and Language Arts) who meet regularly to discuss a small group of students
- Have no more than 165 students per team
- Creates a “school within a school” feeling
- Very similar to the model our E.H. Greene school uses
- Estimated to be practiced in over 80% of middle schools in the U.S.

Junior High Model

Math		Math
Math		Math

Social Studies		Social Studies
Social Studies		Social Studies

LA		LA
LA		LA

Science		Science
Science		Science

Teaming Model

Math		Science
LA		Social Studies

Math		Science
LA		Social Studies

Math		Science
LA		Social Studies

Math		Science
LA		Social Studies

Guidance for Middle Level Education

- The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) is largely regarded as being at the forefront of research associated with educating students between the ages of 10-15.
- Their book, “This We Believe” is their living publication outlining the best practices when developing middle level education, last updated in 2020.
- This guidance leans towards the teaming models for junior high education but does not explicitly mandate it for success.

Successful middle schools in any model must have the following essential attributes according to AMLE

Be Responsive

- Use distinctive nature and identities of young adolescents as the foundation upon which all decisions about school are made.

Be Challenging

- Cultivate high expectations and advancing learning for every member of the school community.

Be Empowering

- Facilitate environments in which students take responsibility for their own learning and contribute positively to the world around them.

Be Equitable

- Provide socially just learning opportunities and environments for every student.

Be Engaging

- Foster a learning atmosphere that is relevant, participatory, and motivating.

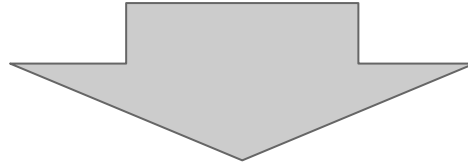


Learnings from Other Local School Districts

We Met With Leaders From Local School Districts

We reached out to the following school districts for interviews:

- Kings Local School District (**Teaming**)
- Lakota Hopewell Junior High (**Teaming**)
- Oak Hills - Rapid Run Middle School (**Teaming**)
- Milford Junior High School (**Teaming**)
- Loveland Middle School (**Teaming**)
- Mason Middle School (**Transitioning to teaming next year**)
- Princeton Middle School (**Did not reply and unclear what education model they use**)
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For each school, we asked their school leaders a series of questions to try to capture:

- Overall school statistics
- An overview of their education model and why they chose it
- Both High level challenges and perceived successes of their chosen education model approach

Note: Our questions and their answers are captured on the presentation appendix.

We noticed common threads in feedback from local district leaders about their teaming model

- **Team sizes ranged from 120-160 students** (similar to EH Greene).
- **3 of 5 schools follow teaming model with only cross curricular core teachers**, meeting during school day; **other 2 schools include elective teachers in teams** and meet after school.
- Teacher teams meet two to three times per week to strategize and work together.
- Additional department meetings (i.e. all math teachers or all language arts teachers) occur on a regular weekly basis to review curriculum and any important subject area topics.
- Most leaders we interviewed stated that teaming helped them better address student needs and to create a more nurturing environment.
- All schools identified challenges with the teaming model that they had to overcome, including reassignments and shifts in schedule, but they felt the benefits outweighed the challenges.



Sycamore Students' Perspectives

7th Grade Sycamore Parent/ Student Survey Results

Parents were given the survey but only 8 replied to the survey. We did not find this to be an applicable sample size to include data

Students: 67 responses (16%)

67% enjoyed teaming at Greene

67% students would not like teaming at SJH, 25% would like teaming at SJH, 8% replied with maybe/other

- Family oriented
- Closer relationships
- Locker access
- Homeroom
- Lack of socialization
- Feel isolated within the building
- Different team activities/perceived unfair opportunities

How Current Sycamore High School Students Feel

Quotes from High School Students:

“The jump from the junior high to the high school is already hard, and adding teaming to the junior high would make it an even larger jump.” (‘24)

“...greene school felt much more isolated when in the wings...” (‘26)

“...diversifying the student body (in the sense of meeting people outside your team) is really important to introduce before high school.” (‘24)

“...a teaming system would make the transition to high school more difficult...” (‘25)

“...junior high is super important to kind of segway into meeting everyone based on classes and interests similar to high school...” (‘25)

“...you wouldn’t have classes w some of your friends...” (‘26)

“...in JH they should start to get use to what it’s like in high school...” (‘24)



Overview of the Benefits & Challenges to the Teaming Model

Benefits of Teaming Models

- Allows for regular discussion of what students need
- Builds comradery among staff and students
- Encourages cross-curriculum experiences
- Helps to ensure no student “falls through the crack”
- Allows for more social/emotional learning during hard adolescent growth
- Research shows students in a teaming model have higher scores on standardized tests, are more engaged, and feel a stronger sense of belonging

Challenges of Teaming Models

- Students only have access to the same group of students for the entire day/year
- Specials/IEP teachers can feel as though on “islands” depending on the model chosen and often their plan time is not equitable
- Scheduling can be difficult/limited for students
- Can require more staff and thus a larger budget
- Teams may need to meet outside of school day
- Academic benefits have been researched and proven but social benefits/detriments are not conclusive

Possible Ways to Mitigate Challenges of Teaming

- Some students indicated that changing lunch/recess schedule during the school year to allow students across teams to spend time together helped mitigate challenges of not seeing friends in their teams.
- Including specials teachers in teaming model increased cohesiveness of teams and allowed electives teachers to benefit from teaming model.
 - Likely requires teachers to meet outside of school day



What to Consider Next?

Considerations

While Teaming is regarded as a widely used structure for middle level education some things for Sycamore to consider if it decides to go that direction

- Sycamore Junior High is currently ranked very well: (#33 US News, #4 Niche); if it's not broken, should we "fix" it? [Comparison Here](#)
- A move to teaming could take 2-3 years to structure, gain buy-in, pilot and implement.
- There would be considerable training time and costs for teachers (in addition to already mandated trainings).
- We are missing perspective of high school students who come from JH teaming and what their subsequent transition is like to High School.
- Are recent academic improvements due to teaming model or post-pandemic rebound?
- Depending on staff structure and Specials/IEP needs there could be additional staff, thus budget needed.
- Teaming does allow for more social/emotional support, which may be a need that current students have post-pandemic and in our ever changing technology climate.
- Any next steps on this project would require significant expertise.

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Appendix



Interview questions (script)

Interview questions (script) we asked of local school district leaders

Statistics on school district:

- Number of students in middle school by grade:
- % of students on free and reduced lunch
- How many kids are on IEPs per grade?
- *Any other relevant statistics to add?*

1. Please explain to us what learning model your school uses and how it differs from other models. *If not using teaming, why did you choose your model? Did you consider teaming and if so, what challenges kept you from teaming? Have you ever used teaming in the past? ***Then jump to question #6, #10**

2. Could you please share any details/bell schedules and/or literature about how your school's teaming model works?

3. Does your teaming model present scheduling issues? If so, what has your District done to minimize negative impacts? (ie elective teachers participating in model, cohorts of students together, opportunity to make multiple choices with schedule or dependent on one elective choice)

4. Please share with us why your school chose this learning model? Was it in response to any specific needs?

Interview Script Questions (cont'd)

5. How much planning time do teachers have under your model on a weekly basis? Is this common planning time? And is this by subject or by team? Please explain.
6. What does your learning model do well? What changes, if any, would you make to your learning model?
7. How many intervention specialists does your teaming model require? Do you feel that this teaming model requires more or less staff than a non-teamed model? Please explain.
8. Any other additions to staff or costs required? Please explain
9. Have there been any impact on electives from a student perspective? From a staff perspective? Are elective staff able to participate in the teaming model? How many electives does your school offer?
10. Overall, has this learning model been successful at your school? From a teacher perspective? Student perspective? Parent perspective? Please explain.
11. If your school did choose to switch to a teaming model, what was the rollout process like? What kind of roadmap did you use to switch the school over to a teaming model? **Thank you so much for your time!**



Detailed feedback from school
districts we interviewed

Kings Local School District Junior High

Facts:

- Students per grade: 7th 370, 8th 360
- Number of Students on IEPs: 14/grade
- Have had extreme student population growth but have made changes to ensure they stay with the teaming model
- #128 US News & World Report, #83 Niche Report

Structure:

- The Kings Local School District operates on an Interdisciplinary Team Structure
- Each Team has 125 students of varying academic abilities
- Each “Specials” teacher is assigned to a team
- The teacher day is 30 min longer than students. They use this time to meet with interdisciplinary team, content team and plan
- Once a week the Principal and counselors meet with each team group
- Students off team for “specials” due to class sizes and options for students
- Students switch bell schedule at semester change to ensure class options but team structure

Lakota-Hopewell Junior High

Facts:

- Total students in building: 520, smallest of all Lakota schools
- Number of Students on IEPs: about 20/grade
- 27% free and reduced lunch population
- #318 in Ohio Middle Schools US News and World Report, #122 Niche Report

Structure:

- Hopewell JH moved to teaming over 20 years ago and were the champions of it for their District. They are extremely proud of their school and how it's structured
- Took two years to train staff and socialize the change to the community
- 165 max students per team, all of varying abilities
- Each teacher team meets for at least 1 hr/week to real-time discuss students and needs
- Finds takes no more staff, just more flexible staff and those trained for 4-9
- Has seen no issues with transitioning to High School. Students actually more prepared and more mature. Have had more invested in them to help develop prior to change

Oak Hills - Rapid Run Middle School

Facts:

- Total students in building: 629 - grades 6-8
- Ranked #233 of Ohio Middle Schools by US News Ranking, #164 Niche Report

Structure:

- They only team with 6th and 7th grade - two teams per grade
- Has been teaming for at least 12 years. Wanted to do it to assist students with transition from elementary.
- The school counselor felt that team works great for 6th grade, but is not necessary for 7th and 8th grade.
- Major scheduling conflicts for electives teachers because classes can only be attended at certain times for the day. Many students have to choose between music and a language because they happen at the same time.

Mason – Mason Middle School

Facts:

- 1,665 grades 7-8
- Ranked #71 in of Ohio Middle Schools US News Ranking, #17 Niche Report

Structure:

- Previous school is 5th-6th grade
- Next year they are implementing a new teaming model.
- The principal was asked by the staff for the teaming model
- Principal is researching and including the staff in the decision of the model
- Each team will have 1 intervention specialist (math/ELA) and specials' teacher assigned to a team
- Creates opportunities for cross-curricular experience and student-led conferences..
- Deeper dive into student goal setting.
- Increase the number of students who report a close connection to a peer or staff member.
- Cons: Teachers need to move rooms, student movement (unity shift), more preps, student travels with same small groups

Milford – Junior High School

Facts:

- Total students in building: 993 - grades 7-8
- Ranked #242 of Ohio Middle Schools US News Ranking, #147 Niche Report

Structure:

- Core Interdisciplinary Teams: 2 intervention specialist, 1 core teacher for every subject
- New building next year: housing 6th graders -8th grade
- Team into 9th grade
- Intervention Specialist- played a huge role in the master schedule
- Flex time built into their schedule- share powerpoint -student movement
- Same plan time- IEP meetings are held, Student Meetings, Conferences w/ parents
- Intervention Specialist are subject specific
- Academic Study- not co-teaching
- Con: No plan time with department- only team

Loveland Middle school

Facts:

- Total students: 682: 355 (7th) and 325 (8th); 15% on reduced lunch, 45 students on IEPs
- Ranking among Ohio Middle Schools: #145 US News, #68 Niche Report

Structure:

- Had partial teaming in past; returned to teaming after COVID years to address social and emotional health and to drive relationships at school
- Current model: 3 teams per grade; 5 core teachers and 1 intervention specialist). Specials teachers included in teams; full inclusion for special needs; has co-teaching
- Daily schedule: Tiger time(30 minutes), 45 min instruction with 7 bells
- Teachers meet: By team 3x per week after school (20 minutes); 1x/week by department
 - All teachers learn about what works for specific students, managing situations.
- Moving from non teaming to teaming, staff reallocated 90 minus ELA was reduced to realign, but ELA scores skyrocketed so that supported the change.
- Culture supporting teaming has grown (families, students, teachers) Decrease in student behavior. Teachers can manage behaviors because they are aligned. No changes to teams this year. Sent survey to staff and no need or push to change model



Sources

References

- “This We Believe, Keys to Educating Young Adolescents” Association for Middle Level Education
- [Social Consequences of Academic Teaming in Middle School: The Influence of Shared Course-Taking on Peer Victimization](#)