

Independent School District 279
Osseo Area Schools

Final Report and Recommendations of the
District Planning Advisory Council

To the Superintendent and School Board

2024-2025

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2024-2025 Membership

Basswood Elementary	Tien Doan, Robert Lee	Brooklyn Middle	
Birch Grove Elementary		Maple Grove Middle	Angel Becker
Cedar Island Elementary		North View Middle	
Crest View Elementary		Osseo Middle	Amy Blakeley, Semantics King Jr.
Edinbrook Elementary	Sacey Yurcek		
Elm Creek Elementary	Miamon Queeglay, Bao Vang	Maple Grove Senior	Igor Rudenko
Fair Oaks Elementary		Osseo Senior	Sean Masterman
Fernbrook Elementary	Ruth Epping, Danielle Johnson	Park Center Senior	Heather Antoine
Garden City Elementary		Osseo Area Learning Center	
Oak View Elementary		279Online	
Palmer Lake Elementary			
Rice Lake Elementary			
Rush Creek Elementary	Michelle Poss, Nana Yaa Bankah		
Weaver lake Elementary	Eliud Amaya		
Woodland Elementary			
Zanewood Elementary			

Community:

Dr. Britt Stuessay

Rose Tonn

Emily Thompson

School Board:

Heather Douglass

Erica Foster

Tanya Prince

Keith Tate

ESC Staff:

Pam Brandt

Dr. Jill Kind

Jill Lesne

Steering Committee:

Rose Tonn - Chair

Stacy Yurek - Vice-Chair

Dr. Britt Stuessay - Recorder

Pam Brandt

Dr. Kind

Jill Lesne

INTRODUCTION

Final Report and Recommendations of the District Planning Advisory Council 2024-2025

The purpose of the District Planning Advisory Council is to assure community-school cooperation in setting improvement goals, evaluating progress toward meeting annual objectives and in reporting of findings and recommendations to the entire school community. Membership of the District Planning Advisory Council includes parents/guardians, community members, senior high students, classroom teachers, administrators, staff and School Board members. The council meets on a regular basis with no fewer than eight meetings. The major functions of the Council are listed under Board Policy 616 – World’s Best Workforce as follows:

The school board will adopt a comprehensive long-term strategic plan to support and improve teaching and learning. In adopting the long-term strategic plan, the school board will consider the superintendent’s recommendation based on the input of the school district’s strategic planning process, the District Planning Advisory Council, and school site teams. The plan will be aligned with creating the world’s best workforce and include performance measures designed to determine each school’s progress in striving to create the world’s best workforce.

The school district will establish an advisory committee. The advisory committee will recommend to the school board rigorous academic standards, student achievement goals and measures designed to fulfill the school district’s mission.

The work calendar of the District Planning Advisory Council during the 2024-2025 school year was guided by the provisions of Board Policy 616. The Council’s bylaws directed its internal operations.

In accordance with the aforementioned policy and procedures, the District Planning Advisory Council submits this annual report and recommendations for the instructional improvement plan for the next school year to the Superintendent of Schools and Board of Education.

PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN 2022-2023 FOR IMPLEMENTATION IN 2023-2024

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: Program Assessment And Review Subcommittee

We recommend expanded extracurricular opportunities across the middle school to include a common set of offerings across all middle schools.

Progress: Middle schools are continuing to explore how to expand their extracurricular opportunities across the middle school to include a common set of offerings across all middle schools.

Recommendation 2: Program Assessment And Review Subcommittee

We recommend that the district lay the foundation for the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the classroom and provide staff and students with the resources to develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to leverage technology effectively. We recommend that this integration is delivered via a multi-year plan.

Progress: The Department of I2T2 conducted a work group last year to develop an AI guiding principles document for AI use in Osseo along with a Digital Equity plan. This year professional learning was provided to district and site leadership on AI. The Department of Learning & Achievement will begin a Program Improvement Process around using AI for deeper learning.

Recommendation 3: Program Assessment And Review Subcommittee

We recommend that the district leverage the power of AI-enabled data analytics to more effectively identify data correlations, as well as predictive analytics capabilities.

Progress: The Department of Learning & Achievement used AI-enabled data analytics to analyze open-ended survey responses in our stakeholder surveys. Further AI-enabled data analytics continue to be studied and will be implemented on a case by case basis.

Recommendation 4: Program Assessment And Review Subcommittee

We recommend that the District implement a credit-based, standalone college and career readiness course required for graduation to ensure scholars are college and career ready after high school.

Progress: All high schools and middle schools have implemented the Advancement via Individual Determination program or AVID focusing on college and career readiness. AVID's elective class and schoolwide focus provide students opportunities to learn knowledge and skills. In partnership with counselors, College and Career Readiness Coordinators, teachers, the Department of Learning & Achievement began a Program Improvement Process to examine our advisory program to be more focused on college and career readiness.

Recommendation 5: Student Services Subcommittee

We recommend that the district pursue a partnership with a mental health agency that specializes in training practitioners to become culturally sensitive in their practice. This would include training for all School Psychologists, School Counselors, and School Social Workers.

Progress:

The district has partnered with Kente Circle for the 24-25 school year to provide culturally responsive professional development for school psychologists, school counselors and school social workers. We have offered one session per trimester (two are complete and the last for the year takes place in April) and are in the process of determining what follow up and additional learning opportunities will be offered for the 25-26 school year.

Session 1: Cultivating Cultural Humility and Personal Reflection

Focus: Introduce cultural humility and the 'Self-of-the-Therapist' theory, emphasizing self-awareness and personal development in the context of a school setting.

Session 2: Equity in Action and Crisis Skills Development

Focus: Integrate equity principles into mental health practices and strengthen crisis intervention skills with a focus on the 'Self-of-the-Therapist' approach.

Session 3: Empowering Student Voices and Reducing Service Disparities

Focus: Develop strategies to empower student voices in expressing mental health needs and address disparities in service access, incorporating the 'Self-of-the-Therapist' perspective.

The sessions for this year have provided strategies and tools for school based mental health practitioners that they are able to put into practice immediately. Practitioners have also had the opportunity to learn from each other, collaborate and ask questions of the facilitators and learn about additional learning opportunities.

Restructure School Day Recommendation

SECTION I: Committee Activities

The Program Assessment & Review subcommittee engaged in a variety of activities over the 2024–2025 school year. The primary focus of the group was to examine the results of the Family Stakeholder Survey conducted during the 2023–2024 school year and identify key areas for improvement. In addition to reviewing areas for improvement in the areas surveyed by the district, committee members also looked at past recommendations and discussed topics that remain relevant. From there the group narrowed down recommendations, both new and previously proposed, that might positively influence future survey results.

One recommendation the committee identified was adding instructional minutes. To inform our recommendation the group also gathered feedback from a school board liaison regarding adding instructional minutes.

One recommendation the committee identified was to add instructional minutes across grade levels, district wide. To inform our recommendation, the subcommittee also gathered feedback from a school board liaison regarding feedback received by the Board advocating for adding instructional minutes.

SECTION II: Data Summary

The following items from the 2023–2024 Family Stakeholder Survey were identified as areas that would be positively affected by adding additional minutes of instructional time:

2023–2024 Family Stakeholder Survey Item	Score
Staff address the needs (i.e. behavior, special education, language, social-emotional) of my scholar.	79%
My scholar sees how their learning connects to the real world.	69%
My scholar experiences positive representation of their culture in their school environment.	68%
Staff address the needs (i.e. behavior, special education, language, social-emotional) of my scholar.	67%
My scholar has been able to use their strengths.	62%
My scholar's cultural history is represented accurately in the curriculum.	58%
My scholar sees how their learning connects to the real world.	52%

Length of School Day Across nearby MN School Districts			
District Name	Elementary Length	Middle School Length	High School Length
Osseo	6:30	6:30	6:30
Wayzata	6:40	6:50	6:50
Anoka	6:30	6:40	6:40
Robbinsdale	6:20	6:45	6:50
Minneapolis	6:30	6:30	6:40
St. Paul	6:30	6:30	6:30
Elk River	6:40	6:40	6:40
Brooklyn Center	6:20	6:45	6:45

SECTION III: Listing of Subcommittee High Priority Recommendation

Recommendation:

We recommend that the district extend the length of the school day across all grade levels districtwide.

Alignment with Strategic Directions and World's Best Workforce Goals

The key statements of priority work for Osseo Area Schools that were of focus for this recommendation were as follows:

- Create a system of operational innovation, excellence, accountability, and sustainability.
- Address, acknowledge and reduce systemic disparities, barriers and inequities as we lead, develop and align our district toward continuous improvement.
- Build and nurture a culture of achievement by providing content rich, rigorous, equitable and individualized pathways.

The key World's Best Workforce goals that were the area of focus for this recommendation were as follows:

- All racial and economic achievement gaps between students are closed.
- All students are ready for career and college.
- All students graduate from high school.

Rationale

Limited instructional time within the school day forces educators to make difficult decisions on how to allocate instructional time. In addition to satisfying minimum instructional standards required by the state, the district must also evaluate worthwhile initiatives proposed by parents, scholars, and other stakeholders that hold potential for improving student outcomes. Integrating these valuable additions without compromising the time allocated to the core curriculum presents a significant challenge. One way to alleviate the challenge is to increase the number of instructional minutes across all grade levels, district-wide.

Potential Benefits of Increased Instructional Time in Osseo School District

Increasing the number of instructional minutes in the school day for primary and secondary students in Osseo Area Schools could offer several potential advantages, aligning with general educational research, the district's own strategic direction, and World's Best Workforce goals.

Potential Academic Gains:

- **Improved Core Subject Proficiency:** More instructional time could allow for deeper dives into foundational subjects like reading, math, and science. Research suggests that additional, well-utilized instructional time can lead to improved student test scores and academic achievement, particularly when targeted effectively.¹ This could be beneficial in addressing any identified areas for academic growth within the district.
- **Targeted Support and Intervention:** Increased instructional time could provide more opportunities for individualized and small-group instruction. This would allow educators to better address the diverse learning needs of students, offering extra support for those struggling and enrichment for those excelling. This aligns with the district's strategic direction of providing equitable and individualized pathways.
- **Closing Achievement Gaps:** Some studies indicate that increased learning time can be particularly beneficial for students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those at risk of falling behind, potentially helping to narrow achievement gaps.² This resonates with Osseo's commitment to addressing systemic disparities and promoting educational equity.
- **Enhanced Learning in Specific Areas:** Additional time could be allocated to areas the district wishes to bolster, such as STEM education, arts, or other specialized programs, without detracting from core subjects but rather enhancing learning in the core areas.

¹ [The potential role of instructional time in pandemic recovery, Sarah Novicoff and Matthew A. Kraft, November 15, 2022.](#)

² [Turnaround Using Increased Learning Time - Boston Public Schools](#)

Broader Educational and Developmental Benefits:

- **Deeper Engagement and Exploration:** More time in the classroom can foster deeper student engagement with subjects, allowing for more project-based learning, collaborative activities, and in-depth exploration of topics. This could help in addressing family stakeholder survey feedback related to connecting learning to the real world and the availability of opportunities to influence learning experiences by making learning more relevant and inspiring.
- **Development of Non-Academic Skills:** Lengthening the school day could offer more opportunities for developing crucial 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. It could also provide more time for social-emotional learning (SEL) programs, potentially impacting areas like "Classroom Respect" and "Belonging" as highlighted in district survey results.
- **Increased Teacher-Student Interaction:** More time in school could lead to more meaningful interactions between teachers and students, fostering stronger relationships which are foundational to a positive learning environment and student development.

Considerations for Implementation:

It's important to note that research emphasizes that the *quality* of instructional time is as crucial, if not more so, than the quantity. For any increase in instructional minutes to be effective, careful planning would be necessary. This includes:

- **Purposeful Use of Time:** Ensuring that additional time is used for engaging, well-structured learning activities and not simply more of the same.
- **Teacher Training and Support:** Providing educators with the professional development and resources needed to maximize the effectiveness of the extended time.
- **Student Well-being:** Considering potential impacts on student stress, fatigue, and opportunities for extracurricular activities and free play.³⁴
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** Involving parents, students, and staff in discussions about any potential changes to the school day.

³ [Benefits of Recess: Improving Student Outcomes Beyond Physical Health, November 12, 2020.](#)

⁴ [How Much Recess Should Kids Get? Kate Rix, October 14, 2022.](#)

Comparisons to Neighboring and Similarly Situated Districts

Comparing Osseo Area Schools to neighboring districts (6) and St. Paul, we have identified the following:

At the **high school level**:

- 2 districts have school days that are 20 minutes longer,
- 1 district has school days that are 15 minutes longer,
- 3 districts have school days that are 10 minutes longer, and
- 1 district has the same length of day as our district.

At the **middle school level**:

- 1 district has school days that are 20 minutes longer,
- 2 districts have school days that are 15 minutes longer,
- 2 districts have school days that are 10 minutes longer, and
- 2 districts have the same length of day as our district.

At the **elementary level**:

- 2 districts have school days that are 10 minutes longer, and
- 2 districts have school days that are 10 minutes less than our district.
- The remaining 3 districts have the same length of day as our district.

A review of the data shows that Osseo Area Schools fall behind neighboring and similarly situated districts in the number of instructional minutes, particularly at the high school and middle school levels. The recommendation to lengthen the school day presents the district with the opportunity to bring itself up to par with our neighbors and create space in the day for additional learning and connection opportunities.

The potential impact that additional instructional minutes could have on a scholar's education in the district is significant. Based on a 172 student calendar year:

- An **additional 10 minutes** per day equals 1,720 additional minutes, or 28.7 hours, per year.
- An **additional 15 minutes** per day equals 2,580 additional minutes, or 43 hours, per year.
- An **additional 20 minutes** per day equals 3,440 additional minutes, or 57.3 hours, per year.

Utilization of Additional Instructional Minutes

Suggested instructional enhancements to a lengthened school day could include:

1. Adding a "Zero" hour for secondary students for additional elective opportunities;
2. Adding programming designed to improve reading levels for elementary students;

3. Allowing counseling staff to engage in social/emotional learning initiatives with entire classes/grade-levels;
4. Providing additional instructional opportunities for students struggling with “core” curriculum;
5. Adding “recess” for middle school and more recess for elementary school; to improve memory and attention and reduce disruptive behavior.
6. Additional instructional minutes in content areas (social studies, science, health, art); and
7. Additional time for staff to help scholars set goals and to build relationships.

Middle School Programming Recommendation

SECTION I: Committee Activities

The District Planning Advisory Committee engaged in a variety of activities throughout the course of the 2024–2025 school year. This year, the committee took a mixed-methods approach to identify opportunity areas in the Osseo Area Schools (OAS). Committee members with middle school students provided feedback on the middle school experience, specifically the difficulties of transitioning from elementary school to middle school. The committee reviewed the 2023–2024 Family Stakeholder Survey to identify opportunity areas at the middle school level. To better understand learning culture and connection to the real world, Dr. Jill Kind, Director of Learning and Achievement, gave a presentation on the program review matrix cycle, curriculum, Career Technical Education (CTE) strands and AVID. Lastly, Angie Vivatson, BARR Coordinator at Park Center Senior High School (PCSH), gave a presentation that provided an overview of the BARR program and how it was implemented at PCSH to help with the transition of students from middle school to high school.

SECTION II: Data Summary

Data from the [2023-2024 Family Stakeholder](#) was reviewed by responses from the overall district-level and as well by specific group-level (i.e. grade range, language, gender, race, services). The committee decided to focus on middle school opportunity areas over specific group-level factors because scholars of different genders, races, languages and services are nested within middle schools. Survey items at the middle school level with satisfaction scores less than 70% were flagged as areas of focus (displayed in Table 1 below). Themes that emerged from the areas of focus were *staff relationships between scholars and parents/guardians, belonging, communication, and learning that connects to the real world.*

Table 1. *Areas of focus items at middle school level district-wide*

2023–2024 Family Stakeholder Survey Item	Score
My scholar feels emotionally safe in the school environment	69%
My scholar’s school works to prepare them for their future.	69%
My scholar experiences positive representation of their culture in their school environment.	68%
Staff address the needs (i.e. behavior, special education, language, social-emotional) of my scholar.	67%
Staff create space for me to provide feedback regarding my scholar.	65%
My scholar has been able to use their strengths.	62%
My scholar has opportunities to influence their learning experience.	61%
My scholar’s cultural history is represented accurately in the curriculum.	58%
Staff use my feedback to support my scholar.	58%
Staff provide regular updates on the progress of my scholar.	57%
School staff have helped my scholar set goals for their future.	54%
My scholar sees how their learning connects to the real world.	52%
Staff know my scholar’s interest.	42%

SECTION III: Listing of Committee High Priority Recommendations

[World’s Best Workforce](#) goals from Policy 616 that were the focus of this committee:

- All students are ready for career and college.
- All students graduate from high school.

Alignment to [District 279 Strategic Directions](#) are as follows:

- Create safe, welcoming, and inclusive learning environments that foster global curiosity, belonging, innovation and engagement.
- Promote inclusive participation of all of our communities and provide timely, relevant, and easily accessible communication.
- Create a system of operational innovation, excellence, accountability and sustainability.

Recommendation

We recommend that the district implement a strengths-based approach like the [BARR program](#) in all middle schools district-wide.

Rationale

Key academic milestones, such as transitioning into middle school or high school, can have a dramatic impact on the trajectory of a student's academic journey. Research has shown students transitioning into middle school and high school frequently experience stress, behavioral problems, declines in attendance, decreased academic performance and lower self-esteem (Benner, Boyle & Bakhtiari, 2017; Goldstein, Boxer & Rudolph, 2015; Lippold et al., 2014).

A strengths-based approach like Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) is a comprehensive program focused on improving secondary school outcomes and experiences for students at key transition points (i.e., going from elementary school to middle school). The developers of BARR recognized the impact of school climate on student belonging, attendance, academic progress, disciplinary issues, teacher effectiveness and retention (Bos, Dhillon & Borman, 2019). The BARR model is achieved by utilizing a comprehensive set of eight interlocking strategies which include:

- Focus on the whole student
- Provide professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators
- Use BARR's I-Time Curriculum to foster a climate for learning
- Create cohorts of students
- Hold regular meetings of the cohort teacher teams
- Conduct risk review meetings
- Engage families in student learning
- Engage administrators

BARR focuses on building relationships between teachers, students and families to improve the school experience and academic achievement. The American Institutes of Research (AIR) scale-up evaluation found the greatest effects of BARR was among students who were predicted to do worse academically: minority students, boys and students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Bos et al., 2019).

In 2018, BARR was implemented as an opt-in program at PCSH for 9th and 10th grade students. At PCSH, BARR-students have shown increased academic performance and higher attendance rates compared to non-BARR students. It should be noted BARR data from PCSH closely aligns with the AIR scale-up evaluation results. The AIR scale-up found the passing rate for BARR-students was 6% higher compared to non-BARR students (Bos et al., 2022). Similarly, the scale-up evaluation showed the absenteeism rate for BARR-students was 3% lower than non-BARR students (Boss et al., 2022).

During her presentation to DPAC, Angie Vivatson stated BARR cost about \$19,000 per site and the middle school model cost an additional \$1M for staffing. BARR is currently implemented at the

following middle schools in neighboring districts: South St. Paul Middle School, Brooklyn Center Middle School, Hopkins West Junior High School, Robbinsdale Middle School, Central Middle School, Sunrise Park Middle School (BARR MN Senate Packet, 2024). Lastly, BARR plugs into the existing school structure and does not require a dramatic transformation to the school environment like staff changes or breaking up a school into several smaller schools (Farnham & Altmann, 2019).

This recommendation addresses three specific areas of focus from the 2023-2024 Family Stakeholder Survey at the middle school level district-wide:

1. Relationships between teachers, scholars and families
2. Student belonging + learning relevancy
3. Communication

Relationships between teachers, scholars and families: To build and facilitate student connections, students would attend a set of core classes together. In these core classes, students would participate in I-time activities that encourage students to interact with their peers and teacher. The I-time activities allow for student strengths to be observed and identified by peers, teachers and families. Feedback from I-time activities is used in development plans in order to better engage, support and challenge students. Additionally, teachers of the core classes have a common planning period. This planning period for teachers is intended to cultivate and support peer-to-peer collaboration and learning. A study by the American Institutes for Research reported BARR-participating teachers felt better supported by their schools, felt more confident in their work, collaborated better and had an improved view of their peers (Bos et al., 2019).

Student belonging + learning relevancy: Lieberman (1990) noted that robust student-teacher relationships require a shared understanding and appreciation of students' strengths, interests, circumstances and challenges. Building foundational relationships between student-student, student-staff and staff-staff will enhance levels of engagement, belonging and connection to the school. BARR offers opportunities for teachers to get to know students better and help them set personal goals, identify career interests and show them how their learning connects to the real world. The risk-review meetings provide an opportunity for academic and nonacademic staff to come together to have a shared understanding of the strengths and attributes of each student, the barriers they face and interventions that can be done to better support them (Mathewson, 2018).

Communication: Teachers in the same BARR-cohort hold weekly check-in meetings to discuss student success and opportunity areas, plan interventions that address academic and social-emotional learning (SEL) needs and new student data. Teachers have weekly check-ins with their students to discuss academic progress, individual plans, celebrations or concerns. These weekly check-ins permit stronger relationships to be formed between teacher-teacher and teacher-student. Reflection activities that are completed during I-time lessons allow for students to receive feedback from fellow students and their teacher. Most importantly, the BARR model seeks to engage families in student learning; ensuring families are continuously engaged with their child's education, can freely communicate their child's needs and be involved in check-in meetings (BARR Center, n.d.).

Recommended Next Steps

1. Create a working group of key stakeholders at the middle school level, including Angie Vivatson and one other BARR staff member from PCSH to research and design the BARR program model for all middle schools district-wide
2. Conduct a cost analysis for BARR implementation at middle schools district-wide
3. Connect with middle school BARR-coordinators in neighboring school districts to learn about program implementation strategies
4. Facilitate listening sessions with the OAS community, inform community about the BARR program, gather feedback and input from community to be used by working group
5. Evaluate implementation sites; determine what will be consistent across middle school sites and what will be unique at each middle school site

Additional Resources

- BARR Center
<https://barrcenter.org/>
- BARR Center Report (Closes the Gap in Graduation Rates)
<https://www.house.mn.gov/comm/docs/2db9853c-139c-4d5f-90bd-c667e9a5d8e5.pdf>
- Minnesota Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan at BARR 2024 National Conference sharing about her experience in school and what BARR meant to her
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i5WtyY_xGXg

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2024-2025

Osseo Area Schools Independent School District 279

DPAC Meetings

Date / Time	Group
Monday, 10/7/24 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Full DPAC Meeting
Monday, 11/11/24 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Full DPAC Meeting
Monday, 12/02/24 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Full DPAC Meeting
Monday, 1/06/25 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Full DPAC Meeting
Monday, 2/10/25 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Full DPAC Meeting
Monday, 3/10/25 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Full DPAC Meeting
Monday, 4/7/25 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Full DPAC Meeting
Monday 5/19/25 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	Presentation Practice
Tuesday, 5/20/25 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM	School Board Presentation of Final Report
	Full DPAC Debrief and Celebration

Meetings for the 24/25 school year were held both in person and virtually.