

Guiding Coalition for Middle Grades Design and Improvement

The Guiding Coalition on Middle Grades Design and Improvement is a high-level District Committee appointed by the Superintendent to guide the redesign and improvement of middle grades education in Norwalk.

Committee Charge

The Committee is charged with providing advice and advocacy on how best to improve the quality of middle grades education in Norwalk through the implementation of programs, pedagogy, procedures and use of instructional time designed to better address the academic and developmental needs of the trans-adolescent.

Goals

The goals of middle grades redesign are four-fold:

- Raise the level of student achievement of all students in all four Norwalk Middle Schools
 - Close the achievement gap between average student achievement of Norwalk and Connecticut students in 6th, 7th, and 8th grade, particularly in Math where it is greatest.
 - Narrow the achievement gap that exists to varying degrees in each Norwalk Middle School between “high needs” students – English Language Learners, Special Education students and lower-income students – and their classmates.
- Improve middle grade transitions
 - 5th to 6th
 - 8th to 9th
- Redesign schools to better address the identified developmental (social and emotional) needs of students in the trans-adolescent life stage.
- Create the most efficient, cost-effective middle grades program that is sustainable within the resources the City can provide.

Committee Composition

The Committee will be chaired by Dr. Michael Conner, Chief Academic Officer and is comprised of 16 other members:

- 4 Principals – one from each current middle school
- 4 Teacher Leaders – one from each middle school
- 4 Parent Leaders – one from each middle school
- 1 District Math Specialist
- 1 Board of Education liaison
- 1 Consultant – the National Center for Secondary School Reform
- 1 Representative of Norwalk ACTS

Work of the Committee

The Committee is asked to examine aspects of middle school redesign that represent best practice, innovation and research in state of the art middle schools with an eye toward pilot implementation of at least five promising redesign elements – programs, practices and/or structures – one in each Norwalk Middle School beginning in the 2016-17 school year. Moreover, the Committee should monitor the implementation of these design elements to assess their effect and importance to all middle schools for implementation in 2016-17 and 2017-18.

The Committee is asked to develop a plan for the pilot implementation of middle school design elements including but not limited to the following:

1. Two-teacher 6th grade teams that enable transition from self-contained elementary classrooms to a departmentalized setting in grades 7 and 8.
2. Vertical House Plan or ‘schools within a school’ that enable students to work with the same team of teachers for three years.
3. “New Classrooms,” “Teach-to-One,” Math Program to personalize, individualize and accelerate math instruction (supported by the Dalio Foundation).
4. Exploratory/Encore course offerings to provide enrichment, exploration and application of the core curriculum.
5. Skill Navigator Intervention Groups

To the extent possible, the Committee is encouraged to enable parents and students to choose an innovative program or design element.

Finally, the Committee is asked to develop a plan to enhance the thematic content offering of each middle school consistent with their high school feeder patterns, e.g. Arts and Science at West Rocks and Nathan Hale; Global Studies and World Languages at Ponus and Roton

Timeline for Implementation:

February 10, 2016: Meeting with Middle School Principals (Dr. Adamowski and Dr. Conner)

February 18, 2016: Introductory leadership workshop with Center of Secondary School Redesign

March 24, 2016- June 9, 2016: Middle School Redesign Committee meetings

July 11, 2016- July 13, 2016: Leadership Institute for Middle School Principals (NPS and CSSR)

August 2016: Site-based training for school leadership teams and practitioners

September 2016- June 2017: On-site coaching, workshops, and facilitation of support with implementing framework elements

September 2016- June 2017: District committee meetings

March 2017: Identification of elements for second phase of implementation with MS Redesign Committee

July 2017: Leadership Institute: Phase II Implementation

2016 Middle School Redesign Committee Dates

Date	Time	Room
March 24, 2016	3:00pm	Room 333
April 21, 2016	3:00pm	Room 333
May 19, 2016	3:00pm	Room 333
June 9, 2016	3:00pm	Room 333

Performance Analysis

Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium

ELA (Meets or Exceed Achievement Levels)

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Difference
Norwalk	53.8%	47.5%	-6.3%
State	58.5%	55.6%	-2.9%

Math (Meets or Exceed Achievement Levels)

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Difference
Norwalk	30.9%	24.7%	-6.2%
State	36.9%	37.3%	+0.4%

Cohort Analysis

Connecticut Mastery Test

Grade 5 2012 to Grade 6 2013

ELA (Proficient or Higher)

	Grade 5 2012	Grade 6 2013	Difference
Norwalk	66%	58%	-8%
State	68%	67%	-1%

Math (Proficient or Higher)

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Difference
Norwalk	68%	66%	-2%
State	72%	73%	+1%

Performance Analysis
Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium
ELA and Math (Meets or Exceed Achievement Levels)

ELA

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Difference
Norwalk	53.8%	47.5%	-6.3%
State	58.5%	55.6%	-2.9%

Math

	Grade 5	Grade 6	Difference
Norwalk	30.9%	24.7%	-6.2%
State	36.9%	37.3%	0.4%

ELA

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Difference
Norwalk	47.5%	45.2%	-2.3%
State	55.6%	57.1%	1.5%

Math

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Difference
Norwalk	24.7%	24.5%	-0.2%
State	37.3%	38.8%	1.5%

ELA

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Difference
Norwalk	45.2%	46.6%	1.4%
State	57.1%	54.0%	-3.1%

Math

	Grade 7	Grade 8	Difference
Norwalk	24.5%	24.7%	0.2%
State	38.8%	36.8%	-2.0%