

## Pressing MVWSD Concerns Re: Middle School Schedule

2 messages

[REDACTED]@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 16, 2024 at 9:11 PM

To: publiccomments@mvwsd.org

Dear MVWSD Trustees,

Thank you for representing the voice of the community in MVWSD matters. As you must know by now, **hundreds of members of the community have concerns** regarding the proposed middle school schedule changes and the lack of honesty and transparency surrounding the decision-making process.

Aside from the obvious fact that the proposed schedule change from 8 periods to 7 will increase class sizes and reduce the number of teachers on campus, I have several points I would like to address with the Board for the April 18 meeting:

First, **the lack of transparency by the MVWSD** is deeply troubling. While this proposed schedule change is purported to be from teacher leaders and site-based administrators, the emails from the teachers delineate that this was a follow-up item from the 2023 "Calendar Committee" meetings. In fact, the first email in the trail provided for Thursday's Board meeting is addressed from Ms. Doracak Ecobar (a GMS teacher) to three district personnel (Tara Vikjord, Swati Dagar, and Cathy Baur) and states, "When we met for the Calendar Committee in the fall, you [district employees] mentioned there might be a discussion in December about possible ways to include some type of advisory class in the middle school schedule." <https://mvwsd.novusagenda.com/AgendaPublic/AttachmentViewer.ashx?AttachmentID=6505&ItemID=4668> At best, it is misleading for Dr. Ayinde (on the April 1 middle school Town Hall with hundreds present) to disguise this initiative as site-based and teacher led, when the email chain delineates that the concept was initiated by district personnel at the "Calendar Committee" meetings in 2023. Further supporting this idea of a district-based, district-led program, the "Scheduling Committee" meetings were scheduled by district office staff and held with district office personnel at the district office location. (See February 6 email from Swati Dagar, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment available at the link above which states the dates and district office location for the meetings.) For this reason alone, any decision on the schedule (by MVWSD staff or the Board of Trustees) should be tabled until the public has had full access to the information available and considerable time to review it. Even the email chain provided as "backup material" for Thursday's meeting was provided with less than 72-hours leeway before the meeting.

Second, Kaizen, or a "bottom up" approach is proffered in the presentation by the Scheduling Committee (<https://mvwsd.novusagenda.com/AgendaPublic/AttachmentViewer.ashx?AttachmentID=6509&ItemID=4668>) as justification for this schedule change. If we totally ignore the California Education Code and the fact

that the **school board is put in place to set policies** like this one (regarding the schedule), we can discuss “Kaizen.” In this sense, we have heard the voice of a committee of five teachers. We have not heard the voices of all of the teachers, and we certainly have not heard from any teachers (and there are several) who are against this change but fear retribution for speaking against it. Furthermore, **the voice of community has overwhelmingly been silenced and ignored.**

One such example would be the public’s opportunity to speak publicly for a matter of minutes to rebut a 60-page slide presentation. Additional examples include: (1) no opportunity for clarification or explanation from Mr. Kim Stevens at the Graham Site Council meeting (2) the dismissal of dissenting voices during that meeting, and (3) the curtailing of public input (or even allowance for the chat feature or use of emojis or early raising of hands) at the April 1 MVWSD Middle School Town Hall. Instead of having a meaningful opportunity to provide input, community members have been forced to sit in silence while District personnel take the stage to provide their views. This forceful silencing of the voices of the community is unacceptable.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the Scheduling Committee’s presentation to the Board (see prior link) states that Kaizen “empowers teacher leaders and site-based administrators to make data driven decisions” and delineates “Objective 1b: Ensure targeted instructional opportunities that maximize learning for all students.” **The current proposed scheduling is a thinly-veiled attempt by the district to make budget cuts by reducing electives and increasing class sizes.** The proposed schedule change is neither data-driven nor designed to “ensure targeted instructional opportunities that maximize learning for all students.” In stark contrast, the presentation actually clarifies that the 7-period schedule proposal is actually designed to “allow for a cost savings of \$1.2 million or 8 fewer teachers.” (Prior link, slide 38.)

Again, the lack of transparency is appalling. Although questions were asked of Dr. Ayinde at the April 1 Town Hall, it was not until this week that the true problem has been acknowledged. **This is a budget and hiring issue.** Today’s slide presentation states that we “Cannot both give these raises and maintain an 8 period schedule under current conditions.” (Prior link, slide 37.) The presentation also states that the “change from 8 periods to 7 allows for a cost savings of \$1.2 million or 8 fewer teachers\* due to fewer periods. What it doesn’t state is that class sizes will increase, which will have a direct detrimental impact on student performance. What it also doesn’t state is that we should be creating “hiring committees” rather than “scheduling committees.”

Lack of transparency, however, is not the only problem with this proposal. While the idea has been proffered that increasing time in core subject areas may benefit academic performance, there is a **lack of data** to support a direct correlation between such changes and improved academic performance. Conversely, there is a wealth of evidence to demonstrate that increased involvement in the arts has a positive effect on academic performance, standardized test scores, and dropout rates. (See, for one example of many, [https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/by\\_program/research\\_\\_studies\\_and\\_publications/one\\_pagers/15.%20ArtsEducation\\_Drop%20Out.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/by_program/research__studies_and_publications/one_pagers/15.%20ArtsEducation_Drop%20Out.pdf), where

**“Longitudinal data of 25,000 students demonstrates that involvement in the arts is linked to higher academic performance, increased standardized test scores, more community services, and lower dropout rates...”**) Therefore, reducing opportunities for students to engage in the arts by cutting elective periods is unjustifiable. Furthermore, decreasing the number of teachers and increasing class sizes without solid evidence to show that this will lead to academic improvement is misguided and could detrimentally affect students.

**Trustees, I am appealing to you to rectify this situation. The disregard for the role of the School Board in setting policies, the lack of transparency by MVWSD, the exclusion of dissenting voices among teachers, the silencing of community input, and the lack of data-driven decision making raise serious concerns about MVWSD’s leadership and the accountability of the decision-making process. The focus on budget issues under the guise of performance improvement further erodes trust in the integrity of the process.**

**In conclusion, I urge you to stop the railroading of MVWSD with regard to the proposed schedule changes and to prioritize transparency, inclusivity, and evidence-based decision-making in these deliberations. Our students deserve a learning environment that values their well-being, academic growth, and diverse interests.**

Thank you for your attention to these pressing concerns. I eagerly await your response and hope for meaningful dialogue and action to address these issues.

Sincerely,

████████████████████ and MVWSD Volunteer

----- ██████████ @yahoo.com -----

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## Middle school schedule change

2 messages

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████████████████████@gmail.com>  
to: publiccomments@mvwsd.org

Wed, Apr 17, 2024 at 9:50 AM

Hi,

I just want to express my concerns about how this Middle school schedule change has been done within the school district.

Parents and students have been completely excluded from the discussion.

Parents have been lied to by the Superintendent regarding the real motivations of the change and also about who initiated the change.

The issue with the \$1.2M budget was never disclosed to parents (tax payers).

There is no data or evidence supporting that the changes will solve the issues, especially the absenteeism issue since the new proposal will disengage a lot of the kids

The input received from parents regarding the SEL period have been completely ignored in the presentation for the next meeting.

The Toyota Way example doesn't really apply to this situation, we are not talking about factory workers, we are talking about kids.

The proposed changes will reduce the number of teachers, increase the class sizes resulting in more kids per teacher. That is completely unacceptable.

Please, take all these issues into consideration.

Thanks,

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## Thank You to Teachers, Administrators and Board

2 messages

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[redacted] yahoo.com>  
to: "publiccomments@mvwsd.org" <publiccomments@mvwsd.org>

Wed, Apr 17, 2024 at 12:50 PM

Dear Board:

I agree with the plan for the middle school electives. It is heartening to know that the recommendations come from the teachers, with first-hand interactions with the students and with their best interests at heart. The vast majority of the parents that I've spoken with about this trust the judgement of the teachers and administration and agree that this approach is warranted and good. We appreciate your courage in doing the right thing, even when it is a very difficult thing to do.

I know you're trying to be fair and diplomatic in listening to all. Thank you for that. I also know that it is a very stressful time.

Thank you for all you're doing!

[redacted]  
Stevenson/Crittenden parent

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## Please Reject the middle school schedule proposal

2 messages

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████████████████████@gmail.com>  
to: publiccomments@mvwsd.org

Wed, Apr 17, 2024 at 8:48 PM

Dear Trustees,

I am a Graham school parent. Please reject the middle school schedule proposal. This proposal is rushed and didn't take into account the opinions of students and parents. This will be a big change so we need to think more carefully. Thank you for your consideration.

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## Please reject middle school proposal

2 messages

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[REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomments@mvwsd.org

Wed, Apr 17, 2024 at 6:29 PM

Hello,

I have a 6th grader at Graham who loves his three electives: Spanish, creative writing and media wheel.

We are afraid that if one elective is taken away, our children will be less engaged with their studies and treasured options like advanced Spanish disappear. If we are really concerned with students getting more core subject time, we should explore requiring one elective to be in a core subject area.

Thank you,  
[REDACTED]

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## Please Reject the BAD FAITH middle school schedule proposal"

4 messages

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[REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
to: publiccomments@mvwsd.org

Wed, Apr 17, 2024 at 6:19 PM

This proposal was initiated in bad faith, aiming to slash \$1.2M from the budget and cut 8 teacher positions covertly.

The superintendent has propagated multiple falsehoods, including misrepresenting the motives behind the proposal (budget cuts and teacher reductions), falsely asserting majority teacher support, and misleading claims about gathering adequate feedback from students and parents.

Parents and students, the primary stakeholders, were denied any opportunity to contribute to the proposal's development. The superintendent actively disregarded and silenced community feedback, insisting on its implementation regardless of opposition.

There is no substantiated evidence that the proposed schedule change will effectively address any of the district's outlined issues.

Thank you for reading this out loud during tomorrow's meeting!!

[REDACTED]  
Mother of 6th and 8th grader at Graham.



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## Proposed Middle School Schedule Change Proposal

2 messages

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[REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomments@mvwsd.org

Wed, Apr 17, 2024 at 9:56 PM

Please REJECT the proposed Middle School Schedule Change Proposal which seems to have been created in haste and without due diligence.

1. Parent and student inputs were not solicited to begin with. Inputs, when provided, were unceremoniously dismissed and not vetted.
2. Underlying motivation for the change has not been communicated and is unclear to all affected parties (students and Parents and Teachers) as most students are unanimously in favor of keeping the current schedule.
3. MVWSD middle school program is an excellent program with high academic standards and rich electives. We don't need to compare to other school districts and lower our standards.

Please keep the current schedule and reject any proposal which does not have proper stakeholder input.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

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## Faulty Logic (Middle School Bell Schedule Change)

2 messages

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[REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomments@mvwsd.org

Thu, Apr 18, 2024 at 6:49 AM

Dear Trustees,

We have a significant MVWSD leadership problem having to do with faulty reasoning, a lack of accountability, and a lack of transparency.

This bell-period change problem was first described by the District as a school-site initiated solution to a student performance issue. We (the parents) asked questions on site at GMS. A few weeks ago, the Graham Middle School (GMS) Site Council could not answer questions on the topic and directed us to the Superintendent. Subsequently, at an April 1 Town Hall, the district, in turn, directed us back to the GMS Vice Principal (Site Council leader) when we asked related questions. The Superintendent further discouraged public participation when, at the end of the Town Hall (with roughly 250 community participants), he basically concluded that the decision to change the schedule had already been made. Where is the leadership? Where is the honesty? Where is the community involvement? Where is the transparency and accountability?

A somewhat more plausible explanation for the schedule change came out just this week: there is ostensibly a \$1.2 million dollar budget shortfall, and the district would like to balance it by reducing teaching staff by having "up to 8 fewer teachers." (Slide presentation, 39-40). At a time when students need teachers most, I was trying to figure out the District's logic in cutting budget — especially by reducing the number of middle school teachers. I was trying to find out if the \$1.2 million shortfall was because we provided the Superintendent a \$1.2 million low interest home loan a few years ago or if it was for some other reason; I thought we had a surplus. I looked to the budget for answers, but, to my surprise, the Interim Budget Report that was due in March 2024 had not been posted ([https://www.mvwsd.org/district\\_business/budget\\_and\\_bonds/financial\\_reports](https://www.mvwsd.org/district_business/budget_and_bonds/financial_reports), accessed April 16), and it was not presented at the March Board meeting. Where is the leadership? Where is the transparency? Where is the accountability? How can the community possibly get involved when the community is not given basic information on time?

In the past few hours, I see that the District (some anonymous source at the district, really) has posted a new 9-page explanation for the bell change. It's 6am before the Board Meeting, and I haven't had time to read and digest all of this material yet. What I did see was the District's excuse for the data. There was some comparison to a Brookings study about adding instructional days to the year or adding instructional time to the day (extending the school day). The district either has not read this study or is using incredibly faulty reasoning. Is MVWSD proposing to extend the school day? No; in stark contrast, the current proposal is an attempt to wipe out teachers, art, music, and other valued resources in order to save money (under the guise of increasing core class time). Maybe MVWSD refers to the 4 minutes saved per day by cutting the "walking time" between period 7 and 8, but if that is the justification, I posit that Brookings did not speak to a 4-minute gain, and the short gain could easily be wiped out by bathroom breaks and other disruptions due to the lack of a 4-minute break. Furthermore, by that logic, we shouldn't have periods at all (which is ludicrous).

To date, MVWSD has not backed up their ideas with sound data. On the contrary, there is a wealth of data against making moves toward fewer teachers and cutting the arts. Again, I ask: where is the leadership? Where is the transparency? Where is the sound reasoning?

Where is the accountability?

(Also—Where are the site leaders? Both the Principal and Vice Principal at GMS have been totally “absent” all this week, and the District doesn’t state a source or provide a signature on their posted supplemental materials for this meeting. How is the public supposed to get clarification/answers?)

This is where I ask you, Trustees, to step in. Please do not allow this carnival to continue. Please hold the District accountable to provide the transparency necessary and to welcome the community engagement necessary to make sound, data-driven decisions in the best interest of our kids. Please require the District to stop misleading the community. Please question the faulty reasoning. **Ultimately, this schedule change will cause turmoil. Please step in to stop the railroading by the District, and slow this “schedule change” train down, so we can get all of the data necessary to ensure the next major move we make is the right one.**(1)

Sincerely,

██████████ GMS Parent and Volunteer

(1) SIDEBAR: this bell policy significantly affects PE, which should be a part of any school’s Wellness Policy. Due to a host of reasons, including the absence or suspension of GMS leadership (especially the Vice Principal), I haven’t had the opportunity to access the GMS Wellness Policy to see what other parts may be affected, but I do know that a change to this policy **REQUIRES** community involvement. This is one of many reasons why the rush to push this bell schedule through is not allowing for proper public review, input, or involvement. As a concerned parent, I am doing all I can to understand the long list of policies and procedures, but I cannot keep up with the District’s constantly shifting bell schedule justifications and supplemental materials (as unrelated or misguided as they may be). And...please do not forget, school leadership is currently absent or suspended. With all of this in mind, I ask for your continued oversight to ensure that all applicable policies and regulations are followed.

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## Middle School Schedule Proposal Feedback

2 messages

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Stop-MVWSD-Schedule-Change [REDACTED]@protonmail.com>

Thu, Apr 18, 2024 at 9:16  
AM

To: "publiccomments@mvwsd.org" <publiccomments@mvwsd.org>

(1) Electives can have a positive impact on performance in academic subjects, as described here: [https://www.educationworld.com/teachers/elevating-electives-why-they-matter-so-much#google\\_vignette](https://www.educationworld.com/teachers/elevating-electives-why-they-matter-so-much#google_vignette).

(2) There is no reason to go to 7-periods. For students who are below grade in ELA or Math, one of their elective-periods should be used to provide extra ELA or math. The rest of the student body should not be penalized and lose choice-electives. Based on the document called Middle\_School\_Schedule\_Board\_Report, it seems that this is what was done (at least for math) before Covid. It is also essentially a variation on "Option 2: Designated RTI for ALL Students (8 periods)" which is found on pp. 10-11 of the document called Middle\_School\_Advisory\_Class\_(Proposal)\_From\_Teaching\_Staff\_

(3) The document called Middle\_School\_Schedule\_Board\_Report asserts that "there has been an increase in the number of middle school students below grade level since 2021-22." However, the data in the table is only for 2015, 2017, and 2023. Please provide annual numbers for the missing years (2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022). Please also indicate key changes for each year, including when the double-blocked math class was initiated, and to what you attribute the impressive improvement in math between 2015 and 2017.

(3) It sounds like there will be more use of co-teaching vs. pull-out for students on IEPs and ELDs. Please explain exactly what is being considered for these students.

(4) Please provide details on exactly which electives will be cut or consolidated.

(5) Most adults have a hard time staying focused for 90 minutes. The only class where it seems that one might occasionally need a longer block is science. It seems like going to long blocks 2 days a week has a small positive and a big negative.

Sent [REDACTED] secure email.

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## Scheduling / losing teachers

1 message

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[REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
to: publiccomments@mvwsd.org, trustees@mvwsd.org

Thu, Apr 18, 2024 at 12:10 PM

Dear MVWSD

I am concerned that the new middle school 7-period bell proposal includes the stated allowance to reduce middle school teachers (by up to eight) and would like time for community engagement/input on this issue.

If the community is given the time and access to work with the teachers, we can come up with an amicable plan to address academic performance, provide student support, and keep our electives.

Please consider this request to allow for more community engagement.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]  
Parent of 7th and 10th graders

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## Electives matter to SpEd students too!

2 messages

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[REDACTED]@gmail.com>  
To: publiccomments@mvwsd.org, trustees@mvwsd.org

Thu, Apr 18, 2024 at 4:44 PM

Hello -

As the parent of 2 students with IEPs and as a long time volunteer and advocate in special education, I would like to express my concern with the move back to a 7 period schedule.

In the past, other advocates worked hard to promote the need for co-taught classes and the idea that SpEd and ESL students needed to have an elective. That ended up being a major reason why there was a move to an eight period schedule - so that these students could access a broader education and more opportunities for inclusion.

Moving back to a 7 period schedule seems to be a retreat for these at-risk student groups. How are the problems of the double ESL/IEP students going to be addressed without lose of service hours and possible pull-out time resulting in lost time in core classes? How are all the problems of a few years ago suddenly solvable with a 7 period schedule?

Elective increase engage in education for all students, especially at-risk students. These classes offer an opportunity for inclusion and exploration that many SpEd students desperately need. My daughter is in tears over losing an elective and having only one such class available to her next year. She is angry - as are many many other students - and I am concerned about how that anger will reflect on her engagement with school as a whole.

The voices of students and parents were not consulted early enough in a broad enough manner. Please delay this decision until more stakeholders can participate in the design of a cost-effective solution.

Thank you,  
[REDACTED]

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## Middle School Schedule Change Proposal

1 message

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[REDACTED]@yahoo.com>  
To: "publiccomments@mvwsd.org" <publiccomments@mvwsd.org>

Thu, Apr 18, 2024 at 7:57 AM

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed change to the middle school schedules.

Let me start by saying that although I'm not keen on the proposal, I'm open to being persuaded. Unfortunately, as it stands today, the proposal is lacking sufficient detail to confirm whether it is a good one. To be fair, the folks working on this haven't had enough time to do it justice. I urge you to extend the timeline so that the proposal can be more thoroughly developed and vetted. At a minimum, the proposal should include the following before a responsible decision can be made:

1. A clear articulation of the intended *outcomes*. To be clear, increasing the number of hours in math class is not an outcome, it is a tactic intended to increase the percentage of students meeting grade level math, which is an outcome.
2. How success will be measured, including specific metrics and dates for measurement.
3. Given that the proposal emphasizes how there will be more teaching hours, but fewer teachers, and more subs it begs the question of exactly how that math works. The proposal should include a schedule that shows the number of teaching hours, prep hours, and planned\* substitute teaching hours for each and every class that is taught today and how that would change under the proposal. (\*Planned substitute teaching hours would be zero in the current year, but a positive number under the proposal, since substitutes are required in order to provide teachers with prep-hours.)
4. An appendix that documents \*all\* questions and concerns that have been raised through various channels, as well as the responses. Although not all concerns may end up being addressed to the satisfaction of the people raising them, they should be documented and discussed.

In addition, although it would not be appropriate to run every decision by the students, in this particular case, I believe the school owes the students a seat at the table. When was the last time you heard about students organizing petitions and handing out fliers the way our students have? It's been inspiring to witness such an impressive example of student agency, but also heartbreaking to see how those students who had the courage to speak at the Town Hall a few weeks ago were shut down. This is an important teachable moment. What do you want all of the protesting middle schoolers to learn from this moment? They are our future. Do you want them to be engaged citizens who believe that they can make a difference? Or do you want to teach them that trying to change the world is a lost cause? Yes, giving them a seat at the table might encourage them to make a stink every time something happens that they don't like. And that creates a hassle to deal with – but I bet some of them will learn more about conflict resolution through the process than through SEL classes, and maybe some of them will go on to change the world for the better. Graham students had the opportunity to see Malala Yousafzai speak last year. It's time to show our students that was more than lip-service.

**Please, if for no other reason than 'doing the right thing' for our children, insist that a decision be postponed until an objective 3<sup>rd</sup> party can design and facilitate a true two-way discussion with students. They've earned it.**