

Tredyffrin/Easttown School District  
Middle School Advisory Committee Meeting

5/25/22

The Middle School Advisory Committee met on May 25, 2022. The committee's objective this year was to review aspects the middle school schedule and make suggestions for enhancements. At the meeting, the following agenda items were discussed.

1. Daily Schedule Follow-Up and Feedback Gathered Since the Previous Meeting
  - a. Focus on Mental Health, Empathy, Belonging, Prosocial Learning, and Character Development
  - b. Advisory Initiative Lessons
2. Strategic Plan Developments
3. Discussion of Possible Paths Forward

The meeting began with a synopsis of the steps that have been taken since the last meeting to gather feedback on the middle school schedule. The previous meeting of the committee, which took place in February 2022, resulted in several topics of exploration for the committee members to seek feedback from their grade-level colleagues and content area teams. These topics included possible changes to the eight-period day schedule, the order and timing of student lunches, the amount of time dedicated to Advisory Support, and evaluating mechanisms for adding a "double period" or "rotating block" into the schedule for certain content areas.

Dr. Phillips, principal of T/E Middle School, and Mr. Gibson, principal of Valley Forge Middle School, described how feedback was collected via meetings with teams of teachers, grade level facilitators and other stakeholders. Consistent themes emerged from the feedback and those themes were shared at the meeting. Specifically, people identified the need to incorporate more opportunities for character education and prosocial learning. Areas of concerns included students' mental health, wellbeing, empathy, and sense of belonging. There was also strong and consistent feedback to continue the current model of providing time for students during the school day for Advisory Support.

During the months after the committee's most recent meeting, the District's Strategic Plan developed significantly. New strategies emerged from months of work collecting information from the community and hundreds of touch-points with key stakeholders, including students, parents, staff, and community members. Mr. Cataldi, Director of Assessment and Accountability, shared the newly established strategy areas with the committee. While the Strategic Plan is not yet approved, the connections between its proposed strategies and the feedback gathered by the committee regarding areas of focus for the middle school schedule were very striking. Any changes to the middle school schedule at this time should be focused on providing students with growth opportunities in the areas of wellness, mental health, resiliency, socialization, team-building, and making meaningful connections with peers and staff members so that all students feel valued, heard, and a sense of belonging in our schools.

With this, the conversation was opened up to the whole committee for their thoughts and ideas. Excellent suggestions were made on how to best utilize Advisory Support and Advisory Initiatives so

students have time built into their schedules for connecting with teachers and seeking academic support. Feedback strongly supported the eight-period day in its current form with the exception of adding additional time to our current model for prosocial lessons (the “HERO” Program). HERO stands for Honesty, Empathy, Respect, and Open-Mindedness. The lessons are taught during an extended homebase period once every other week and they cover bullying prevention, digital citizenship, resiliency, and many more middle school relevant topics centered around developing citizenship and other positive character traits. There was a desire to increase the amount of lessons, the time allocated for each lesson, and for grouping lessons together on consecutive days. To bolster student interest and engagement, the committee would like to pursue adding team-building activities early in the school year to build a sense of community and excitement around the extended homebase time and upcoming lessons. The committee members felt a “rebranding,” or change to the name of the lessons/program might help rejuvenate student engagement and buy-in for the concepts. The committee also felt that summer workshop time would be very helpful to plan for and pursue these changes for the start of the 2022-2023 school year.