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# Division Director Board Report

Middle School

## Division Director Board Report - December 2019

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### From the Director's Desk

Dr. E. Ward-Jackson, Middle School Director

With less than three weeks left in the first semester of the School Year, I am finding that there is an atmosphere of reflection, evaluation, and a thrust towards the finish line as students, faculty, and leaders are preparing for finals, the revamping of goals and strategic plans, as well as the highly anticipated behavioral leveling that the Spring semester often brings.

From the perspective of Culture and Climate, the Middle School has had a unique first semester. We have been challenged by change, specifically associated with our programmatic model shifts and the residual impacts of growth within our student and parent populations. We have also been challenged by the longstanding vacancy that we've had in 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA. In addition to weathering the pangs associated with change and perception management, we've been able to thrive through the change by being transparent, proactive, and leaning on the collective genius of our community to support in minding the anticipated gaps. This has looked like:

- Tight collaboration and alignment between Upper School and Middle School Senior Leaders
- Planned and Intentional direct communications (in person and via email) from me to the faculty and to the greater community
- Weekly Area Pulse Checks
- New Teacher Seminars
- Strategically Deploying Teacher Leaders
- Trusting established systems and protocols

We have also had many triumphs to celebrate this semester. Persisting through challenges being one, we have also made some major strides towards our goals in all three of our Divisional Priority Areas, participated fully in the WASC Self-Study development and LCAP processes, inaugurated and supported all workshops for our Parent Academy, and made it to the City of Richmond Youth Volleyball Championship, winning 2<sup>nd</sup> Place—to name a few.

As a reminder, these are the Middle School Division Priorities for 19-20 School Year:

Division Priority Area	Key Performance Indicators
Focus on Dynamic, Data Driven Instruction	Achievement Network (ANet) GPA SBAC
Focus on 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Teachers & Scholars	Classroom Observations Student & Teacher Surveys Digital Curriculum Analytics
Focus on Implementing Restorative Practices	EdClick Referrals Average Daily Attendance Student & Teacher Surveys

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### Six Key Successes:

- We are on target with our instructional pacing and have had 100% fidelity to our data meeting cadence
- “Teaching and Learning Cycle” as well as “Habits of Learning” have been infiltrated into both the messaging and the mindset of our culture
- 99% of teachers are using Google Classroom with fidelity
- Fall 2019 Student Culture and Climate Survey data shows that approximately 64% of students agree or strongly agree that Teachers and/or Deans of Students (DOS) are helping them to address and resolve harm and conflict in the school community. This is an 8% improvement compared survey results from the last Spring survey
- 100% of teachers are provided with daily Community Building lessons and activities for implementation during homeroom periods. Based on cohort participation in completing Community Building artifacts delivered to the DOS, 100% of teachers are currently implementing Restorative Practices via the Community Building Calendar
- The DOS have partnered with our Intervention Coordinator to identify all students who are failing academically with below 2.0 cumulative GPAs. The DOS collaborated with Grade Level Leads to prioritize facilitating Parent-Teacher conferences for our most academically “at promise” students identified through this process.
  - As a result of the collaborative interventions 198 students have received formal individualized parent conferencing interventions:
    - 66 students have received Parent-Teacher Conferences
    - 67 students have received IEP and 504 Plan meetings
    - 19 students are being supported with active SST Plans
    - 46 students have received SARB conferences

### Six Key Challenges:

- Year 1 of shifting to our Single Subject/Multi Grade Model
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA Teacher Vacancy
- Many Wave-Maker families have norms for dealing with conflict that are counter to MWA’s Restorative Framework, which results in students struggling to adopt and internalize MWA’s approach to conflict management
- Approximately 25% of Wave-Makers have GPAs below 2.0 (155 students)
- Influx in Social Worker caseload has impeded some progress on KPI’s associated with liaising for the greater student/parent population
- Impact associated with depressed morale due to bereavement, health, and the effects of organization change

### Next Steps:

- Continue to lead the way through change and transition by being a culture carrier, champion of the mission, and modeling how to effectively persist
- Work with Senior Leadership to respond more fully to the “why” behind our divisional model shift and to the associated impacts of the legislative climate regarding credentialing
- Deliver a Parent Academy workshop on Restorative Practices and Conflict Management in S2
- Hire and onboard for 8<sup>th</sup> grade ELA
- Continue to monitor progress towards goals in each of our priority areas

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This year, I have set some “laser focus priority areas” that I am tracking, as the Middle School Leader. These “laser focus priority areas” were introduced in the September Board meeting:

1. Black/African American student achievement (BAASAI) and engagement
2. 5th and 8th grade Math achievement and engagement

To assess the adequacy of progress on these areas I crafted the following SMART goals for the year:

- *Black/African American student achievement (BAASAI) and engagement*
  - 8% increase in B/AfroAm student attendance over 18-19 SY
    - 60% of B/AfroAm parent involvement in meetings and events (80% for parents of 5th grade students)
  - 10% decrease in B/AfroAm student referral data
    - 100% 1:1 semesterly meetings between Director and parents of B/AfroAm students who are also SPED identified
- *5th and 8th grade Math achievement and engagement*
  - 100% of all Tier 3 students in 5th and 8th grade math will have Individual Learning Plans (ILP) in math by the end of 1st Semester
  - As measured by the ANET assessment and the annual SBAC state exam, at least 80% of all Tier 2 students in 5th and 8th grade math will achieve their individual growth goals for Distance from Standard (DFS)
  - 80% of 5th and 8th grade students and families will attend a math focused engagement event (such as Family Math Night) by end of 3rd quarter
- 100% of math teachers will participate in content professional development and ANET data talks

### Three Key Successes:

- All attendance, Black parent engagement and referral data goals are on target
- 100% of Tier 3 students have ILP’s (this has been a long standing goal, and I am extremely proud of this feat. I am looking forward to sharing more about this form of math intervention with the Board by way of Ms. Stilwell, our Intervention Services Coordinator)
- 100% of math Teachers have participated in content PD (both vertically and horizontally), as well as all ANET data talks

### Three Key Challenges:

- Scheduling conflicts with families of students with IEPs and 504 plans
- Causation and manifestation associated with influx in students on DOS and SW caseloads
- Time

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### Next Steps:

- Create and implement an S2 plan for parent engagement
- Continue to collaborate closely with the Student Support Services Team and SPED Director
- Calendar Strategic Thinking Time (STT) specifically for these two focus areas
- Disaggregate upcoming ANET data for these two student populations

Below we will delve deeper into 1) Student Culture & Climate, 2) Attendance, and 3) Black/African American Student Achievement.

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### Dean of Students Department: Culture and Climate

Mr. Greene, Mr. Ortega, and Ms. Pilloton

**What? Fall 2019 Middle School Culture and Climate Student Survey Results (514 respondents/~83% of Middle School population)**

#### Successes and Notable Improvements from Spring to Fall of 2019:

- Nearly 80% of Wave-Makers agree or strongly agree to the following statements:
  - Making Waves is preparing me to be successful in college and beyond
  - I am proud to be a student at Making Waves
  - What I do in school will help me succeed in life
- Over 70% of Wave-Makers agree or strongly agree to the following statements:
  - My teachers challenge me academically
  - All my classes have high Academic expectations
  - All my classes have high Behavior expectations
- Wave-Makers are least worried about keeping friends and having someone to talk with when they need help:
  - Making or keeping friends (5% reduction in worry for this area from Spring to Fall of 2019)
  - Not having someone to talk to when I have problems (12% reduction in worry for this area from Spring to Fall of 2019)
- The percentage of Wave-Makers who agree or strongly agree with the statement: *“Other students make me feel like I belong here”* increased by over 6% (from 59.33% in Spring of 2019 to 65.89% in Fall of 2019)
- The percentage of Wave-Makers who agree or strongly agree with the statement: *“I feel that if I want to change something at MWA, I can use my voice to make change happen”* increased by almost 7% (from 49.01% in Spring of 2019 to 55.95% in Fall of 2019)
- The percentage of Wave-Makers who said their Deans help them feel safe improved by almost 7% (from 49.60% in Spring 2019 to 56.34% in Fall 2019)
- Approximately 64% of students agree or strongly agree that teachers and/or Deans are helping them to address and resolve harm and conflict in the school community (8% improvement from the last Spring)
- The percentage of Wave-Makers who agree or strongly agree with the statement: *“My teachers adjust their teaching to how I learn best”* improved by 6% (from 63% in Spring 2019 to 69% in Fall 2019)
- The percentage of Wave-Makers who identified that they have a Life Dream increased by almost 10% (from 80.16% in Spring 2019 to 89.67% in Fall 2019)

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### Challenges:

- Wave-Makers report what they are most worried about as follows:
  1. “Getting Good Grades,” which increased by almost 3% (from 67.26% in Spring 2019 to 70.18% in Fall 2019)
  2. “Students hurting themselves,” which remained steady at about 66% of students (decreased from 66.07% in Spring 2019 to 65.50% in Fall 2019)
  3. “Students physically hurting each other,” which increased by almost 3% (from 58.33% in Spring 2019 to 61.21% in Fall 2019)

### So What?

Our Fall 2019 Middle School Culture and Climate Student Survey results clearly indicate that MWA’s Middle School Division is continuing to achieve noteworthy improvements with the school’s overall culture and climate. More specifically, in the critical foundational culture and climate domains of 1) student engagement, 2)safety, 3)relationships/connectedness, and 4)rigor. Our students have reported that we are showing the capacity to make strides in these areas, even as we grow our model to scale, with the addition of a significant number of new students, families, and teachers to our community each year. These results speak to the dogged persistence of all professional members of the MWA Middle School community, who pride themselves in producing quality work and who work tirelessly to not only maintain established climate and culture norms, but also intensively apply new strategic interventions (e.g. the Daily Community Building Calendar) to perpetually improve the student experience at MWA.

The Deans pride ourselves in distinguishing MWA’s approach by creating and facilitating a robust support network so that all students are connected to meaningful adult *and* peer relationships, while building skills for how to seek out and receive timely interventions for all of their safety needs. Through our inclusive Restorative Practices model and daily Community Building Calendar, all adults in the school community have an explicit role in strategically developing the relationships that form the foundation of a positive school culture and climate. Through this model, faculty are equipped with the tactics needed for actively supporting students with addressing and resolving the developmentally expected adolescent conflicts that can so easily erode school culture and climate. Having a faculty that is aligned with the Restorative Practices model provides a platform of integrative services where all members of the school community are responsible for taking **ownership** for the state of the school’s culture and climate. As showcased by student feedback in our Fall 2019 Culture and Climate Survey results, through our sustained collective efforts we have attained notable achievements in the critical areas of student engagement, safety, relationships/connectedness, and rigor. We still have more work to do, but we are proud of the strides we’re making in overall student experience and we are on target with our Key Performance Indicators for the year.

### Now What?

The DOS is committed to ensuring safety, support and skill development of all students. In order to ensure we keep a strong, safe and supportive community while also addressing challenges within our community we need to empower our

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students with the social emotional skills that will ensure both their social and academic success and that will help them persist through and beyond Making Waves Academy.

The DOS will continue our focus on developing high quality Daily Community Building Calendar offerings. Further training and Professional Development on implementing Restorative Practices will be provided to faculty and staff as requested, and will be offered to team members who are new to their craft, and who are observed to be in need of further classroom management and relationship development tools. The Deans plan on reviewing disaggregated (e.g. grade level specific) student survey data with grade level teams to identify and reinforce practices that are contributing to climate and culture successes, and to identify areas requiring new approaches and further interventions.

Given rising student anxieties/worries related to demands for “getting good grades,” the Student Support Services Team, DCI, PMSC Implementation Team, and Intervention Coordinator will work together to create additional parent workshops and Community Building offerings on the topics of coping mechanisms and goal setting. Emphasis will be placed on students giving their best effort on their approach to learning, setting SMART goals, and valuing, recognizing, and rewarding incremental improvements toward those goals, as opposed to valuing the end grade above all. Further work is also needed from the Student Support Services Team in the area of student self-harm and on the subject of students harming their peers. Psycho-education on the topics of self-harm prevention, self-harm intervention, and bullying prevention and response measures will be included as topics to explore via the Community Building Calendar.



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### Dean of Students Department: Attendance

Mr. Greene, Mr. Ortega, and Ms. Pilloton

#### What?

##### Strengths:

- Average Daily Attendance (ADA) for the MS for August through October 2019 was 97.4%, up 1.4% compared to our ADA for the 2018-2019 school year
- 5.6% of students are chronically absent for the 19-20 school year, which is nearly an entire percentage point improvement (reduction) compared to this time last year
- The DOS have personally engaged parents and families with 40 phone conferences for all students with 3 or more unexcused absences or tardies
  - All conferences included a review of MWA attendance policies, a review of state laws regarding attendance, and an appeal to partnership with parent/guardians to collectively address obstacles to attendance
- The DOS have also Coordinated 6 in-person SARB meetings for students with 6 or more unexcused absences or tardies
- Students are being rewarded by grade level with casual dress days on Fridays if they achieve 98%+ attendance on two or more days in any given week
- Fall 2019 Middle School Culture and Climate survey data indicates that the primary reasons that students come to school are for “engagement” and “safety,” as students were provided with a list of reasons they come to school:
  1. “What I learn in classes” (73% of respondents agree or strongly agree)
  2. “I feel safe” (57.5% of respondents agree or strongly agree)
  3. “To participate in school activities such as Community Building (57% of respondents agree or strongly agrees)

##### Challenges:

As part of our Attendance leadership team (DOS/Social Workers/Registrar) weekly meetings, we have identified that the greatest causes of student absences are due to the following (from highest volume to lowest):

1. Emerging student illnesses/sick days
2. Family emergencies (e.g. funeral attendance, car accidents, immigration status crises, serious family illnesses, etc.)
3. Student suspensions

##### So What?

Our Average Daily Attendance rate provides critical insights into the level to which we provide a school culture and climate that is safe, engaging, and encourages students to attend school each day. Achieving 97% or higher ADA signifies that our instructors are leading engaging classrooms, that students feel safe and supported at school, and that the school is providing proactive supports for families in removing obstacles to attendance. The Deans take pride in developing a strong culture of attendance at MWA. We believe that the powerful proactive Community Building

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measures that we are taking this year through the Community Building Calendar, in tandem with the extensive responsive measures we are enacting with parent conferencing via the SARB process, are creating notably improved attendance results.

When students feel engaged with content and when they are connected to meaningful relationships with peers and educators, then they are much more likely to attend school regularly. For these reasons, the foundation of developing a culture of attendance resides in our Restorative Practices framework, and more specifically in the extent of our proactive Community Building measures. Experience and emerging research informs us that when teachers create explicit opportunities each day for students to relate with one another, to share their voices and concerns, and to create the solutions to the challenges of our community, then students feel safe, efficacious, look forward to coming to school, and are best prepared to engage each of their learning opportunities. To this end, MWA's Middle School Deans have devoted extensive efforts toward creating daily Community Building offerings for all Homeroom classes in order to promote a sense of engagement, belonging, and connectedness for *all* students at MWA. Daily Community Building offerings focus on relationship development, MWA Affirmation and Core Value exploration, Life Dream development, celebrating culture and heritage, developing Social Emotional Learning skills, exploring how students can seek help (Notice, Talk, Act), and mental preparation for diagnostic and state testing. Daily Community Building experiences create a safe and supportive environment where Wave-Makers are able to RELATE with each other, teachers, and school staff. Designated Community Building periods also facilitate daily spaces and times where students can engage conversations that address and REPAIR harm as it occurs. Our Community Building Calendar also provides opportunities for students to RESTORE themselves, each other and the school community as needed. Ultimately, our proactive Community Building measures are used to build positive relationships, respond to and address harm/conflict, and restore students back into the school community so that our Wave Makers can thrive in and out of the classroom. These efforts promote a school culture where students pursue every opportunity to attend school each day.

When parents/guardians are knowledgeable on school policies and state laws regarding attendance, when they are accountable to school officials for fulfilling attendance responsibilities, and when partnerships between parents/guardians and school officials are established to remove obstacles to attendance, then student attendance rates improve. The responsive DOS efforts this year to triple our direct correspondence with parents via phone conferencing for each SARB threshold crossed (3, 6, and 8+ Unexcused Tardies/Unexcused Absences) has contributed to our improved attendance outcomes.

### **Now What?**

As a final layer of accountability, and to maximize parent/guardian responsibility with fulfilling their duties with ensuring that their children attend school regularly, as mandated by state law, the DOS will be partnering with Ms. Rebecca Vichiquis, Director III of Student Programs Court & Community Schools for CCCOE, to further address students and families who have exceeded the SARB 3 threshold (8+ unexcused tardies and/or absences). Ms. Vichiquis will be our primary point of contact in the event that we pursue Truancy Court intervention for chronically truant or absent students and families. Ms. Vichiquis has offered to provide individualized support to MWA, for example by opening up her services to come to MWA and meet with our families that have surpassed the SARB III threshold and who have not responded to our interventions. Ms. Vichiquis noted that at the beginning of Semester II, that she would be happy to clear a day on her schedule, and come to MWA to lend County support and weight to a series of individually scheduled

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consecutive family meetings about the importance of attendance. This would be a measure used as an intervention prior to referral to Truancy Court, which should only be used as a last resort in extreme cases.

### **B/AASAI Update Black/African American Student Achievement Initiative**

Micah Stilwell, Middle School Intervention Services Coordinator & School-Wide B/AASAI Lead

#### **What?**

- This quarter, B/AASAI hosted two family engagement events: Back-To-School Day and a B/AASAI Chat & Chew
- Each event provided families with the opportunity to provide feedback, make recommendations, and connect B/AASAI to their child's academic achievement and Life Dreams
- Families greatly appreciate the focus the academy is placing on the achievement of our Black/African American Wave-Makers. One parent explained, "I tell friends all of the time, academically, Making Waves is great; however, I worry about my son's social experience. I was so happy to learn about [B/AASAI] last year."
- The vast majority of families (78.6%) expressed an interest in becoming a Parent Leader. This year, two of the MS Wave Representatives are parents of Black/African American Wave-Makers. With that said, several families (33%) continue to express feeling invisible during parent events
- After the first B/AASAI Chat & Chew, individual families requested: content specific tutoring, separate testing accommodations (anxiety), and support accessing PowerSchool Parent Portal
- The B/AASAI committee meets monthly to review student achievement data, discuss trends on campus, and plan for upcoming B/AASAI student/family engagement events

#### **So What?**

Upon analysis of the feedback families shared during the first quarter, two major needs are evident; direct student services for Black/African American Wave-Makers, and communication for families and students regarding services and opportunities for meaningful engagement. Black/African American students report feeling alienated from their instructors and Latinx peers, finding it difficult to feel part of the larger community. It is imperative that we strengthen our Black/African American students' connection to MWA to ensure their academic achievement and graduation. Parents have expressed similar sentiments of feeling disconnected. Additionally, parents are often unaware of opportunities to be part of their children's education, despite wanting to do so. To address this, the B/AASAI committee will immediately implement a process to provide direct academic and social-emotional support for many of our Black/African American Wave-Makers via student opted mentoring, and academic case management. To support this effort, the B/AASAI committee will establish explicit, direct, and continual systems for communicating with our families to respond to families who are seeking opportunities to volunteer, collaborate, and support the academic achievement of all Wave-Makers.

#### **Now What?**

B/AASAI will continue hosting family engagement opportunities for families to deepen relationships on campus, encourage families to actively participate in opportunities for parent leadership, and establish a series of college readiness family workshops. The B/AASAI committee has established a case management protocol, ensuring the academic achievement of each Black/African American Wave-Maker is monitored biweekly. B/AASAI mentors will also serve as the point person in communicating with families regarding their child's ongoing academic performance and to extend personal invitations to MWA events. B/AASAI is set to launch a Remind group to ensure that families are updated

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regarding student progress and family engagement opportunities. This will allow us to provide B/AASAI updates directly to families via text. This feature will serve to fill the communication void some families expressed experiencing.