



Board Report
School-Wide

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Middle School Division - Instruction Big Rock: Gains, Triumphs & Progress

Brian Jimenez, Assistant Principal - Middle School

What?

In What Works in Schools: Translating Research Into Action, Robert J. Marzano declared that “Creating a guaranteed, viable curriculum is the number-one factor for increased levels of learning” (2003). Creating a *Guaranteed & Viable* experience for our students is the core of our work this school year.

When I joined Making Waves Academy in July, I immediately wanted to understand what curriculums we used. When I asked about curricula, I received mixed answers from various people. I was able to get clear answers for some contents and grade levels and contents, but many conversations ended with “I’m not sure.” “I know we used to use…” and “Some people use ___ but they also use ___”. Understanding that we would never be able to make the academic growth we needed to until we addressed using a common curriculum, our instructional big rock focused on supporting that all students get a similar, quality, educational experience by aligning, planning and internalizing:

*By May 1, 2023, MWA Faculty will provide students with a **guaranteed and viable** academic experience. We will do this by aligning, planning and internalizing.*

1. All teams will **align** and implement a high quality, standards aligned curriculum in all core subjects and align and norm in non-core classes.
2. All faculty will **plan** year at a glance (YAAGs) and pacing guides, and internalizing unit.
3. All faculty will grow their content knowledgeable by **internalizing** units/models.

Align	Plan	Internalize
MWA students should be able to enter any classroom and receive a similar quality education and content.	A guarantee that each MWA student will learn the major standards of each grade level/content. The YAAG/pacing guide supports this by map of the school year. It includes which units, standards, dates, assessments and lessons.	A commitment to become/grow as content experts by internalizing units to in order to better serve students.

During August PD, Eric and I set out this vision for the school year and had teams conduct a curriculum audit in order to align on a curriculum and identify curricular access and needs. We used this information to prioritize ordering curricula, since that was not done at the end of last school year.

We also had teams begin their YAAGs and norm on unit planning process/document. Receiving feedback that most years unit planning would take place during summer but would not continue throughout the school year, we built unit planning into our professional development (PD) schedule on a rotating cadence. This would prioritize unit planning and grow our ability to internalize in a more meaningful way.

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So What?

All core classes now have access to an aligned curriculum across their grade levels, and where possible, are aligned across the middle school and upper school. We also developed a yearlong professional development calendar to ensure we continue to address our goals during PD. We have had two Instruction-focused PD meetings so far, and our next one is November 04, 2022. In addition to our “Big Rock” for Instruction, we are strengthening other structures at Making Waves Academy that should result in stronger instruction and student achievement such as academic intervention, efficacy of assessment data analysis, and instructional/professional coaching.

I am currently leading the Academic Student Support Team in creating a new intervention plan. As the first step, I am supporting the team in creating a new vision for our academic intervention program, then creating SMART goals to begin laying the foundations for their visions. As an appendage of this work, MWA’s new ELD Coordinator, Gerri Swift, is doing the same thing for our English Language Development programming and support.

In order to get an accurate understanding of how our students are performing, we are working to strengthen the efficacy of our assessment data. Learning from the [lower completion rates from last year](#), this year we are training all staff, including substitute teachers, identifying back-up assessors, and hosting test make-up days. We saw [great gains in our completion rates](#) during our STAR and MAP assessments at the beginning of year:

	Beginning of Year 2021-2022	Beginning of Year 2022-2023
MAP	90%	96.8%
STAR	97%	98%

In our approach to coaching we have led with the idea that ***everyone deserves a coach***. Whether in their 1st year of teaching or their 15th year, all middle school teachers have a coach and are meeting with them in a variation of cadences: weekly to monthly. We are also working on developing our skills as coaches by using normed observation tools that come from [The New Teacher Project - Core Teaching Rubric](#) and are currently developing a shared coaching goal by using the [Transformational Coaching Rubric](#).

Now What?

In grounding our instructional priorities on creating a “guaranteed and viable” academic experience for students, we build a base for instructional possibilities further down the road. By aligning, planning, and internalizing, we create ***common conditions, common language, and common academic expectations***. This will allow us to spend more time on HOW to teach than looking for WHAT to teach; and spending less time THINKING ABOUT what to teach and more on WHETHER OR NOT OUR STUDENTS ARE LEARNING.

In regards to our Big Rock for Instruction, our next steps are for teams to internalize their upcoming unit or module. We will focus on how to internalize more effectively by grounding in key content standards and skills embedded in our unit assessments. Our Academic Support Services Team will be submitting their academic intervention plan at the end of October 2022. Coaches will be conducting “step-backs” with their coaches at the end of the semester to get feedback on their coaching. The same process will be taking place in our Instructional Leadership Team. Lastly, will eventually be launching *walk-throughs* to strengthen our pulse on our academic instruction and inform year-long goals.

Update on Upper School Division: Better Supporting Teachers through a Focus on Safety, Instruction & Innovation

Eric Becker - Assistant Principal, Upper School

The role of the **Assistant Principal** is to provide leadership for a grade-level cluster for Making Waves Academy (MWA) with five focus areas:

1. student safety and well-being
2. rigorous and relevant instruction
3. school culture
4. faculty and staff supervision and development
5. parent and school community engagement

Student Safety and Well-Being in the Upper School

Supervision has run more smoothly this year than last year, thanks largely to a system of “captaincies” implemented by the Director of School Operations. Key staff members, acting as captains, lead and support staff in their supervision duties in a timely and effective manner, including upper school arrival, breaks, lunch, and dismissal. The greater presence of staff members during these key times provides adult presence, helps keep students physically safe, and helps to communicate a culture to students that “staff care, are available, and are accessible”.

In the upper school, the Dean of Students and the campus supervisors provide support for managing student behavioral challenges, which has been relatively low this year. The increased visibility of the Dean of Students, in collaboration with the Assistant Principal and Campus Supervisors, adds another layer of adult visibility supporting both students and staff.

The Assistant Principals and Deans have been working with Anchor Solutions Consulting in creating a system for Student Success Team meetings (SSTs), which allows the tracking of student progress and response to intervention in the classroom. The pre-SST process helps to identify students who may qualify for IEPs (Individualized Education Plans) or 504 Plans, and is an essential component of the *Child Find* process, a process meant to proactively assess student needs for additional support, assessment, and accommodations based on a variety of criteria of student academic performance and observed behavior.

One of this year’s areas of focus in the upper school is on building relationships with students to help increase their connection to school. Some of the initiatives around this goal include:

- Incorporating strategies for community building into staff professional development
- Using *Along* (an online program to strengthen the connection between students and adults) in advisories
- Creating a bi-weekly cadence of meetings for grade-level teams to discuss students of concern, align approaches, and identify students who may need greater support.

The Dean of Students has worked with grade-level teams to set up several parent/ guardian/ student-teacher meetings so far this year, originating from discussions in the grade-level team meetings.

School Culture

School culture improves when students feel they have greater access to relevant and rigorous instruction, often through the intersection between committed staff members, who are able to share their academic passions, and student interest. In collaboration with the Career and College Counseling (CCC) office, a master schedule was developed for the AY 22-23 school-year that allows for students to work towards meeting “A-G” CA college admissions requirements, expanded course options for students, and opportunities for faculty to teach courses based on their interests. These courses are offered both during core instruction blocks and the new, *Flex Time* class period.

New courses offered during core class blocks include the following:

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- Chemistry (renewed)
- Biology (renewed)
- Ethnic Studies
- Principles of Finance

Flex Time (formerly “Marlin Hour”) was repurposed in three key ways.

1. Elective course options
2. Academic intervention/support (e.g. English Language Development)
3. General academic support/homework-planning time

Flex Time elective course options include:

- *Music Theory*
- *Career Exploration*
- *History through Graphic Novels*
- *Astronomy*
- *Marlin Strength & Conditioning*
- *Calligraphy*

In addition to the graded electives, academic intervention is offered during *Flex Time*, including English Language Development and Math Intervention Support (Tier 3 supports). These courses are now offered with letter grades and category weights to add a level of accountability to the courses.

Lastly, students were given the choice between electives and general academic support. Support could be getting support with homework and/or planning.

Starting the school year with a clearer, shared understanding about what *Flex Time* is (including having clear categories for grades and category weights not just for elective classes, but also for English Language Development, Academic Support, and Math Lab) has helped to improve school culture by better utilizing this time. The hope is that in future years many of the *Flex Time* electives will migrate to core instruction and become part of the master schedule, providing students with a greater array of “A-G”-aligned course electives - something both students and staff have asked for.

In order to build relationships with student leadership and create a partnership between student leadership and the administration, the upper school assistant principal has begun meeting bi-weekly with the Associated Student Body (ASB). The ultimate goal is to activate student leadership, currently through the ASB and clubs, to help create a culture on campus that is diverse, inclusive and caring, and where students and staff support the success of all students.

Finally, in order to support student safety and well-being, building connections with students, and promoting a positive school culture, the Dean of Students and Assistant Principal have spent the last three weeks visiting each English Language Arts classroom to talk about making healthy and responsible choices on campus - including following school rules, understanding behaviors that may be interpreted as harassment, as well as how to access resources they have on campus to promote their own health and well-being and to follow the “Notice. Talk. Act.” protocol. Qualitative feedback from staff has been positive. Largely, staff have been thankful that as we move as a community out of the pandemic, that leadership is more visible, both around campus and in the classroom.

Rigorous and Relevant Instruction

The “Big Rock” for instruction for this academic year is for all staff to provide grade-level and appropriately challenging instruction to all students by:

- Implementing high quality, standards-aligned curriculum in all core subjects
- Aligning and norming on student academic performance learning targets and expectations in non-core classes

Although much work still needs to be done in this area, we are working towards this goal in a handful of ways through faculty and staff supervision and development.

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Faculty and Staff Supervision and Development

First, the assistant principal meets weekly with an instructional leadership team composed of Content Leads, the Lead Teacher for the Humanities, and Grade-level leads to discuss instruction and school culture. The meetings are themed so that every other week the topic alternates between school culture and instruction.

The Content Leads and Humanities Lead teacher have already identified teachers to observe and provide non-evaluative coaching for, and in some cases, have already conducted several rounds of observation and feedback. The assistant principal has conducted observation and debrief cycles for 10 upper school teachers and participated in Teacher Induction goal-setting meetings for four teachers.

In collaboration with teacher leaders, the Assistant Principals identified the The New Teacher Project (TNTP) Core Teaching Rubric, as the tool to be used for conducting classroom observations and for guiding the implementation of evaluations for every teacher.

The Assistant Principals will continue to work together with lead teachers in their divisions to observe teachers, determine a cadence of observations and feedback cycles aligned with a calendar of evaluation including an introduction to the TNTP Teaching Rubric, a mid-year progress report, and an end-of-year evaluation. This system will help support the instructional goals for this year (and beyond) of ensuring all students are provided with appropriately rigorous and grade-level instruction, while increasing teachers' sense of efficacy, and ultimately, retention at Making Waves Academy.

- **Cycle 1 - Introduction:** October 17 - November 4, 2022
- **Cycle 2 - Pulse Check:** January 03 - January 20, 2023
- **Cycle 3 - Formal Evaluation:** March 27 - April 21, 2023

Parent and School Community Engagement

On Saturday, September 24th, 2022, Making Waves Academy upper school held its first Back to School Event in three years. Parents were invited on to campus from 9:00 AM to 12:20 PM. First, parents met their student's advisory teacher in the middle school gymnasium, received their schedules for the day, and then received presentations from myself, the Student Activities Coordinator, Dean of Students and the Athletic Director. Next, parents were able to visit classrooms around campus and hear from and speak with their student's six core-day teachers. The day ended with 30 minutes of "office hours", whereby parents could return to speak with a teacher and/ or administrator.

Feedback from faculty was gathered through a survey sent out the next day. Highlights included that 75% of staff considered the event a "3" or higher on a scale of one through five (five being 'excellent'), 25% considered it a "4" or higher, and no staff members gave it a rating lower than "3". Staff noted that parents were engaged and happy to be on campus and able to meet with them. Additionally, staff noted that several logistics worked well (e.g., 15 minute teacher presentations per period seemed the right amount of time and parents were able to find classrooms with schedules, maps and signage provided). Constructive feedback included holding the back to school event during the work week, after school (25% mentioned this) and shortening the presentation from school leaders and Career and College in the beginning. Leadership notes that we would like to advertise the next events further in advance (starting 3 weeks in advance, at least) to gain greater participation.