

Garden City Middle School
Curriculum Committee Meeting
November 12, 2021

PTA Representatives: Krista Irwin, Meghan O'Brien, Marissa Padala

SEPTA Representative: Karen Butt

AGENDA

1. 6th Grade ELA Program

- What changes have been made to the newly revised ELA program in sixth grade?
 - The 6th grade ELA classes are following a balanced literacy philosophy that is grounded in Reader's Workshop. The model and the classroom spaces have been a tremendous improvement and the teachers are enthusiastic about the positive direction they are seeing in reading with students. They are seeing an increase in independent reading and student motivation to pursue their own reading interests.
- Can you discuss the specific details of the new reading program and how this will impact the writing program?
 - The reading program follows the model of a mini-lesson on a particular topic (e.g., symbolism), then group work, then individual work: I do / we do / you do
 - Impact on writing program was not addressed.
- What changes are planned for the writing program? Are there plans to include a Writing Lab in the middle school for students to seek individual guidance?
 - The writing program follows a similar structure to the reading program.
 - Students are encouraged to utilize the English Studio for support with their writing as it relates to their ELA classes as well as for their cross-curricular writing pieces.
 - The writing program was not discussed specifically.
 - The English Studio is a new offering (3 days at time of meeting). It's too soon to report the effectiveness of the program, but teachers and administration will be open to feedback from parents and students as the program moves forward. Parents and teachers of students at this age should encourage them to take advantage of this resource.

2. Genius Hour

- Can you describe the new Genius Hour program and how it will impact other parts of the curriculum?
 - Genius hour is on a 4-day rotation with Math, ELA, and STEAM (2x) during the 9th period block. It leverages project based learning and design thinking strategies.
- Are there plans to extend the program to other grades beyond 6th?
 - Not at this time. The program is still in a pilot phase.
- Does this program include PBL, and if so, how is it integrated?

—The STEAM program is a new curriculum pulling from multiple sources. The classes are focused on design-thinking and probleming-solving. The maker space philosophy drives a lot of the work being done.

3. SEL

- What curricular additions have been made in the area of Social-Emotional Learning, in particular, additions that can address the changing needs of students moving through the pandemic?

—Dr. Mendelssohn, Dr. Greenwald, and Mr. Baker created a presentation for the Board that can be reviewed [here](#). There is no specific SEL curriculum. Mr. Baker has volunteers who participate in the Leaders Program to push into classrooms providing character education. Also, there is the ABC club, Best Buddies, and Peer To Peer program. In addition, Unity Day is a successful school-wide curricular event.

- Is there a set curriculum to the Homebase period? Could this time be used to address student social-emotional needs?

—There is no curriculum to homebase. It is not specific to character education. In the past, teachers sometimes used the time for board games, etc. Teachers can use the time at their discretion. Most use the 20 minutes as down time for the students, since there is no dedicated recess period in the MS. Homebase allows for the children to have a more traditional cafeteria experience that balances our goal to develop positive social interactions with our goal to observe current safety guidelines since half of the grade is in homebase, while the other half is in the cafeteria.

- How does the mental health team at the middle school respond to student needs? Is there a specific process of intervention for a student who has been identified as struggling? A wellness room has been added to the guidance suite that students may access at any time. Guidance is available to any student who asks to go.

4. NWEA

- How will the results of the recently administered NWEA be used to impact curriculum and instruction?

—Dr. Cannone will be sending an email today with information for parents on accessing the results of the NWEA. There is strand data for the teachers to help identify students in need. Teachers can also use the data to assess gaps in students' learning across the grade level. It is also critical for MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Supports). Over the past two weeks, professional development has been provided for teachers to help interpret the information.

- Will the NWEA results be available on the parent portal for each family?

—Yes. Instructions for accessing scores on the portal will be provided in an email from building administrators.

At the time of this meeting, the messaging from the district and from the building about NWEA and related data points were about to take place. At this point, those messages have gone out.

5. Assessments

- What is the official policy regarding multiple assessments in one day in the core subjects?
Parents are concerned that their children are feeling overwhelmed by multiple tests and quizzes scheduled for the same day.

—Core teachers coordinate exams. There may be 2 tests on one day, especially a Core and World language exam. Three tests would be unusual; in this case, students and/or parents should communicate the conflict with the cluster teachers.

6. 7th Grade Science

- How has the current Space Science project (SSEP) impacted the science curriculum for 7th grade? Has the curriculum been altered to accommodate the time spent on this project?

—Requirements for the 7th grade science curriculum have continued to be completed while also working on the Space Program. Teachers planned ahead for this, and have created lessons that serve multiple purposes, so as to ensure all standards are being met efficiently and effectively. The overall focus is on scientific learning processes and learning these concepts with varied content.

- What are the major differences between the traditional science curriculum and the accelerated curriculum for 7th (and 8th) grade?

—The 7th grade accelerated program covers both Life Science and Physical Science, which is actually two years of curriculum. It prepares the student for the 9th grade Earth Science Regents course.

7. Mr. Samuelson's Additions

—none noted

N.B. An agenda item regarding a late inquiry from a parent on the Curriculum online google form regarding the LJ Create was brought to the administration; the concern was specific to a teacher, class assignment and assessment. As a matter of procedure, parents are encouraged to discuss specific issues directly with teachers before bringing to the Curriculum Committee's attention.