



**Findings from Middle School
Use of Time, Course & Staffing
Practices, and Comprehensive
Stakeholder Engagement
Public Schools of Brookline**

March 16, 2023



PROJECT GOALS

1

Highlight and elevate effective components of the current middle school model

2

Better understand areas of need and potential improvement at the middle school level

3

Clearly define the district's approach to middle school schedules going forward and the types of experiences students and families can expect from grades 6-8

PROJECT TIMELINE

ESTABLISH INITIAL FACT BASE

Summer / Fall

- Conduct 1:1 interviews with school & district leaders
- Analyze bell schedules
- Collect & validate school course & staffing data

ENGAGE & ANALYZE

Fall / Winter

- Engage teachers, staff, students, families, & community stakeholders
- Conduct analysis of school course & staffing data and grade-level transition practices

SHARE FINDINGS

Winter / Spring

- Share progress update and content preview
- Share executive summary of findings
- Share full set of findings and recommendations

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS

- 1. The teachers and staff of the Public Schools of Brookline are dedicated to providing exceptional learning experiences and opportunities to students at the middle school level.**
- 2. There is a common belief in the power and potential of the K-8 model across the district.**
- 3. The district provides students early and continuous learning opportunities in world languages and music across all middle schools**
- 4. The middle schools actively facilitate programming to address student social-emotional needs and help students navigate the challenges of being a young adolescent.**
- 5. Middle school schedules create multiple opportunities and time for staff to collaborate across grade levels, content areas, and roles.**
- 6. Many students, teachers, and staff appreciate and value the rotational aspect of middle school schedules and the fact that students take classes at different times over the course of the week.**
- 7. Many teachers at middle schools with ~60 minute academic periods value the benefits provided by a relatively longer period length.**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 1. There is no comprehensive middle school “baseline” across the eight 6-8 schools, which results in inequitable student experiences, access to instruction, and preparation for high school.**
- 2. The middle schools do not universally provide best practice academic intervention or acceleration to students.**
- 3. The district values and is thoughtful about supporting the social-emotional needs of middle level learners, but under-invests in best practices to build student engagement and agency.**
- 4. There is no universal expectation or definition of what constitutes a “full” workload for middle school classroom teachers, which results in uneven use of teacher time and talent.**
- 5. There is opportunity to staff more closely to enrollment and adjust class sizes to reflect ongoing changes in student enrollment in the district.**
- 6. There is no district-level point person to direct, monitor, or support the development of middle school students.**
- 7. The district’s current approaches to music (conservatory) programming as well as shared staff in select subjects have a disproportionate impact on middle school schedules.**
- 8. The district intentionally does not currently provide advanced-level academic courses at the middle school level.**

Finding 1: There is no comprehensive middle school “baseline” across the eight 6-8 schools, which results in inequitable student experiences, access to instruction, and preparation for high school.

Finding 1

The amount of annual time on learning a student receives in a given subject can vary considerably between schools and across grade levels in the same school.

ELA

School	6 th Grade	7 th Grade	8 th Grade
Heath School	135	141	135
John Pierce School	135	135	135
John D. Runkle	144	142	144
Amos A. Lawrence	147	144	144
Baker School	189	135	162
Driscoll School	195	177	160
Florida Ruffin Ridley	246	135	132
William H. Lincoln	248	147	147
Range	135 – 248 (113 hrs)	135 – 177 (42 hrs)	132 – 162 (30 hrs)

Finding 1

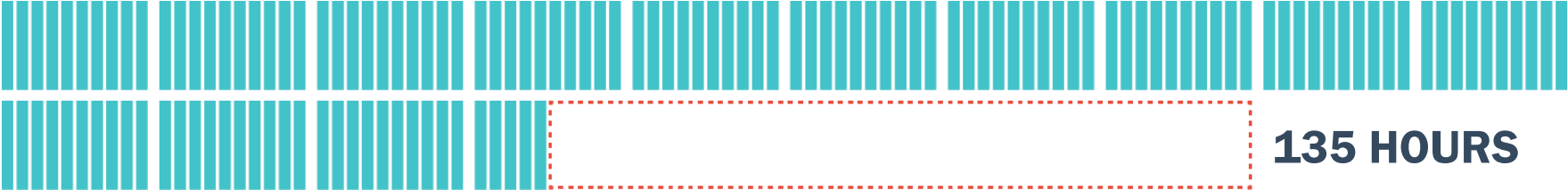
Research states that the amount of time devoted to a topic is related to the amount of learning.

HOURS OF MATH PER YEAR

ELEMENTARY



MIDDLE



45 FEWER DAYS OF MATH INSTRUCTION

Finding 2: The middle schools do not universally provide best practice academic intervention or acceleration to students.

Most students who struggle need extra time to learn



**"Learning should be the constant
and time the variable."**

-Richard DuFour

Finding 2

While nearly all schools offer a “What I Need” (WIN) block, the duration and frequency of this block differs by school and grade level, and the use of the block is not consistently aligned to best practice.

Student Activity	“How do you usually spend the majority of your time in a typical WIN block?” - % of students that responded by activity
Completing homework	76%
Other activities	6%
Reading a book	5%
Working with a teacher to get extra help or catch up	4%
Talking with friends	4%
Engaging in some type of enrichment activity	3%
Receiving services related to my specific needs (e.g. special ed)	2%

Finding 2

Very few, if any, content-specific academic intervention courses are available to students at the middle school level struggling in math or literacy.

“If I had a magic wand, I would create dedicated time in the school day for intensive, planned intervention by skilled teachers.”

“RTI is offered regularly in the younger grades. There is hardly any RTI in the upper grades. We need to add intervention blocks for tier 2 & 3 services in grade 6-8.”

Finding 3: The district values and is thoughtful about supporting the social-emotional needs of middle level learners, but under-invests in best practices to build student engagement and agency.

Finding 3

While an advisory period is offered at all middle schools, the duration and frequency varies by school and grade, and is not consistently aligned to best practice.

Group	“Advisory is helpful” - % of students that agreed or strongly agreed	“Advisory is a good use of my time” - % of students that agreed or strongly agreed
Current Brookline Middle School Students	52%	50%

MAKING THE BEST USE OF ADVISORY

Best Practice Advisory

- Runs 1-2x/week for 25-30 minutes
- Students choose advisor
- School- or district-level staff person “owns” advisory vision, materials, and training (may be stipend position)
- 2x/year survey of students and teachers on effectiveness of advisory

High levels of student voice and choice can be as or more effective in building student-teacher relationships than advisory

Finding 3

Middle school students have consistent and nearly identical access to classes in art, music (conservatory), physical education, health, and world language, regardless of interest or prior experience.

Student Response	“The amount of time for <u>world language</u> in the schedule is:”	“The amount of time for <u>art</u> in the schedule is:”	“The amount of time for <u>conservatory</u> in the schedule is:”
Too much	46%	9%	26%
Just right	51%	37%	65%
Not enough	3%	54%	9%

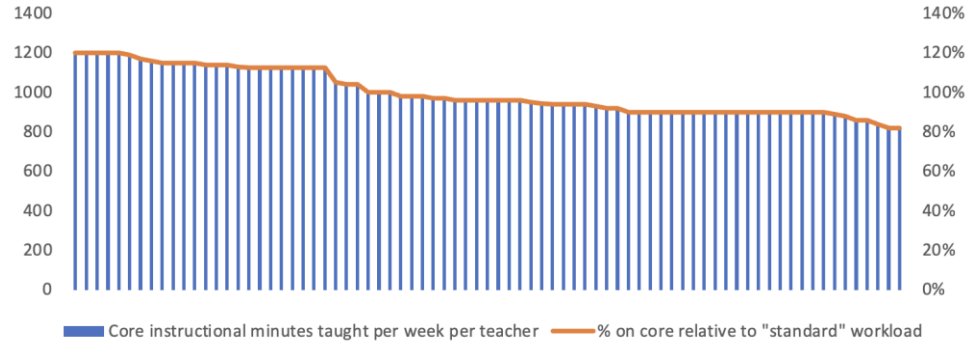
Finding 4: There is no universal expectation or definition of what constitutes a “full” workload for middle school teachers, which results in uneven use of teacher time and talent.

Finding 4

4. The amount of time core teachers spend delivering instruction in their subject in a given week varies across and within schools.

Many world language teachers expressed a high level of frustration regarding current instructional workloads and range of grade levels taught.

Individual Core Teacher Instructional Minutes per Week



- Total weekly minutes spent on core instruction by middle school core subject teachers ranges between 770 – 1200 minutes (~56% difference)
- Annually, this equates to a difference of ~258 hours in core instructional time between teachers

Finding 5: There is opportunity to staff more closely to enrollment and adjust class sizes to reflect ongoing changes in student enrollment in the district.

Finding 5

5. Average class sizes vary considerable across middle schools and it is unclear whether existing district class size guidelines represent the ideal class size or "worst case" scenario. Additionally, absent a universal definition of what constitutes an "average" teacher workload, staffing precisely to enrollment is impossible.

School	Average Class Size*
FRR	21.1
Runkle	19.7
Lawrence	18.7
Pierce	18.6
Lincoln	18.2
Driscoll	17.8
Baker	17.3
Heath	16.9
District	18.6

**Excludes WIN, tutorial, advisory, special education, and EL classes*

Finding 6: There is no district-level point person to direct, monitor, or support the development of middle school schedules.

Finding 7: The district's current approaches to music (conservatory) programming as well as shared staff in select subjects have a disproportionate impact on middle school schedules.

Finding 8: The district intentionally does not currently provide advanced-level academic courses at the middle school level.

Finding 8

8. Many students and parents expressed a high-degree of interest in the district providing more opportunities to challenge students, especially in math.

"I feel like math has been outsourced to Russian Math. I'm worried about my kids transition to high school. Students don't really have any homework. If you don't do Russian Math, then math is challenging in high school."



Q + A



To Continue The Conversation

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