

Memorandum

To: Andy Barrett & Adam Law
CC: Exploratory Departments of GMS North and South
From: Larry Bidlack & Terry Bleau
Date: 3/24/2017
Re: Exploratory class study

Over the past years we have been able to manage our exploratory rotations without much difficulty because we had a very stable staff with few changes. Due to a variety of factors we have come to an understanding that our current exploratory rotations may be difficult to maintain in the long run. Our current system requires support from part time staff in difficult to fill content areas. With a consistently small candidate pool of family and consumer science (FACS) teachers and technology education (Tech Ed) teachers we are not confident we will be able to staff a part time FACS teacher and part time technology education teacher with a woods certification in the years to come. As a result a study was initiated for the 2016-17 school year to plan for how we can resolve these issues. The goal of the study was to make programming recommendations that would be able to be implemented without part time staff in the FACS and tech ed areas. The targeted year of implementation of new programming is the 2018-19 school year.

The study consisted of representatives from both middle schools and from each department within our elective program (art, FACS, foreign language, general music, performing music and tech ed.). Additionally, the group included administrators and union representation. As part of the study, the group looked at solutions that involved course offerings by quarters, semesters, trimesters and even quints (five marking periods). The group reviewed research that outlined the different programs offered by our neighboring districts as well as other districts to the east of Geneva. The group concluded that switching programming from semesters to trimesters would be the best way to minimize the need for part time staff in FACS and tech ed., but also that this shift would create more opportunities for students in our elective programming.

The following are the main recommendations:

1. Shift to a trimester system. Due to this shift all of the current exploratory classes would need to reduce their curriculum to fit the appropriate time line of 12 weeks instead of 18 weeks.
2. Create an additional 6th grade art class that would result in students having a trimester of general music, a trimester of 2-D art and a trimester of 3-D art.
 3. Create a trimester 7th grade class called "Entrepreneurship". Students would also have FACS and tech ed. for a trimester each.
4. At the 8th grade level, maintain our current foreign language options. Create more options in the FACS, art and tech ed. department by having two trimester options in each of those departments instead of a single semester option. Additionally, create an 8th grade non-performing music option.

These recommendations create the following impact on the district.

1. The creation of the 8th grade music elective would result in an increase in staff on the middle school campus by between .1 to .4 FTE depending on the choices made by the students.
2. This solution creates a full time staff member out of positions previously held by part time staff members. Therefore, this is an addition of benefits for a staff member.
3. There may be a need for some equipment to support implementation of the new elective choices. Those options have not been fully developed yet and therefore a budget has not been created.
4. There may be a space implication depending on the development of the courses. With the move to one to one computing, the computer labs will be able to accommodate space concerns.

Below is a basic outline of the plan. Since this is a plan still in development in terms of actual curriculum descriptions, some areas of the plan simply indicate TBD (to be determined).

6th grade programming and staffing: The focus of programming in 6th grade will be on art and general music. On campus this will require the current art and general music teachers as well as an additional staff member who is certified for art. The following is the total predicted staffing required for each building in order to implement this programming (two total FTE).

- .67 general music teacher
- 1.33 art teacher

The students' schedules would include the following courses:

- One trimester of general music
- One trimester of 2-D art
- One trimester of 3-D art

7th grade programming and staffing: The programming in 7th grade would be focused on FACS and tech ed with the addition of an entrepreneurship course that would incorporate some concepts related to both of those departments. On campus this will require the current FACS and tech ed teachers as well as limited involvement of the current general music teachers, the new art teacher and possibly part time staff already available in the district. The following is the total predicted staffing required for each building in order to implement this programming (two total FTE).

- .8 FACS teacher
- .8 tech Ed. teacher
- .2 art teacher and/or other part time staff.
- .2 general music teacher

The students' schedules would include the following courses:

- One trimester of FACS
- One trimester of Tech Ed.
- One trimester of Entrepreneurship

8th grade programming and staffing: The programming for the 8th grade level beyond the foreign language electives will include the creation of new courses. These courses will be taught by teachers from the art, FACS, general music and tech ed. programs. The following is the total predicted staffing required for each building in order to implement this programming (.73 FTE). This represents a .13 increase in staff compared to the existing system.

- .2 art teacher
- .2 FACS teacher
- .13 general music teacher
- .2 tech ed. teacher

The students schedules will be based on their choices and will be made based on the ability to fill a class based on the students choices. All students will have three trimester classes unless scheduled for a foreign language class. For each elective, there is not a prerequisite class. A student can enroll in art 2 even if they have not taken art 1.

- Art 1: Content TBD
- Art 2: Content TBD
- FACS 1: Content TBD
- FACS 2: Content TBD
- Music: Content and name TBD
- Tech Ed 1: PLTW Robotics
- Tech Ed 2: Computer programming

Next Steps in the planning:

To be prepared for the 2018-2019 school year the staff will need to engage in curriculum development for the new class as well as curriculum modifications for existing classes. Although much of this work can be done through the PLC process on normal PLC days and institute days, there is also a need for summer curriculum development time before final implementation. The following are benchmarks for the remainder of this study.

- By August 2017 the middle school administration will review the plan with the central office administration for final approval as well as with the Board of Education as an informational item.
- By December 2017 a course description will be developed and approved by the administration to allow students to select 8th grade electives in February of 2018.
- General curricular outlines including the completion of the PLC unit planning guide stage 1 for each course will be completed by May of 2018.
- Summer curricular development time for the planning of assessments and key instructional activities will take place in the summer of 2018.
- Students will begin the new classes in August of 2018.
- A staff presentation will be made to the Board of Education by April of 2019 that highlights the new courses with student samples and hopefully student presenters as well.