Middle Schools:
A Force for the Future

“Maintaining a middle level school that makes a difference in the lives of young adolescents requires a complex mixture of leadership, commitment, programs, and practices implemented in a caring, collaborative environment.”

- Breaking Ranks in the Middle

Elementary to Middle School Feeders

Beginning in 2017, students promoted from K-5 schools will receive an initial offer to their middle school feeder school. In the meantime, students going to middle school before 2017 will receive a preference to their middle school feeder if they list it as one of their seven choices.

Middle school principals, staff, and parent groups are eager to build relationships with elementary communities so they can plan and work together to align services and resources to better meet the needs of all students.

Family Engagement

“When parents are involved in their children’s education at home, they do better in school. And when parents are involved in school, children go farther in school and the schools they go to are better.” - A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement.

We believe family engagement is essential to a child’s success in school. Here’s a quick overview of some of the resources and structures in place to support and encourage deep and meaningful family engagement.

- Every school has an elected School Site Council (SSC) to represent parents, students, community members, and school staff in the school governance process.
- Schools that receive funding for low-income students have a School Advisory Committee (SAC).
- There is an English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC) at every school that has 21 or more English Learners.
- Every ELAC is invited to send representatives to the District English Learner Advisory Committee (DELAC).
- Every middle school has a Parent Teachers Association (PTA/PTSA) or Parent Teachers Organization.
- Selected middle schools have Family Liaisons to strengthen relationships with internal and community partners.
We are rolling up our sleeves each and every day to prepare our students for high school, college, and careers. We will continue to institutionalize and practice the five R’s – rigor, relevance, relationships, reflection, and recommitment. We have to make sure that what we are teaching is relevant to our students; that we have high expectations for all students; that we truly know who our students are; that we continue to reflect on our practices; and that we make a point of recommitting to our profession and our students.”

– Jeannie Pon, Assistant Superintendent, Middle Schools

**Vision**

Our vision for success for middle school students is every student being promoted from middle school equipped with the skills, capacities, and dispositions necessary for success in high school and beyond.

**Access and Equity**

Make social justice a reality by ensuring every student has access to high quality teaching and learning.

**Student Achievement**

Create learning environments in all SFUSD schools that foster highly engaged and joyful learners and that support every student reaching his or her potential.

**Accountability**

Keep district promises to students and families and enlist everyone in the community to join in doing so.

**Curriculum and Instruction**

Our goal is to provide a challenging and rigorous curriculum with appropriate academic and developmental support to all our middle school students. We expect students to engage in classroom activities, which promote the 1) development of academic vocabulary and discourse; 2) strategic reading of informational and scientific text; and 3) depth and complexity of mathematical thinking and reasoning.

We believe that it is possible to increase the achievement of high performing students and accelerate the achievement of those currently less academically successful. To enrich the academic experiences for all middle school students, we are (1) working toward full implementation of the SFUSD ELA PK-12 Core Curriculum (2) supporting the redesign of services for students with disabilities, and (3) supporting the needs of English Learners.

Here are examples of what this work looks like:

**Middle School Mathematics**

- We are committed to supporting our underserved populations, including English language learners and students with disabilities. Engaging lessons and best practices that lead to conceptual understanding are foundational to good teaching and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Language Objectives, and Inclusive Practices are practices that we will see in middle school mathematics classroom.

**8th Grade Math/Algebra**

- In January 2013, the California Department of Education re-adopted the original iteration of the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics after much debate over its previous decision to incorporate Algebra for all eighth grade students in middle school. Therefore, San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) will follow suit with the rest of the nation and provide the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Math 8 Course for all eighth grade students and place the CCSS Algebra Course at the high school level.

**English Learner Development**

- While continuing to emphasize reclassification of English Learners in middle schools, we will be using California’s new English Learner Development (ELD) standards to shift instruction so English Learners "Interact in Meaningful Ways" as they progress through a continuum of English proficiency and receive access to core curriculum.

**Special Education**

- Middle Schools continue to move forward with actualizing the District’s promise of access and equity by ensuring all students with special education services are included in general education, with their same age peers, to the greatest extent appropriate. All middle schools are able to support the needs of students with disabilities through a variety of strategies, inclusive of but not limited to: adaptations, accommodations, modifications, co-teaching, small group instruction and individualized supports. All middle schools are structured to meet the needs of students with RSP and Mild-Moderate SDC levels of services and eight sites have additional supports to meet the needs of students with Moderate-Severe SDC levels of services.

**STEM iPad Project**

As part of Mayor Lee’s Educational Leadership Initiative with Superintendent Caranza’s vision to build a PreK–12 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) pathway, middle schools will be leading the effort with funding and support from Salesforce.com to create a model for innovating with technology in the classroom. In all of the comprehensive middle schools, a cohort of math/science teachers will receive professional development utilizing iPads with educational apps and projects to engage students and to accelerate learning. The iPads will be the instructional tools for the STEM curriculum and alignment to the Math Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.

**School Climate**

Every staff member in our middle schools takes responsibility for assuring a safe school climate where differences among students are accepted and positive peer relationships are supported. Here are a few of the ways our middle schools are cultivating such environments:

**Restorative Practices/Alternatives to Suspensions**

- Restorative Practices emphasizes the importance of positive relationships in building school community, and works to strengthen individual and community relationships by repairing harm when conflict and misbehavior happens. This is an approach where students learn to accept accountability, recognize and repair the harm their actions caused. In addition, the collaborative approach offers a voice to those who have been harmed and lets them have a say in how the damage can be repaired.

**Response to Intervention: Behavior**

- 10 middle schools participated in an extensive year-long professional development opportunity focused on supporting the behavioral needs of all students. This training guided school site teams to identify where their challenges were and begin to establish Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) designed to meet the behavioral needs of all students. Creating common behavioral expectations, focus on positive reinforcement, and building relationships with students were at the center of this work. This work will continue through this next year, with the original 10 sites participating in their second year of training and the other two sites beginning the process.

**Step-Up Program for Incoming 6th Graders**

- A one-week summer orientation program for rising 6th graders at all middle schools.

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