

# Middle School Study Team

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## Introduction

### Goal

The District will conduct a Middle School Study Team to review the current practices at the middle level; review state, local and regional data; review state and national best practices; and to provide recommendations for systems improvement to the Executive Cabinet and the Board of Education.

### History

Middle Schools in the School District have morphed dramatically over the time. The four middle schools have gone from having three grades at the middle level, grades 7 through 9, to having two grades at the middle level, grades 7 and 8. Along with this grade-level change, the middle schools have transitioned through dramatic administrative and teacher changes. All four middle school principals currently have less than four years of principal experience.

### Membership

The Middle School Study Team is comprised of 20 members. The composition of the team include the four middle school principals, the four school executive directors, the executive director for special education, director for ESL, assistant superintendent of school performance, assistance superintendent of human resources, three members from the Board of Education, the president of the teacher's association, four middle school teachers, and the alternative school principal.

### Timeline

July 2008-June 2009 – monthly meetings with the broad study team and monthly meetings with smaller study groups.

Recommendations will be brought forward for Cabinet for approval and brought to the Board of Education for review.

### Budget

A budget of \$25,000 dollars was allocated for the study team process.

## Rationale

Middle schools in the School District have not made substantial academic gains in recent years. When looking at data sets (state assessments, universal screening data, discipline data), the Executive Leadership made a decision to undertake a study team to recommend changes to improve the current status of the middle schools in the District

Examples	2007-2008 Meet/ Exceed	2006-2007 Meet/ Exceed
School A		
Seventh	56.6	66.1
Eighth	35.8	59.79
School B		
Seventh	72.8	78.7
Eighth	54.9	63.8

The study team process has been used in the District extensively over the last three years. The District sees the study team process as being successful in identifying best practices that can be replicated. The middle school study team process itself, with the four middle school principals having great leadership responsibility within the team, has been as powerful as the outcome of the study team recommendations.

School	Number of Students	% Free/Reduced Lunch	% Minority	% ELL
A Middle School	886	32.39%	31%	5%
B Middle School	919	37.54%	46%	8%
C Middle School	543	64.64%	58%	14%
D Middle School	775	51.48%	48%	12%

## Study Team Activities

Members for the study team were selected through recommendations from the Executive Council.

- Initial executive meeting with middle school principals to review study team expectations
- Monthly team meetings – whole group/small group
- Utilize school, district, state data
- Review state, regional, and national practices and research
- Outside audit of the middle schools conducted
- Parent forums conducted
- Student forums conducted
- Online survey was given to parents

## Contact Information and Acknowledgements

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## Recommendations

### BELIEF STATEMENTS

#### Leadership

- Advocacy and Accountability

#### Understanding the Needs of the Middle School Student

- Appropriate support to ensure student learning
- Hire effective staff that value and are prepared to work with middle school students

#### Rigor/Engagement

- High Expectations
- Curriculum is relevant and challenging
- Students are supported through academic and extracurricular extensions
- Assessments is continuous, authentic, and aligned to learning goals.

### WORK GROUPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

- Have a viable, engaging curriculum that connects learning to the world outside of school
- Help students access technology resources
- Ensure all teachers have access to professional development pertinent to school and District goals
- Have all certified staff participate on data teams
- Literacy plan is used to align curriculum K-12
- Provide students with ongoing, timely, descriptive feedback
- Grades should reflect student progress towards mastery of state standards
- Proficiency assessments used to measure student growth and learning

#### Systems/Schedule

- Develop a flexible schedule
- Embed an advisory period for each student
- Develop teams for core classes
- Expand the student day

#### School Culture/Climate

- Provide professional development to help staff understand the developmental needs of middle level students
- Establish systems that support the school atmosphere
- Provide extracurricular opportunities for all students

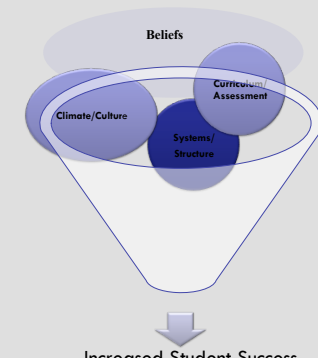
## Budget Implications

- Expanded staffing costs at each school
- Staff development costs
- Intervention and extension material costs
- Costs for expanding extracurricular activities
- New staff professional development

## Outcomes

- Staff that are prepared to work with middle level students
- Staff on professional learning communities
- More effective school systems
- Expanded extracurricular programs
- Concentrated staff development
- Principal mentoring
- Students being more successful in high school/ beyond
- Engaged and academically challenged students

## Conceptual Framework for Middle School Excellence



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