

Focus Group: Bala Cynwyd Middle School Staff

Date: May, 2014

Key Questions

What should middle school look like ten years from now?	What should a LMSD graduate look like? What are the skills, attitudes, and disposition that we want for all students?	What do we value as a district?	How do we hold onto our traditions while simultaneously embracing change?
<p>Student led or driven curriculum meetings to discuss topics to be covered in class. 1-1 laptop/Chrome books for all students in middle school. All Web 2.0 sites/activities/devices will be available for instruction all day. Less standardized testing throughout the academic year; if testing continues it will be contained in a short timeframe. Proficient and advanced writing occurring in all subject areas. More access to learning outside of the classroom. Minimal interruptions to the daily class schedule. Distance learning/online learning when weather effects instruction.</p>	<p>Love of learning, trust themselves, confidence, independent learners and thinkers, adaptation, flexible, fully aware of all available technology of the times, advanced writers, public speakers, be able to access any and all information needed for success.</p>	<p>High academic standards, extra-curricular activities, respect from all stakeholders, multiple intelligences, synthesis of information, technology, progression of learning, positive parental and community support.</p>	<p>Remember our past and celebrate the present (BC Speech Assembly 75 years running); change is a slow and steady process for all involved; we need to embrace it and be supported by all peers, strong and consistent leadership from the top down, change and adapt if necessary not for the sake of something different.</p>

<p>6th grade will be 5 person team where every teacher teaches one content area. We are one to one computing at least in school and there is a loaner program for students with no internet and computer at home. There are rotation of teacher schedules. The gifted program is a collaborative program where teacher works with gifted teacher to compact curriculum when needed. Gifted teacher rotates and has office hours for students to attend on a need basis. Schedules are aligned so teachers can do cross student collaboration. No Rally just a full AR for kids to do work and for the PLC'S.</p>	<p>High technology skills, Be able to question and think independently, know how to access information and use a multiple array of strategies to achieve success. Should be motivated to learn and engaged by inquiry.</p>	<p>We value learning, exploration, differentiation, continued professional development, value student success, individuality and diversity but there is an increase value in testing and data</p>	<p>Staff needs to be open minded as new initiatives are implemented. We are so driven by testing and data we must try to keep creativity and curiosity imbedded in our instruction. Leadership flexibility and open mind.</p>
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<p>Less standardized testing, more opportunities for teachers to collaborate in ways they decide. Fewer time-wasting data-oriented processes for both students and teachers. Less concern with everyone being the same. Technology that helps make learning easier and more inventive, rather than slowing down or inhibiting the process. Less change, fewer new initiatives, more trust that teachers are here to do their best—and capable of doing it without micromanagement.</p>	<p>Accountable, capable, competent, independent thinkers and doers. Curious and enthusiastic. Have the ability to work in teams. Great awareness of their resources and empathy for those whose needs are greater than theirs.</p>	<p>What do we, or what should we? We seem now to embrace pointless time-wasting change because it looks good, or because the state PDE tells us to. We seem to embrace data, and prestige, and status, and image. We think we'd like to begin a new era, where we value what's best for students first, no matter what it looks like. Where it's great for a kid to have a unique, rewarding experience in our classrooms even if not everyone gets that same opportunity. Where we provide so many different great opportunities that every student can choose his or her own. Where choice is understood to be a valuable part of living in I.M.</p>	<p>We don't. As we sit here, we have trouble identifying "traditions" in a concrete way. Do we have those? Change is good if solutions and ideas are good; excellence is good, and we should recognize when and where we have it. Let's not fix what isn't broken.</p>
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<p>Middle School should have more teacher/student with smaller learning communities. There should be technology readily available but not to the point where it supplants the role of the teacher. The ever increasing amount of screen time makes face to face communication skills even more important. Instead of specific curriculum, there should be broad topics where teachers and students can dig deep with critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork.</p>	<p>Graduates should leave LMSD with a continued thirst for knowledge, strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills. They should carry with them the attitude that they can be the leaders of the world. Graduates should be positive role-models and have a positive approach with regard to all of life's possibilities.</p>	<p>We value a strong academic tradition while striving to include every student in our school and local communities. We see differences as opportunities to learn. We believe every child can be a strong contributor to society.</p>	<p>We must embrace change but be very careful not to disregard the wisdom that has been gained by our traditions. We must be careful not to be led by outside educational paradigms that really don't apply to a community that values real learning opportunities.</p>
<p>Increased Technology and interactive programs, enable student owned devices, each student has a computer, 9th period study hall, less focus on music and more focus on academics</p>	<p>Less sense of entitlement, strong academic and social skills, ability to work with diverse people, good citizenship and community focus, determination and grit, acceptance of and adaptability to failure</p>	<p>strong academic and social skills, ability to work with diverse people, good citizenship and community focus, determination and grit, open communication and consideration</p>	<p>Being open minded while standing our ground for our values and aspiring for the students, ont try to change what is not working.</p>
<p>Student centered learning. Use of cutting edge technology to enhance curriculum and learning. Technology will be available to all teachers and students. Students will speak more than one language.</p>	<p>They should have the determination to work through learning frustration. They should be ready to handle any of life's challenges through problem solving skills and background knowledge, give to others and have a zest to learn.</p>	<p>Honesty, integrity, character, knowledge, skills, Hard work, kindness (students acting as good citizens), diligence, community, critical thinking, ability to adapt, inquisitive nature, intellectual thirst.</p>	<p>Decide what is truly important to the culture of the school. We need to be more selective in our initiatives and how it will benefit the kids. Change should be beneficial, make sense and implemented gradually.</p>

<p>more laptops for middle school students; an alternative education program for students who do not respond to the traditional program; an after-school program to reinforce basic skills open to all students; an emotional support program at BC; more flexible scheduling - with open periods (study halls) and fewer electives so students can spend more time on academics and have time to wind down/get individual or small group help during the school day; a petty cash fund to purchase supplies for needy students; dedicated fax line for the clinical team; hold students (and parents) responsible for their actions; District support for teachers who are beaten down by parents; changing the culture of "everyone gets a medal" and offering rewards for achievement that has been earned through effort</p>	<p>develop a social learning curriculum to enhance empathy; independent learner and self-advocate - decrease the influence of teachers and parents in maintaining student achievement and hold students more accountable for their actions; develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for learning.</p>	<p>learning how to learn; learning from mistakes; coming to school ready to learn; we should value our teachers and support them when bullied by parents.</p>	<p>respect for differentiated learning; interdisciplinary learning, and expand on community service - we do a lot of community service projects but they seem disjointed - how about if we picked one or two charities a year and we had multiple options for serving them through different activities - students might develop a deeper appreciation for the charity and need it fills. Get outsiders to come into the school to showcase their expertise in ways that would support student learning (eg - a lawyer leading a debate team). Give up the 8th grade moving up ceremony. develop consistent protocols across all buildings with all programs (eg - access to accommodations, gifted support, iep's, 504s, etc.).</p>
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<p>I find it hard to visualize things like this.</p>	<p>Literate, compassionate, patient, worldly, kind, technologically capable.</p>	<p>What we DO value and what we SHOULD value are two entirely different questions.</p>	<p>Do not rush to follow, especially current trends that may not last. Take time to examine possible outcomes before instituting new initiatives. Do not think technology is the answer to everything.</p>
<p>Middle school should look like students engaged in small communities of learning that reflect cross-curricular activities, in-depth learning, inquiry, critical thinking skills, and technology purposefully used to enhance learning. The overall middle school experience should be designed to reflect where students are developmentally academically and socially.</p>	<p>Competent, Critical Thinkers, Culturally Proficient</p>		
<p>I'd like to see it look more like a mini-high school. More opportunities for students to take electives to help support their core classes. More opportunities to use technology in an authentic environment!</p>	<p>LMSD grads should be leaving high school with great communication skills, the ability to work with others and entry level job skills to hold a job if they're not going on to college.</p>	<p>Well rounded students—we offer a lot of opportunities for our students to participate in a lot of different activities during the school day as well as outside of school. Also important to keep the music, arts, etc for those students who may not experience success in the core subjects.</p>	<p>Not sure—maybe try to hold on to a few traditions but also implement some changes to try each year too. We may find some new ideas that are better and can replace what we felt was a good tradition.</p>

<p>Smaller class sizes, flexible scheduling, inquiry based learning that is relevant and interesting to students. School should start later, too!</p>	<p>A skill set that includes communication, teamwork, creative problem-solving, metacognition. A student who enjoys learning.</p>	<p>Test scores. We should value seeing and treating teachers as professionals who are most able to make decisions for their students.</p>	<p>Do we need to hold on to traditions? What traditions? This question is too ambiguous.</p>
<p>A community of diverse learners working together with high expectations from the school.</p>	<p>They should be energetic, enthusiastic learners with skills to be able to join the workforce without a college degree.</p>	<p>We value testing and results/numbers. We used to value student's creativity, learning outside the box, individual expertise and high expectations. Now we teach to the text and the lowest denominator.</p>	<p>We don't, we can't and we won't. If we try to hold on to them they will only be pale in comparison and will only be a shadow of what we embraced to begin with. We will only be creating a mockery. You might as well make new traditions and get rid of the old ones, and start anew.</p>
<p>Modern, technologically advanced. State of the Art facilities</p>	<p>Advanced Learner willing to get an advanced degree and serve the community</p>	<p>Our Families and Students. Our staff</p>	<p>Blend them with giving people a voice so all can have input</p>
<p>Lower Merion should be a 1 to 1 ratio for technology. There should be access to online classes, and there should be teams designed to work together to meet the best needs of students.</p>	<p>Critical thinker, problem solver, creative (thinking outside the box), effective communicator, solid character, strong leader, the ability to appreciate cultural, global, and environmental diversity to develop a sense of purpose in ones life for the greater good.</p>	<p>Diversity, tradition, technology, life long learners</p>	<p>Our values may stay the same while we recognize the ways to achieve our goals may take a different route.</p>

<p>-Experiential and problem-based learning should be the norm. Content area subjects should not be taught in silos (interdisciplinary). Similar to the IB Model. -More structure for student accountability. Students are well versed in the “basics” and are able to perform computations and problem solve without googling the answer.</p>	<p>-Problem-solvers -Survive in the global marketplace - Technologically savvy - Independent thinkers - Responsible and collaborative</p>	<p>-Safe environment for all to learn -Diversity and individuality -The whole child -Academic rigor</p>	<p>-Keep kids at the center of all decisions and changes - Resources need to match expectations</p>
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<p>Some parts should really look the same. Students in this unique age have developmental needs (social, emotional, physical, cognitive, etc.) that ALL need to be addressed. As such, we need to make sure technologies do not drive our decision-making more so than our students' needs. While we can't think of specific visions of the future, there are elements that need to be in any middle school future: Time for social interaction/social learning. Engaging curriculum and instruction. Opportunities for movement. Opportunities for curriculum to be tied together (as opposed to only existing in discrete subjects---that is how adults focus on content, but that is not how kids learn). ALL subjects need to be valued (academic subjects that are measured via standardized should NOT supplant music, art, and</p>	<p>They should be intellectuals...that goes beyond the bare minimum standards set forth by the state and also suggests in inherent interest in knowledge. They should be capable readers. They should have the social skills to be successful in an adult world. They should care more about ideas than GPAs.</p>	<p>The diversity of talents and interests that our students bring to school each day. The community feel that we can create in our schools. It used to feel like LMSD had an administration, faculty, student body, and community that all operated as lofty thinkers. Ideas, learning, and in general "being smart" were valued and on display daily. That feeling has been eroding. Also, teachers' talents should be considered more valuable than prepackaged curriculum.. .passion for a subject comes from the heart not from a publishing company</p>	<p>It is essential to look at WHY the changes are happening. If we can articulate how the change is for the better of our community, schools, and students then perhaps the change will easily be embraced. We need to be cautious, however, of changes motivated by superficial forces (like technologies that put the cart before the horse, or state standards that are below the ability of our average student)-- -too often these changes diminish the experience of large groups of students and disenfranchise the teachers that should be making learning meaningful.</p>
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<p>In 10 years, I feel that middle school should be more student driven. Teachers should be used as facilitators guiding and mentoring students to solve problem based learning. I think middle school students should be pushed more to apply strategies to problem solve. Technology will be greater than ever.</p>	<p>LMSD graduates should be well-rounded and productive citizens. They should be leaders, be creative and have empathy for others.</p>	<p>We value high expectations for academics, but offer experiences that promote diversity, creativity, flexibility, and acceptance.</p>	<p>Change is good! I feel that we are a district that is constantly changing and evolving. Traditions can still be present with change.</p>
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