July 29, 2019

Summer Email #6

Dear Parents and Guardians of Incoming 6th Grade Students:

In today’s email I am writing about student classes, instruction, and support in the middle school.

**Middle School Model / Team Approach**

Each grade is divided into two teams (6 Green, 6 Yellow, 7 Green, 7 Yellow, 8 Green, 8 Yellow). Each interdisciplinary team consists of an English, math, science, and social studies teacher. The teams create smaller learning communities within the middle school allowing teachers to build powerful relationships among themselves and with their students. The teachers on each team have a common planning period to: coordinate student assignments or assessments, contact and involve parents, effectively address student needs, and set high expectations for all students. I also believe that the team creates a sense of cohesion and harmony for students.

It is important to know that the teams are heterogeneously grouped with no team being more advanced than another. Teachers differentiate instructional strategies and learning assessments to meet the needs of all students.

In my opinion the middle school or team approach is an organizational structure that empowers teachers so they, in turn, can develop each student to his or her fullest potential during the critical developmental stage of adolescence.

**Unified Arts Rotation**

At the middle school level, Unified Arts classes are be taught by the quarter (45 days). Students take two Unified Arts classes a quarter and those classes meet daily. This is different from elementary school where students typically take a special (Unified Arts class) once a week for the entire year. Unified Arts classes include: art, computers, health, library, physical education, Spanish, technology, and some students choose to join the band or chorus.

**Class Times**
Classes are 54 minutes long. The length of classes allow teachers greater opportunities for creativity, student-centered learning activities and differentiated instruction. Each school day ends with “Flex” which is a 20 minute period for students to see their teachers to receive addition support as needed.

**Whatever It Takes (WIT)**

In addition to the core subjects and unified arts, students will be assigned to a “Whatever It Takes” class during one or two marking periods during the school year. During this period students will have opportunities for remediation and enrichment in the core content areas, along with the development of study skills and 21st Century skills (problem solving, informational literacy, collaboration, communication, community and civic responsibility).

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**Instructional Methods**

Differentiation is a way of teaching which requires teachers to know each of their students well so that they can provide learning experiences which enable each child to improve academically (and socially). It is my expectation that every student experiences rigorous learning opportunities which do not overwhelm them nor bore them. Differentiated instruction requires: ongoing formative assessment of student learning, knowledge of the various needs of students, collaboration, problem solving, and various instructional and assessment opportunities.

**Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)**

Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI) are a way to provide support and instruction to students who are struggling to learn. A student’s progress is studied and the findings are used to make decisions about teaching and other learning supports. Reading, math, and behavior needs are most commonly addressed using SRBI. GOMS has one certified teacher who oversees the SRBI process and programming. Her name is Brenda Shidel and she has two interventionists who work under her leadership. Diane Hassler is our Math interventionist. We are currently in the process of hiring our reading interventionist.

**Universal Assessments of Student Learning**
The middle school uses the STAR assessment in reading and mathematics as our universal assessments and to monitor the progress of students throughout the year.

I hope you find this information helpful.

My Best,
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