



Board Meeting Date: 10/16/2023

Title: Middle School Proposal for First Day of School, Fall of 2024

Type: Discussion

Presenter(s): Dr. Randy Smasal, Assistant Superintendent; Patricia Pettis, South View Principal; and Patrick Bass, Valley View Principal

Description: For the start of the 2024-25 school year, the middle school leadership team has proposed a regular start for students new to the school (incoming 6th graders, some 7th and 8th graders, high priority families/students with IEPs) and a late start for students who are returning to their middle school (7th and 8th grade students). The purpose for the first day late start proposal is to provide an enhanced onboarding process for new students to the school. This proposal is very similar to the onboarding process done for 9th grade students at the high school.

Recommendation: No recommendation is being made at this time. This item has been prepared for board discussion

Desired Outcome(s) from the Board: Please bring forth questions you have for the presenters.

Attachment(s):

- See Proposal

Middle School Proposal for First Day of School, Fall of 2024

Current Reality

The first day of middle school begins with nearly 1000 students arriving at the school at about the same time. All 6th grade students are new to the building and many in 7th and 8th grade are new as well. (Last year there were about 100 new 7th and 8th graders at each middle school.) As they arrive at school, numerous students make their way to the front office to seek help with their lockers, finding their way around the school and changing their schedule. Anticipating that many students will spend part of the morning on the first day problem solving in the front office, school leaders at Valley View decided to move the WEB (Where Everyone Belongs) kickoff activities to later in the week so that all students can participate. This is less than ideal since WEB is designed to help successfully onboard new learners at the school. Additionally, Valley View administrators received several emails from 6th grade and new families wanting more of a personalized onboarding process for their student(s) (and for them). We believe a late start delivers on both of those things.

Proposal for the start of the 2024-25 school year

The middle school leadership team has proposed a regular start for students new to the school (incoming 6th graders, some 7th and 8th graders, high priority families/students with IEPs) and a late start for students who are returning to their middle school (7th and 8th grade students). The purpose for the 2024-25 late start proposal on the first day is to have an improved onboarding process for our students who are new to the school.

The focus of this time provides students the opportunity to gain comfort and confidence in navigating middle school and provides teachers the opportunity to gain valuable background knowledge that will allow a more efficient start to the school year. Teachers will also help new students understand how to be successful in an Edina Middle School because the transition from elementary and other school districts is significant. Transitions are threshold moments. There are times when onboarding strategies are critical in order to help students and families acclimate in the most positive way. This is very reassuring for students and families that are new to the experience.

One of the first tasks in developing this proposal was to examine our current practices through the lens of Culturally Proficient School Systems and the Edina Strategic Plan. In the past, the 6th grade WEB day activities where students connect with one another as well as student leaders in 7th and 8th grades were held in the summer and required parent transportation which was a barrier for some to participate in this event. (15% of 6th grade students at SV were absent on Aug. 24th, 2023, the day of WEB kickoff.) Kicking off the first day of the school year with WEB removes that barrier and gives each and every student the positive start they deserve. In addition, this proposal enhances the depth of the following four strategic initiatives:

B2: Create a school culture that enhances learning and fosters a sense of belonging for all students through our values of Integrity, Compassion, Courage, Commitment, Appreciation and Responsibility.

B3: Support equity by identifying and eliminating structural barriers to success.

C4: Create environments that are conducive to learning and facilitate constructive student interaction.

D3: Develop students as leaders, encourage student voice and promote civic engagement.

This proposal was generated by Web Advisors (teachers) at South View (SV) who had experience with this in another school district where they came from. The Web Advisors shared the idea with the administrative team at SV. SV administrators then shared the proposal with Valley View (VV), where the idea was also supported. Lastly, if approved, the middle schools would be running a similar day one schedule as Edina High School (EHS). EHS runs a nearly identical model to this proposal with a late start for students in grades 10-12 while 9th graders report in the morning of the first day.

Individuals who have contributed to development of this proposal:

SV Web Leaders: Alex Sackett, Jesscia Bateman, Jennifer Harrits

SV Teacher: Betony Osborne

SV Administrators: Dr. Tami Jo Cook, Tricia Pettis

VV Web Leaders: Katie Higgins, Gretchen Brandt

VV Administrators: Patrick Bass, Erik Lowe

Additional information is being collected from Families through Thought Exchange

The How

The schedule would be structured to be a combination of connecting students with teachers and students with students while building relationships in an environment that feels low stress, fun and personal. New students want to know what classes they have, where classes are, what the rules are, and what opportunities are available. While new students are led through orientation activities other student leadership teams are meeting and doing their training. For example, Edina Unified leaders and the Ambassador programs could offer their training on this morning, instead of during the summer. The Spirit team would also be able to connect to plan for future events and later help kick off the rally later in the day.

Below is a sample schedule for the day. The morning would start in Advisory. Advisory is home base for middle school students and can be both multi-grade or single grade depending upon the activities being offered. 7th and 8th grade Web leaders are assigned to specific advisories. New students would start their day with community builders and learn the logistics of the school, tour the building, learn where things are, read the schedule, practice locker access, receive technology access and distribution, and later attend their first middle school lunch. Remaining students in grades 7 and 8 would arrive in the afternoon and would move into Advisory for their onboarding and then all students would complete the first day in an all school assembly for team building.

Sample First Day Schedule

6th grade	7th grade	8th grade
9:20-9:40- all students go to Advisory teacher- 6th graders walk down with Advisory teacher to gym New students to SV will be picked up by SA for programming	1:00pm students arrive 1:00-1:35 Advisory	1:00pm students arrive 1:00-1:35 Advisory

<p>9:45-11:30 gym all 6th grade (WEB opening assembly - large group orientation)</p> <p>11:35-1:05 head to Advisory rooms for small group curriculum (1.5 hours) 1:30</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advisories split into two groups - Go into classes that teachers have prep - Building tours <p>1:05-1:35 6 Lunch w/WEB leaders and groups</p> <p>1:35 go back to Advisory</p>		
<p>1:35-2:55 All students go to Advisory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circle - First day expectations <p>2:55 -3:50 7th and 8th grade level rallies 6th grade transitional orientation with teachers</p> <p>3:50-4:00 Return to Advisory to review bussing expectations</p>		

Reference:

AMLE. Onboarding Middle School Families: A seat for everyone at the table. Available online at <https://www.amle.org/onboarding-middle-school-families-a-seat-for-everyone-at-the-table/>