

AASD Middle Level Reform Initiative

This document has been prepared to provide background information for staff, parents, students, and community members regarding the work of the AASD Middle Level Reform Committee. This representative committee began its work in August 2009 as a continuation of the work that began six years ago. Middle level principals will be working with elementary principals to provide newsletter/website articles and parent informational meetings over the next month at both elementary and middle schools. This flyer will be distributed by each middle and elementary school through newsletters to parents. Questions regarding this initiative should be directed to middle level principals. Middle level principals: Einstein- Mr. Dave Boden (832 -6243); Madison – Mr. Dave Torrey (832 -6279); Roosevelt – Mr. Al Brant (832-6299); Wilson – Mr. John Magas (997 -1488).

Why?

The purpose of this initiative is to improve achievement for each individual student via research-based best teaching practices so that each student will meet or exceed individual MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) testing target growth levels. We want to see every child - regardless of their ability - to grow and gain at least one year in their reading and math abilities each year. Currently, this is not happening for all students.

Given the current constraints of budget, contract language, and student enrollment, the teaming structure does not exist in some middle schools and has eroded in all middle schools. A team is a group of teachers that share a common group of students. This allows the teachers in a team to work closely with each other on issues ranging from curriculum and lessons to interpersonal/social issues of students.

We have explored ways to implement these best teaching practices through conventional means for the last five plus years, but we have not been able to get there due to contract and budget limitations. Working within our present situation, we will focus our attention in order to accomplish the priority areas identified below.

What?

Research-based practices to support reform:

- Interdisciplinary Teams - A team is a group of teachers that share a common group of students.
- Flexible Blocks of Time – Teachers are scheduled in blocks of time with a common group of students. This allows the teacher to move students into different groupings based on the instructional activities that have been planned for the students.
- Curriculum Integration – Research shows students will have higher achievement if the instruction is meaningful and relevant to them. This can be accomplished to a greater extent by integrating subject matter.
- Flexible Grouping of Students to Target Individual Needs – This allows for grouping and regrouping of students depending on the activity and instruction. Some students may need more time on basic skills while others may need to investigate the subject matter in greater depth in order to achieve continuous growth in a given academic area.
- Collaborative Planning time for Student Progress Monitoring – Teachers having a common planning time allows them time to discuss students and monitor their progress

more closely and gives time to plan integrated lessons/units with opportunities for differentiated instruction based on individual student needs.

- Targeted Intervention/Enrichment Time for Reading, Math, Writing, Problem Solving, and/or Project-based Learning in Science and Social Studies during the Core Team time.

How?

The Middle Level Reform Committee, with representatives from all sites and subject areas, as well as parent representatives, is in the process of creating a scheduling structure and a curriculum delivery model(s) to achieve the goals listed above. Committee members will be asked to rank submitted models, using a Likert scale. This information, along with an administrative recommendation, will be presented to the Programs and Services Committee of the School Board in early November. Because the schedule will be expanding the instructional time given to the Core Subject areas (math, communication arts, science, and social studies) to address the goals above, there will likely be an impact on the amount of time available for the Encore subjects (Art, FACE, Music, Tech Ed, World Language). The committee is focused on doing what is best for middle level students given the resources that are available at this time.

What if?

We will have a curriculum delivery model that:

- improves individual student achievement as measured by MAP targeted growth scores
- fosters connections between and among students, staff, and families,
- is responsive to today's 21st Century Learners,
- better prepares students for high school, and
- develops citizens for our global society.