

Garden City Middle School/Garden City High School MS/HS
Joint Curriculum Committee Meeting

January 25, 2022

PTA Representatives: Christine Alkin, Melissa Gaffney, Ploumou Scricca, Krista Irwin, Meghan O'Brien, Marissa Padala

SEPTA Representatives: Frances Mingoia, Karen Butt

Curriculum Chair: Anna Allsbrook

MEETING NOTES

1. Vocabulary Curriculum

Students in grades 7 & 8 are using vocabulary workbooks. The 6th graders are studying words embedded in the curriculum. High School students are studying vocabulary aligned with the literature that they are reading. The district is exploring further aligning vocabulary with texts.

At HS, there is academic support, a resource room, and ENL classes—so there are multiple levels of support in addition to the Writing Center. MS also offers reading support to students at varying levels of intervention.

2. SEL Curriculum

There is not a formal curriculum; rather, SEL is supported through clubs and extracurricular activities such as ABC, Cares-a-thon, Best Buddies, Peer Educators, GSA, SADD, Students Helping Students, One School One Book, and the Leaders Program. Students, parents, teachers, and counselors can help identify students in need of mental health support. Push-in support using some evidence-based programs related to specific topics (i.e., anti-drug/alcohol, mental health/suicide prevention, and Learning to Breathe program) has occurred.

The HS is tracking student engagement at school (via co-curricular programs such as music (band, orchestra, etc.), athletics, and clubs). Approximately two-thirds (800 out of 1200 students) engage even when looking only at the athletics/sports data. The school is considering exploring ways to make sure all students are involved. The Middle School expressed interest in exploring the need for and benefit of a tier 1 SEL curriculum.

Parent, teacher, and self referral tend to be the predominant mechanisms for the identification of students in need of tier 2/3 mental health services (i.e., counseling services). The district is investigating the possibility of a universal screener focused for areas such as social-emotional learning, self-awareness, management, healthy relationships, etc., which could be helpful in identifying students with social-emotional needs.

3. 8th – 9th Grade Transition

The HS will have a web page with a video about course selection for incoming 9th graders. In addition, there will be a visiting night for parents to meet with counselors, ask questions, and tour the HS. The MS will have a Google Form for rising 9th graders that can be filled out with elective choices. Aside from guidance counselors, additional information can be had through inquiries made to 8th grade teachers and curriculum coordinators. Selecting electives and Honors classes should be based on student interest, and balanced with extracurricular activities and other time commitments.

Special Ed science at the HS is often a combined class of 9th and 10th graders that switches every other year between Earth Science and Living Environment, based on the number of students in need. These are not sequential courses and can affect the ability to move within the different offerings of such subjects. Families will be made aware of this when making their course selections for the HS.

4. MS-HS course sequence

PLTW in MS is a computer module that does not sequence with the HS engineering modules. PLTW in HS is not sequenced after the first drawing course. All the courses in 9-12 are college level. This year the HS is running two classes and next year they plan to run three courses. A hiring search is ongoing for a qualified teacher to enhance the program further. Mr. Harrison and Ms. Sheil are the current PLTW HS teachers. Ms. Sheil will be certified for the third course.

The HS has looked into a freestanding financial literacy course in the past, but it is difficult to fit into the schedule with other graduation requirements. Economics has financial literacy within it. Business classes include financial literacy within them. There has been a partnership of many years with W!se.

5. ARPA

The before and after school English/writing and math help are being utilized well at both MS and HS. The HS plans to run its usual review/study sessions before any Regents at the end of the year. The MS is looking into executive functioning support.