

Pleasantdale School District 107

Administrative Office • 7450 S. Wolf Road • Burr Ridge, IL 60527
(708) 784-2013 • Fax: (708) 246-0161 • www.d107.org

Pleasantdale Elementary School

When scheduling students, pacing children in a positive learning environment is a priority. Pleasantdale Elementary administration and staff members spend a great deal of time and energy ensuring each child's unique needs are considered. Annually, the team reflects on the scheduling process and makes improvements.

Preschool groupings are unique because parents have choices regarding the number of days their child attends (2, 3, or 5) as well as a.m., p.m., or full day. Some of the challenges associated with this model include balancing classes, differentiating instruction, assessing, tracking, and making sure instruction is not repeated. We will be looking into ways to improve the preschool scheduling process this year.

Most of our incoming kindergarten students attended our preschool so placement is done in a very similar manner to grades 1-4. However, we are fortunate to have new students enroll in the spring and summer. For example, of the 40 kindergarten students currently enrolled 17 are new to our school. Through conversations with parents, we do our best to learn about these children in an attempt to keep classes balanced.

The introduction of free extended day kindergarten will not affect the overall structure of the day. There will still be half-day students going home at noon. However, as of August 5, there are only six children opting for half-day. Last year at this time, there were thirteen half-day students.

Transition from Elementary to Middle School

The elementary staff members play an important role in the initial placements for our incoming 5th grade students. They assist with the administration of placement tests, provide feedback from data reviews, both regarding academic and behavioral strengths/areas of focus for our new students. They are also critical in helping establish the Advisory/Homeroom groups, the central focus of our Social Emotional Learning curriculum (SEL). These groups are balanced by gender and SEL factors in order to assist with a smooth transition to Middle School.

Pleasantdale Middle School

The Middle School process differs greatly from the Elementary School process, as teachers generally instruct in singular academic areas of focus and students traditionally rotate classes and classrooms throughout the school day. Class sections at each grade level are set based upon the number of students at each grade level, the number of sections in differentiated subjects (Above Level courses in Math and English Language Arts), with a focus both on local district guidelines (class size), state rules regarding IEP/Non-IEP ratios in classrooms (30%/70%), and gender, behavior, and ability balances.

Additional goals for the scheduling process include: aligning staff schedules, when possible, to allow for collaborative planning, data reviews, and grade level planning; aligning English Language Arts classes (composition and literary arts) so that instruction is provided by the same instructor to the

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same set of students for best delivery/continuity of the curriculum; at the 5th Grade level, creating an Language Arts/Social Studies block to minimize transitions and acclimate the students to the Middle School Environment.

The size of the school/grade and the needs for interventions/accelerated curriculum can provide great stress on the schedule. In all but one grade level (7th) two distinct pathways of must be developed for the students to “travel” through their day in order to meet the IEP guidelines. These two paths must intersect on a common period for special services (resource, math/reading labs). Additionally, students identified with the potential for additional supports (RtI tiered supports) are scheduled proactively to allow for seamless transition in and out of interventions. These students are scheduled into these tiered interventions in lieu of either Social Studies or Spanish, at times resulting in an apparent imbalance in these classes.

Similarly, multiple pathways need to be created to allow for students to participate in accelerated curriculum, including those Above Level courses offered within grade levels, double accelerated classes, and those participating in classes at the high school.

One of the greatest challenges this school year has been the great influx of new students to the Middle School To date, 15 new students have enrolled, with 6 pending district registration. Such new enrollments have already created some challenges, including a complete rescheduling of one grade level in late July in order to balance classes. While all courses currently

Presentation Takeaways:

Elementary School

- ❖ Finding the best placement for students is a priority. This is a collaborative process between administration and staff. Student placement is often met with positive feedback from parents.
- ❖ Because of the structure of preschool, sectioning can be improved. There will be possible suggestions explored and presented during the year for 2016-2017 implementation.
- ❖ We reflect on the process and make improvements every year.

Middle School:

- ❖ Students are scheduled individually in order to best provide appropriate supports and academic challenges, based upon prior identified strengths and areas requiring support.
- ❖ Balance is sought in regard to class size, demographics, behaviors, with state (IEP) and local (class size) guidelines providing direction.
- ❖ Common Team time is sought for staff members to allow for collaboration, data reviews, and coordination of grade level activities.
- ❖ Summer new student registration, assessments for grade level transitions have provided challenges to the scheduling process.

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