

Middle School Schedule Proposal Update:

At the request of the Board president, MVWSD staff has prepared an updated presentation on the middle school schedule; a proposed move from the current 8-period cascading schedule to a 7-period schedule (used in the past). This update provides the Board of Trustees with data, and research to help the Board deliberate on the impact of returning to the previous 7-period school schedule.

Recent history of middle schools' schedules

In 2016, concerns arose that not every middle school student had a choice elective. During the 2017-18 school year, at the Direction of the Board of Trustees and in line with Strategic Plan 2021, District staff engaged in a process to find a way to ensure that every student was afforded the opportunity to have a "choice elective" class. At the time, students who required both English language support and instructional support (through their IEP) were unable to have any elective courses. At the same time, MVWSD had also made a strategic decision to double block math classes in order to help students adjust to the California Core Standards that were introduced around 2014-2015. The process started in September, with a recommendation at the January 4, 2018 meeting.

Since the inception of the 8-period schedule during the 2018-19 school year, several other factors have taken shape. First was the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced nationwide school closures and instituted remote learning. This subsequently led to the removal of the double blocked math course as there were significant limitations on how much remote learning a person could endure. The removal of the second math period opened the door for almost all students to have at least two choice electives and for a sizable majority of students to have three electives.

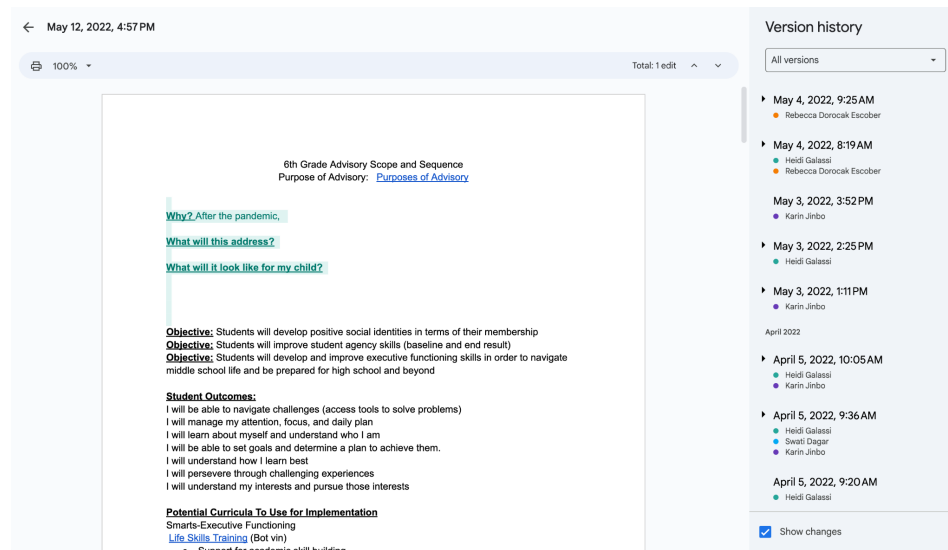
Request 1: Adjust the full day meeting schedule (2021-22)

With the full reopening of schools (2021-22), several additional adjustments were needed in order to make the schedule work. When the eight-period schedule was enacted, MVWSD staff used the schedule change as an opportunity to align early release days (Thursday) for both elementary and middle schools; previously middle schools had a late start day on Mondays. In the original 8-period

cascading schedule (two periods are eliminated each day on a rotating basis), students would see all of their teachers on Thursday. However the shortened, early-release day significantly impacted the amount of time that students had with teachers. To address the concerns raised by teachers about not only the shortened day, but also the desire for teachers to see all of their students at the beginning of the week, the “all-periods” day was moved to Monday.

Request 2: The need for Advisory (2021-2024)

After the pandemic, MVWSD, along with schools across the country, started to notice an increase in aberrant behaviors from students. In addition to an increase in mental health needs, teachers and administrators alike began to notice that students needed to learn critical life skills: conflict resolution, bullying and feelings of belonging. In the 2021-22 school year, Middle School Principals Mrs. Gomez and Dr. Galassi, along with their assistant principals began to request the inclusion of an advisory for rising 6th graders.



The screenshot shows a document titled "6th Grade Advisory Scope and Sequence" with a purpose of advisory: "Purposes of Advisory". The document content includes:

- Why? After the pandemic,**
- What will this address?**
- What will it look like for my child?**
- Objective:** Students will develop positive social identities in terms of their membership
- Objective:** Students will improve student agency skills (baseline and end result)
- Objective:** Students will develop and improve executive functioning skills in order to navigate middle school life and be prepared for high school and beyond
- Student Outcomes:**
 - I will be able to navigate challenges (access tools to solve problems)
 - I will manage my attention, focus, and daily plan
 - I will learn about myself and understand who I am
 - I will be able to set goals and determine a plan to achieve them.
 - I will understand how I learn best
 - I will persevere through challenging experiences
 - I will understand my interests and pursue those interests
- Potential Curricula To Use for Implementation**
 - Smarts-Executive Functioning
 - Life Skills Training (Bot vin)
 - Support for academic skill building

The version history sidebar on the right shows the following changes:

- May 4, 2022, 9:25 AM: Rebecca Dorocak Escobar
- May 4, 2022, 8:19 AM: Heidi Galassi, Rebecca Dorocak Escobar
- May 3, 2022, 3:52 PM: Karin Jinbo
- May 3, 2022, 2:25 PM: Heidi Galassi
- May 3, 2022, 1:11 PM: Karin Jinbo
- April 2022
- April 5, 2022, 10:05 AM: Heidi Galassi, Karin Jinbo
- April 5, 2022, 9:36 AM: Heidi Galassi, Swati Dagar, Karin Jinbo
- April 5, 2022, 9:20 AM: Heidi Galassi

Senior District staff members, including the Superintendent, were supportive of the inclusion of advisory, but also expressed their reservations about the reduction of an elective course for all 6th graders. District office staff felt that it would violate the Board direction from the 2017-18 school year that every 6th grade student would have a “choice elective.” Additionally, Crittenden Middle School was undergoing a change in leadership and senior staff felt that it was important for parity amongst both middle schools. Advisory was again requested during the 2022-23 school year, this time by both Middle

School administrators. Finally, during the 2023-24 school year, the Mountain View Educators Association (MVEA) raised concerns about the impact of the 8-period schedule on student achievement. As the Employer Employee Relations Board (EERB) stated, it was becoming increasingly hard for teachers to meet standards, provide enrichment opportunities as well as remediation with the limited days of instruction. Senior District Office Staff, along with MVEA leadership, agreed to create a committee to explore possible solutions with the stipulation that every student would receive a choice elective.

Creation of Middle School Schedule Committee (2023-24)

At the start of the calendar year, five teachers (two from Crittenden: Megan Binn and Michael Newman, and three from Graham: Rebecca Escobar, Edgar Gomez and Sheila Martinez), two site administrators (Heidi Galassi, Julie Thompson) and two district administrators (Tara Vikjord and Swati Dagar) began to explore the feasibility of including advisory into the instructional day. The committee agreed to the following parameters:

The Committee agreed to the following parameters to guide their work

- English Language Learners must have English Language Development (ELD)
- Students with IEPs will have an option for instructional support
- All students must have a minimum of one choice elective during the regular school day
- PE minutes must be met (State requirement)
- Must be what is best for students

Several opportunities emerged after a series of meetings and feedback from middle school teachers and district office staff.

The first was the creation of a combination course that would allow for every student to have a choice elective. This required the Federal Programs office, as well as the Special Education Department, to find a way to meet both Individualized Education Program (IEP) requirements as well as English Language Development (ELD) requirements.

The second was an opportunity to increase middle schools' "morning



break,” as well as increase instructional time, all the while introducing a once-a-week advisory period.

Third, 7-periods would eliminate the short, 40-minute periods twice a week that are not enough time to complete a full lesson (most lessons are 45-60 minutes)

Finally, all sections of a subject could have a consistent number of minutes in a 7-period schedule, which was an issue in the 8-period schedule.

Selection and presentation of a schedule

After reviewing several schedules, the committee narrowed its focus on three different 7-period options. Those options were vetted and a pro/con list was made in order to objectively determine which schedule would meet the needs of students. The committee ultimately decided to recommend to the Superintendent a schedule that reflected an initial proposal that was emailed to the two District Office staff members from teachers. This schedule appeared to be a “homage” to the previous 7-period schedule that was in place prior to the 2018-19 school year. However, the new schedule included a once a week 37-minute advisory period. With a recommendation in place, the Superintendent formally brought an update to the Board on March 14, 2024.

The change of the schedule and presentation to the Board represents the first opportunity of growth for MVWSD; this will be discussed in a later section of the Board report.

Reaction to the proposed schedule

It is worth noting that the schedule has been met with mixed reviews. It is understandable that parents and students would be concerned about the loss of a third elective (for a portion of the study body). We understand that several teachers from Graham are now voicing concerns about the loss of the second planning period. Several committee members mistakenly assumed that the once a week 37-minute advisory period would count as an additional prep.

Moreover, the initial presentation reflects the District’s desire to continue to allow a current practice of allowing site-based management and bottom-up leadership to emerge. It did not follow the normal MVWSD process for laying a foundation that is rooted in either Board Direction or data-driven by District Office staff. Thus, the March presentation to the Board, and the town hall, did not outline the fundamental underpinnings needed for parents and students to understand the need for change because of its grassroots origin.

Research:

While there is not a large body of research that exists in determining the correlation between instructional minutes and student achievement, there are several formative studies that support the change. The following links for research from the Brookings Institute, U.S. Department of Education, as well as California State faculty all point to the positive impact of increasing student achievement by increasing instructional minutes. As noted by Sin Juz Jez and Dr. Wassmer in 2015

Fifteen more minutes of school a day at a school site (or about an additional week of classes over an academic year) relates to an increase in average overall academic achievement of about 1%, and about a 1.5% increase in average achievement for disadvantaged students. This same increase in learning time yields the much larger 37% gain in the average growth of socioeconomically disadvantaged achievement from the previous academic year.

https://www.csus.edu/faculty/w/rwassme/documents/2015_impact-of-learning-time-on-academic-achievement-2015-jez-284-306.pdf

<https://irl.umsl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2167&context=dissertation>

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-potential-role-of-instructional-time-in-pandemic-recovery/>

https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/regions/appalachia/pdf/REL_2014061.pdf

<https://docs.iza.org/dp9797.pdf>

<https://www.empowerk12.org/blog/more-instructional-time-matters>

By changing the schedule, MVWSD would be able to increase the instructional minutes of all courses by an estimated 3 weeks, without increasing the school day.

Data and Needs

Student achievement

As highlighted in the presentation, the pandemic has had a significant impact on student achievement in the District and across the nation as evidenced by the precipitous decline in student performance at the



middle schools. There has been an increase in the number of middle school students below grade level since 2021-22.

Math	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
2015 MVWSD	50% met/exc	51% met/exc	49% met/exc
2015 State	33% met/exc	34% met/exc	33% met/exc
2017 MVWSD	up 9% from 2015	up 10% from 2015	up 14% from 2015
2017 State	up 3% from 2015	up 3% from 2015	up 3% from 2015
2023 MVWSD	down 10% from 2017	down 8% from 2017	down 7% from 2017
2023 State	down 3% from 2017	down 4% from 2017	down 6% from 2017

ELA	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
2015 MVWSD	58% met/exc	58% met/exc	63% met/exc
2015 State	42% met/exc	44% met/exc	45% met/exc
2017 MVWSD	up 6% from 2015	up 7% from 2015	up 5% from 2015
2017 State	up 5% from 2015	up 5% from 2015	up 4% from 2015
2023 MVWSD	down 9% from 2017	down 4% from 2017	down 5% from 2017
2023 State	down 3% from 2017	down 2% from 2017	down 3% from 2017

Social emotional learning (SEL)

Additionally, MVWSD Strategic Plan 2027 has introduced a new focus on social emotional learning (SEL). As reported to the Board, MVWSD has been waiting for the state to release its framework for SEL before moving forward with an adopted curriculum. However, during this time, MVWSD has started to collect data from students to measure things like “student belonging.” This data is collected outside of the District LCAP survey, which was updated to include a school climate



data section. As highlighted by the presentation, Middle School students are showing more at-risk factors than their elementary school counterparts. Middle school students are being suspended at a higher rate, they report lower senses of belonging and are more likely to be absent from school. While some of this is reflective of the “challenge of middle school,” the increases in these areas are warning signs of larger problems afoot, which has led Graham, MVWSD’s largest school, to enter into the State’s Differentiated Assistance program.

Differentiated Assistance

MVWSD has been identified for Differentiated Assistance by the state for our Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Homeless Students for not meeting academic standards, students being chronically absent and for our rate of suspensions. Differentiated Assistance has been around since 2017, however MVWSD is entering this category now after the pandemic. Additionally, Graham is now in the Additional Targeted Support and Improvement Program for Suspension for Homeless Students.

Budget

While the committee was working on the proposal, we read in the news in February that Google is shuttering their preschool sites they lease from MVWSD. This was confirmed by Google in February. This was an unexpected hit of \$3 million revenue per year moving forward. At the same time, MVWSD was in the process of bargaining with the MVEA for a new agreement that includes 5%-5%-4% raises in the next 3 years. Faced with these new expenses/loss of revenue and the unknown of whether our \$3 million parcel tax renewal (potentially on November ballot) will be approved, MVWSD District staff proactively made \$3.7 million in cuts outside of the classroom. We want to make sure that MVWSD can provide the raises that are a necessity in order to keep staff that has a direct impact on student outcomes.

It was during this time that the teachers’ proposal of a 7-period schedule showed an opportunity for the district to be very cost effective by saving \$1.2 million. The move to a 7-period schedule allows a cost savings of 8 staff members due to fewer periods.

Input

It’s important to note that staff collected considerations for how the 7-period schedule could be implemented successfully, per Board direction. The task was not to collect input on a choice between the two.

Staff: Both middle schools appointed representatives to the schedule committee and provided updates to their respective middle schools.



Committee members and middle school administrators met with staff members and presented the background, scheduling considerations, and the committee's preferred option, along with the pros and cons of the option to middle school staff members. Middle school administrators collected input from their staff at staff meetings and shared a Google Form to collect additional input and thoughts.

Parents: The week of March 28, each middle school held parent coffees where they presented the proposed schedule and collected feedback. There was a town hall meeting with the Superintendent and the middle school principals and assistant principals on April 1 that was well attended (250 participants), in which input was collected and questions answered. A Google form was posted publicly and distributed to parents that has collected 114 responses.

Students: Middle School principals met with student groups, such as leadership, and collected input.

Problems and Solutions

Problem 1: Advanced Spanish

We heard parent requests over the years for continuity of Dual Immersion learning.

Solution: We will have next year a new spanish social studies course for students graduating from Mistral Dual Immersion program

Problem 2: Teachers are concerned about giving up one prep for covering classes due to lack of subs.

Solution: MVWSD is hiring permanent subs for middle schools to avoid loss of preps

Lessons Learned

Opportunity #1 We need to learn how to balance site and district decisions. Many principals change school schedules and programs without parent and district input (examples: Departmentalizing teachers/subjects at elementary schools; implementing Orten Gillingham at elementary). Many of these decisions have not required parent or Board input. It would be helpful to establish parameters for when the Board and/or public should weigh in on which decisions.

Opportunity #2 We need to know when and what cost-saving decisions require public discussion, and which can be made internally. Staff appreciates the flexibility to make cost-saving decisions at lower levels, but it would be helpful to know when they rise to the level of requiring public input and/or Board deliberation.



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Opportunity #3 We have learned that school staff and committee members should be part of Board and public discussions related to site-based proposals. When school sites bring up topics such as a schedule change, we will have them be part of the public discussion and presentation. Without them, it could appear that the proposal is district-driven.