

Garden City Middle School PTA Curriculum

Meeting Minutes – November 2, 2022

Attendees: Mr. Samuelsson, Principal GCMS
Karen Butt, SEPTA Representative
Trina Coviello, MS Representative
Neeta Kantu Smith, MS Representative

1. Writing

- a. Writing Lab - is this available?
 - i. Last year there was an ARPA grant that allowed for Math, English & Executive Functioning offerings before school. This grant is no longer valid. The math lab had a decently strong utilization. There was minimal interest from students in the writing lab and Executive Functioning Support. Students have many access points for support with writing during school and extra help. See below for more info on MTSS.
- b. Accelerated writing / ELA program opportunities
 - i. There is a feeling to not “track” students in too many different ways. It’s not so easy to get in/ out of tracks (although can be done on case by case basis). Additionally, there is a sentiment that too much tracking at earlier grades doesn’t allow for students to progress naturally, could put extra strain on students.
- c. Describe how students can build their writing skills in MS
What types of writing skills they are learning within the current curriculum and extracurricular offerings? For example, what is being done in ELA and what other courses may be writing intensive i.e.- is there a focus on writing in science?
 - i. District-wide there is an initiative under Laura Kaufman (Director of Literacy) to evaluate the overall writing program, arc of progression and next steps for grades K-8. More information expected potentially at December Board of Ed meeting on progress of overall writing curriculum development.
 - ii. Individual classes do have components of individual writing support (TIER I Interventions) as appropriate.
- d. Additional writing / literacy support
 - i. MTSS (Multi-Tiered System of Support) exists in our district and is a means of addressing needs of students in academics, along with behavior, social /emotional areas. Committee meets weekly to assess each case. First contact is generally the classroom teacher(s) / parent to identify need and assess from there.
 - ii. Literary magazine does exist and Mr. Samuelsson was open to hearing about possibility of expanding the accessibility through portal option and having more students submit / be involved. Obviously this needs adult gatekeeper.

2. Technology

a. What technology is available for student use?

When/where can students use technology?

What parents can access?

- i. Every student has a Chrome book. Adding exciting new features – IXL; Google Read/Write (allow voice to text for those who want/need access to this functionality).
- ii. Library – when finished will have additional new technology that is exciting.

b. Google classroom

Are all teachers using google classroom to post assignments?

How are students supposed to use the planner and google classroom together?

Could there be a way that club schedules and schedule changes could be communicated using Parent Square?

On a related note to the above, is there going to be a student square for MS?

- i. All teachers do use Google classroom. Each teacher manages differently but there probably is some room for improvement and some more cohesion which will be reviewed, especially related to calendar / due date posting.
- ii. Some club change information will be communicated through Parent Square but not all.
- iii. No strong desire to have a “student square” app for kids to be tracking because the MS is really enforcing the no device use during school day.

3. General

a. NWEA scores – inform of outcomes or follow-up

- i. A building-wide data team reviews in depth the results of NWEA scores to address both individual and overall curriculum needs. Example – after an NWEA set, it was noticed that there were issues for 6th graders with numeracy and this is now further addressed in the classroom.
- ii. Dr. Cannone to update Board of Education in beginning of 2023

4. Other Class Offerings

What Languages are offered and how are they chosen?

Physical education options for middle school – how often are choices reviewed?

When do students learn to type?

- i. German, Italian and Spanish are offered. Happy to add that German now has a strong presence (had waned a few years ago).
- ii. Concern expressed that there is 1 sport option and 1 walking option during physical education. Mr. Samuelson will review further to assess needs for broader population.
- iii. Keyboarding is an elective for 7th and 8th graders – part of broader elective class. 6th grade Exploratory does have 1/3 of the year dedicated to Google suite of products and some keyboarding is a part of that.

5. Grade-specific questions

6th grade – would a Club Fair at 6th Grade Orientation make sense?

Concerning 8th to 9th grade transition, what supports are there in 8th grade to build high school study skills?

Is there a need for the PTA to sponsor some programming for students around study skills?

What can we add for 8th graders that is special and engaging that can help them prepare for high school? (6th-Exploratory; 7th – SSEP)

- i. 6th grade Club Fair – YES, we will look to create for 23-24. And there is also a “moving up” assembly towards the end of each year where each grade hears about what to expect for next year and elective options. Perhaps there will be a video course catalog of elective options in the future!
- ii. 8th-9th grade transition – nothing specifically in place.
- iii. 8th grade “special” is challenging. There are more demands on 8th grade course schedule – it includes a lab period so there is not a clear time that could be marked for “special” such as Exploratory or SSEP. Electives for 8th graders do include STEAM and Coding.

6. Proposal – Change of master bell schedule contemplated; Feedback being sought

- a. Currently, periods 4, 5, and 6 have 46 minutes to allow for lunch/ home base. All other periods are 41 minutes with 3 minute changeovers in hallway.
- b. Proposal is to move all periods to 41 minutes for several reasons
 - i. Equalize all teaching periods to 41 minutes
 - ii. Allow for 6 minutes of announcements in am. Currently, announcements often run into 1st period time due to number of announcements and/or late bus arrivals (shortening that 41 min period)
 - iii. 4 minute changeovers (from 3 minutes) in hallways. Affects 6th graders less because classes fairly confined in 1 area but 7th and 8th graders do have to travel some and the shorter passing period creates rushing and undue stress.
 - iv. Overall, it will decrease teaching minutes from only 384 to 376 per day – 8 minutes. And it will shorten home base from 21 to 17 minutes

7. Potential New Developments

These are being contemplated as ways to enhance the experience at GCMS

- a. Video course catalog of electives and clubs
- b. Morning announcements becoming student-led in a way that can evolve from announcements to news team / club, journalism club, communications class, podcast, etc.