

Middle School Visits Questionnaire

School visited and date: **Berwick Academy, 10/16/18**

Rye School District Attendees: Marie Soucy, Suzanne Lull, Eric Ross, Celeste Christo

1. How do they structure the 5th grade classes/teams/teachers?

How many 5th grade classes and total students?

- 5th grade = 24 students total; 2 teachers; 2 classes of 12 students; generally cap @ 16 students per class (depends on enrollment); Current 8th grade = large – 71 students
- Students see 5 teachers per day
- CORE classes = Math/Science & ELA/Social Studies
- 5th grade CORE classes are nearby one another in the same area of the building
 - Lockers and cubbies for each student in hallway right near classrooms
- 6th grade CORE classes in that same “wing” of the building
- UA = Art, Music, Wellness, Maker Space (1x per week)
 - Art and Music are in different buildings – 5th grade students travel to classes together, usually in pairs (loosen the reins for transitions between buildings)
 - Schedule can be a challenge b/c Lower and Middle schools share UA teachers
- Music – 5th and 6th grade take music together
 - Choice of Strings, Band, African Drums or Chorus; 45 min block

2. What have they tried in the past that hasn't worked well?

- Need to build in a flex block for extra help for kids – HR is not long enough for morning meeting
 - Scheduling adjustments are being made for next year
 - Home room is currently only 10 minutes in the morning
 - Not enough time for a morning meeting; barely enough time for attendance and quick check-in
 - changing this next year to increase the time for HR to use as FLEX block or time for extra help for students who need that
 - only opportunity for extra help now is afterschool until 4pm
- Middle School did not have a lot of signage to direct kids and parents – school seemed hard to navigate
 - Students worked on a project and made wooden signs that are in the great room (lobby area)
- Movement between classes is always an issue with every grade
 - Kids always working on their executive functioning skills
- Kids forgetting things they need for class
 - Art teacher – keeps sketch books in the art room so they don't have to remember
 - 5th grade laptops – kept on a shelf together, marked with their names so they do not have to travel with them during the day (6th – 8th grade travel with them)

3. What do they do to prepare incoming 5th grade for the transition?

Preparing the Students

- 4th grade teachers try to find opportunities to bring the students to the Middle School Building
 - Ex: Maker Space Classroom is used by one of the 4th grade teachers
 - Makes the building seem less intimidating
- Middle School Principal – goes to lower school and introduces himself to those students and makes time to stop by the lower school throughout the year so the kids become familiar with him
- Step Up Day for Students at the end of 4th grade – the biggest concern voiced from students and parents is that they want more exposure to the Middle School before the day they officially enter 5th grade
 - Teachers identify and pair the 4th grade students with a 5th grade “buddy” before Step Up Day (sometimes there may be a ratio of 2:1 if enrollment is high for 4th grade)
 - Rising 4th graders spend ½ day at the Middle School; come in the morning, attend 2 classes with their 5th grade buddy; morning recess; lunch/recess and then return to lower school for the end of the day
- Dean of Students for 5th and 6th Grade goes to Lower School with 5th and 6th grade students for Q&A session with 4th grade students
- Prepare 4th grade students and provide Leadership Opportunities
 - Select students to be “Ambassadors”
 - Those students get a special LAX jersey to wear for one week
 - Sit with the K students at lunch
 - Act as helpers at recess time with younger kids
 - Choose 4th grade students to help lead the morning assemblies
 - 1x per week on Fridays from 8:30-9:00
 - PreK – 4th grade

Preparing the Parents

- Parent Coffee: 4x per year
 - Invite the 4th grade parents
 - Give a tour of the school
- New Student/Family Orientation Night
 - Welcome Middle School
 - Parents with rising 4th graders and families who are new to the school
 - Provides good opportunity to meet the new families

4. How much interaction do the 5th grade students have with the other grades?

- Bus – no requirements to sit separately although the younger kids tend to sit up front
- Morning recess – 15 min/day, option to be together; indoor recess in great room (table tennis, air hockey); monitored by a proctor
- Lunch/recess – 40 minutes total; 5th – 8th grade is together; monitored by 2 proctors
 - 5th and 6th grade tables on one side of the salad bar
 - 7th and 8th grade tables on the other side
- Activity Period – 1 hour per week
 - great opportunity for older kids and younger kids to interact with common interest
 - Integrates 5th grade students with upper grades
 - Scheduled period for 1 hour per week
 - Rotates every trimester
 - Students suggest ideas for the activities (cooking, winter fitness, computers, sock monkey making, quiddich, snack shack duty, etc)
- Field Trips
 - 5th and 6th grade go together to Dover Bowl and Hilltop Fun Center
 - 6th and 7th Grade – “Socials” (actually just a dance)
 - 7th and 8th Grade - Dance combined for their grades
- 8th Grade “Student Leaders”
 - They were usually the ones in charge of leadership activities
 - They asked if they can explore ways to involve the 5th grade students
 - They know the students look up to them
 - They remember what it was like to be the “little fish” in 5th grade

5. What benefits do they see in having 5th grade housed in the middle school?

- 4th grade students are ready to move up
- Feel supported by the older students
- Increases their sense of independence

Things the kids like:

- Independence; movement between classes
- Allowed to use the panini machine at lunch
- Allowed to drink lemonade at lunch
- Dessert every day after lunch (lower school = 1x per week on Fridays)
- Snack shack (run by students) in the great room/lobby, open to purchase snacks for a small fee if they forget to pack
- Lockers and cubbies

6. How do you handle self-contained classrooms and what are the criteria used to place kids in a self-contained class? Or, if self-contained classrooms are not being utilized, what is the reasoning behind that?

7. How do the self-contained kids get to be part of the larger team projects?

N/A. No self-contained classes in Middle School

8. How are Sports handled for 5th graders?

- No sports for 5th grade
- PE 3x per week; 45 min block
 - 2x per week it is with the students in your HR;
 - 1x per week they have the 5th grade together for PE
- Sports offered for 6th – 8th grade
 - Tues & Thurs from 1:30 – 3:00 pm

9. What type of playground equipment do you have and is 5th grade at recess with other grades?

- 4th grade has a VERY large playground structure
- 5th grade = no playground structure
- Recess Activities
 - Basketball
 - Tag
 - 4 square
 - Hide and Seek
 - Soccer (turf area)
 - Or optional indoor recess

Other:

Action items, if any:

Celeste to follow up to get list of options for Activity Period

Celeste to follow up to get copy of 5th grade daily schedule