



GRADE LEVEL STUDY REPORT

A PREFERRED FUTURE FOR SCM

PRESENTED TO THE SUPERINTENDENT AND THE BOARD OF SCHOOL TRUSTEES

JANUARY 9, 2018



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Overview

SCM Grade Level Work Groups examined educational programming, organizational strategic initiatives, and instructional improvements that have the potential to positively impact student learning in SCM. Grade level work groups were organized to discuss strategies that have the potential to provide excellent schooling experiences for Mishawaka students. The grade level work groups were organized into three categories: Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade (Pre-K-5), grades six to eight (6-8), and freshman through post-graduation (9-13). Each of the work groups intentionally contained members from diverse backgrounds, including parents, teachers, administrators, community stakeholders, and School Board members.

The work groups were assigned SCM Senior Leadership members to help lead the discussions. The leaders of each group were Dr. Bruce Stahly and Barbara Michalos (Pre-K-5), William Welling (6-8), and Sarah Hickie (9-13). The first priority for group discussion was related to appropriate educational programming, organizational strategic initiatives, and proposed instructional improvements for their respective grade levels. The work groups met at times that were convenient for the grade level served, and typically had meetings twice a month. During the work group discussions, leaders were encouraged to discuss advantages and disadvantages of educational programming and instructional approaches that their proposed grade level configuration will create. Finally, the work groups presented their educational programming, organizational strategic initiatives and instructional improvement recommendations to the entire body of the grade level work group to help align the vision and proposed strategic initiatives with the other two work groups.

The second priority of each work group was to examine the building capacity and logistical hurdles that would need to be considered if the educational programming, organizational strategic initiatives and instructional improvements proposed were to be executed. Work group leaders utilized building blueprints, along with a facility usage study completed by Dr. Ken Blad in 2016, to see if the proposed grade level spaces needed would work within the current building footprint. Room for immediate program growth exists in both the Pre-K-5 and 9-13 school buildings. The learning spaces for grades six to eight have classroom and support space limitations. As the 6-8 work group analyzed the capacity issue at John Young Middle School, they discovered specific limitations in terms of classroom space, food service area space, and pick-up/drop-off logistics of students.

The final aspect that the work groups were asked to examine focused on the seven-year sustainability of their proposed educational programming, organizational strategic initiatives and instructional improvements. All of the work groups investigated various scenarios to see if their respective grade level work group plan could actually work within the parameters outlined by SCM. The parameters included whether the plan was financially sustainable and if it promoted an improvement in student learning outcomes. We believe the final recommendations proposed in this document have been thoroughly studied, debated, and found to be factually accurate.

PRE-K – 5 WORK GROUP

Dr. Bruce Stahly	Assistant Superintendent for Business Services/Work Group Co-Leader
Barbara Michalos	Director of Exceptional Learners/Work Group Co-Leader
Amber Buras	Exceptional Learners Classroom Teacher
Richard Currey	SCM Board of School Trustees Member
Karen Landis	Classroom Teacher
Janine Mabry	Elementary Principal
Gina Marchi	Classroom Teacher
Heather O’Laughlin	Exceptional Learners Classroom Teacher
Jeanine Reynolds	Classroom Teacher
Katie Warnock	Classroom Teacher
Matt Wood	Elementary Principal

6 – 8 WORK GROUP

William Welling	Director of Human Resources/Work Group Leader
Jayn Barson	Classroom Teacher
Shelley Brandenburg	Elementary Principal
Chad Brugh	Leader Intern
Joe Canarecci	Community Member/Mishawaka City Council
Karla Daoust	Classroom Teacher
Mike Fisher	Middle School Principal
Eric Johnson	Director of Technology
Eilleen Kalman	Assistant Director of Exceptional Learners
Michelle McCoige	Exceptional Learners Classroom Teacher
Holly Parks	SCM Board of School Trustees Member
Stacy Reisdorf	Classroom Teacher
Beth Schwitz	Classroom Teacher
Caity Stockstell	Curriculum Integration Specialist
Dan Towner	Elementary Principal
Dr. Jim Welling	Community Member/Educational Consultant
Dennis Wood	SCM Board of School Trustees Member
Jeff Yohe	Elementary Principal
Brian Zbrzezny	Classroom Teacher

9 – 13 WORK GROUP

Sarah Hickle	Director of Student Learning and Innovation/Work Group Leader
Dr. Ron Barker	Community Member
Jerome Calderone	High School Principal
Nancy Colburn	Community Member/Higher Education
Randy Colburn	Community Member/Higher Education
Cheryl Herman	Classroom Teacher
Michael McGuire	Classroom Teacher
Susan Piper	Guidance Counselor
John Ross	Associate High School Principal
David Straughn	Community Member

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Grade Level
Work Group
Considerations

PRE-K – 5 WORK GROUP

The group agrees that growing the early childhood program within School City of Mishawaka should be a priority. The belief of the group is that all elementary learners can benefit from the currently recommended and executed student to teacher ratio, more uniformity in core content offerings, and a renewed focus on experiential learning. It is felt that all SCM buildings could benefit from Pre-K programming. The group believes that all students, not just students from low socio-economic backgrounds, can benefit from robust Pre-K programming. It is the belief of the group that a robust Pre-K program will provide immediate, if not lifelong benefits to elementary learners within SCM.

Below are some of the highlights of the Pre-K Work Group outlining research based advantages.

Research Based Advantages of Including Pre-K

Developmentally appropriate Pre-K programs = Lifelong Success

- Healthy early childhood development which includes the physical, social/emotional, and language/cognitive domains of development, (each equally important) strongly influences well being, obesity/stunting, mental health, heart disease, competence in literacy and numeracy, criminality, and economic participation as evidenced by increased graduation rates, and employment opportunities with higher income potential.

Advantages of Including Pre-K

- Creates opportunities to minimize early achievement gaps
- Develops social/emotional skills and addresses deficits at an early age
- Attracts out of district students to stay and increases enrollment in later grades
- Young students are ready to learn in an enriched learning environment

Though Pre-K was a major topic of conversation in the group, it was not the only area of focus. The work group believes that more experiential learning should take place in all of the primary grades. It is also widely felt that elementary students should have opportunities to experience fine arts (art and music) along with organized athletics (physical education) to help create a well-rounded student. It is felt that if students have an opportunity to experience a variety of activities at an early age they will better be able to follow their passions in middle school and high school. The group feels that SCM currently offers courses and extracurricular opportunities for elementary students that meet or exceed many of these standards.

The work group believes in a special focus on two transitions:

1. The transition to school as a Pre-K student
2. The transition to middle school

Planning educational programming, organizational strategic initiatives and instructional improvements that address these transitions are essential factors to consider. These transitions, if planned and implemented appropriately, have the potential to improve student learning outcomes. The purpose of early childhood education is to prepare young children for their transition to elementary school. Students who have not participated in early childhood programs may lack in the following skills: basic social skills, self-helping skills, participating in a structural environment/routine, and communication skills. The work group believes that instructional and support staff will need to recognize the common warning signs students may exhibit when having problems transitioning to school. If the difficulties are not addressed quickly and properly, the student may develop major learning and behavioral problems. Over time, the psychological and social impact may be devastating and produce life-long academic and social difficulties.

The work group also believes in offering academic opportunities to all students in every grade level throughout SCM. Currently, some SCM educational programming is building specific. This change in educational programming delivery would make educational programming services available to all students in each elementary school. Some of this programming includes: High Ability, DEEP, Pre-K, and Exceptional Learners.

The Pre-K-5 Work Group projects that implementation of identified essential components will position SCM students for the successful transition for college and career exploration at the middle school level. All School City of Mishawaka elementary schools will offer similar essential components to each student, ensuring that all students will have the opportunity for success in school, at home, and in the community. The research the work group read and discussed strongly supports the benefits of early childhood education and the lifelong implications for students, their families, and the community.

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

- Social Emotional Learning (Self-Regulation)
- Differentiated Instruction
- Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS)
- Strong Academic Standards Based Foundation
- Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)
- Physical and Mental Health
- Hands on Authentic Learning Opportunities (Problem/Project Based Learning)
- Mindful Movement
- Parent/Family Engagement Opportunities

6 – 8 WORK GROUP

The work group strongly agrees that an appropriate middle school grade level configuration should incorporate grades six through eight. The group spent a considerable amount of time discussing the unique needs of the adolescent learner, which can range anywhere from age 10 – 15 (this also includes grade five). The proposed movement of sixth grade to a 6-8 middle school is supported by the research studied focusing on the onset of adolescence and social emotional growth. The proposed middle school setting (grades six to eight) offers more opportunities for students to develop independence, additional extracurricular opportunities, and the time needed to build a school culture and identity for the students and staff. The work group acknowledges the need of this age group to exercise increased independence and the advisability of organizing learning opportunities that nurture 21st Century skills, such as communication, creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration. In addition, the group recognizes that even though this group of learners strives for independence, they also require a substantial amount of social interaction. Therefore, meeting the academic and developmental needs of this age group may require an instructional plan that differs from a typical elementary school educational programming and organizational structure.

The 6-8 Work Group strongly supports the creation of a six to eight grade level alignment. For reasons connected to middle grades quality instruction, social/emotional growth, and improved educational programming, the group identified conditions more easily met in a six to eight setting than a Pre-K-6 setting. However, the group agrees with the statement from the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform in its *Policy Statement on Grade Configuration*, “... **what is most important for the education of young adolescent learners is what takes place inside each middle-grades school, not grade configuration per se.**”

The National Forum lists six (6) components that may be seen as “challenges” to middle school education:

1. Smaller learning communities and other supports from the school, family, and community that help personalize instruction and give students targeted assistance when they need it;
2. A focus on adolescent literacy with support for advancing reading and writing in all content areas;
3. Rigorous mathematics and science instruction for all students to equip them for success in high school and beyond;
4. Qualified teachers in every middle-grades classroom who not only know their subjects well but also how to teach those subjects to young adolescents;
5. Academic, health, mental health, and other services that support student learning and healthy development;
6. Access to an array of curricular and extracurricular activities that foster healthy development, creativity, critical thinking, career exploration, and civic responsibility.

The 6-8 Work Group created the following chart that showcases a few challenges and potential solutions that SCM could utilize when considering moving sixth graders:

DESCRIPTION OF 6-8 CHALLENGES	PROPOSED SOLUTION(S)
<p>Smaller learning communities and other supports from the school, family, and community that help personalize instruction and give students targeted assistance when they need it;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaming reduces the size of the learning group and promotes a more personalized relationship among students and faculty • PLCs are used to empower instructional teams to be more responsive to students' needs through Tier II targeted instruction
<p>A focus on adolescent literacy with support for advancing reading and writing in all content areas;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolwide emphasis on literacy as means to empowerment, enrichment, and independence • Reading for information in TCU Innovation Lab • Use of written expression to complete authentic assessments, e-portfolios, maker projects
<p>Rigorous mathematics and science instruction for all students to equip them for success in high school and beyond;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schoolwide emphasis on “maker” projects makes science and math more relevant (utilitarian) • Extension of Delta Math to the middle grades assures grade level math readiness • TCU Innovation Lab provides equipment and environment for STEAM engagement
<p>Qualified teachers in every middle-grades classroom who not only know their subjects well but also how to teach those subjects to young adolescents;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaming allows the formation of complementary instructional teams that allow students to experience teachers with differing skill sets, talents, personalities, and passions • Ongoing recruitment of teachers who are particularly effective with young adolescent students
<p>Academic, health, mental health, and other services that support student learning and healthy development;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory/enrichment time includes discussion of age-appropriate social, emotional, health, character, and citizenship issues • PBIS and MTSS systems will be used to monitor and reteach academic and behavior skills • St. Joseph Health System provides RNs for school

The 6-8 work group did identify that this age range (10- 15 years old) of students would be ideal to house together in SCM. The group feels that students in grade five still needed many of the supports that exist in the elementary school setting, but can still benefit from some middle school experiences that give them a feel for the future. It is the belief of the group that proper support systems need to be put in place that address the “Whole Child.” The group notes current successes with “teaming” implemented for the 2017-2018 school year at John Young Middle School. The group also believes that guidance counselors’ and social workers’ proactive involvement in social and emotional learning of students will further expand student success as they transition from adolescence to adulthood.

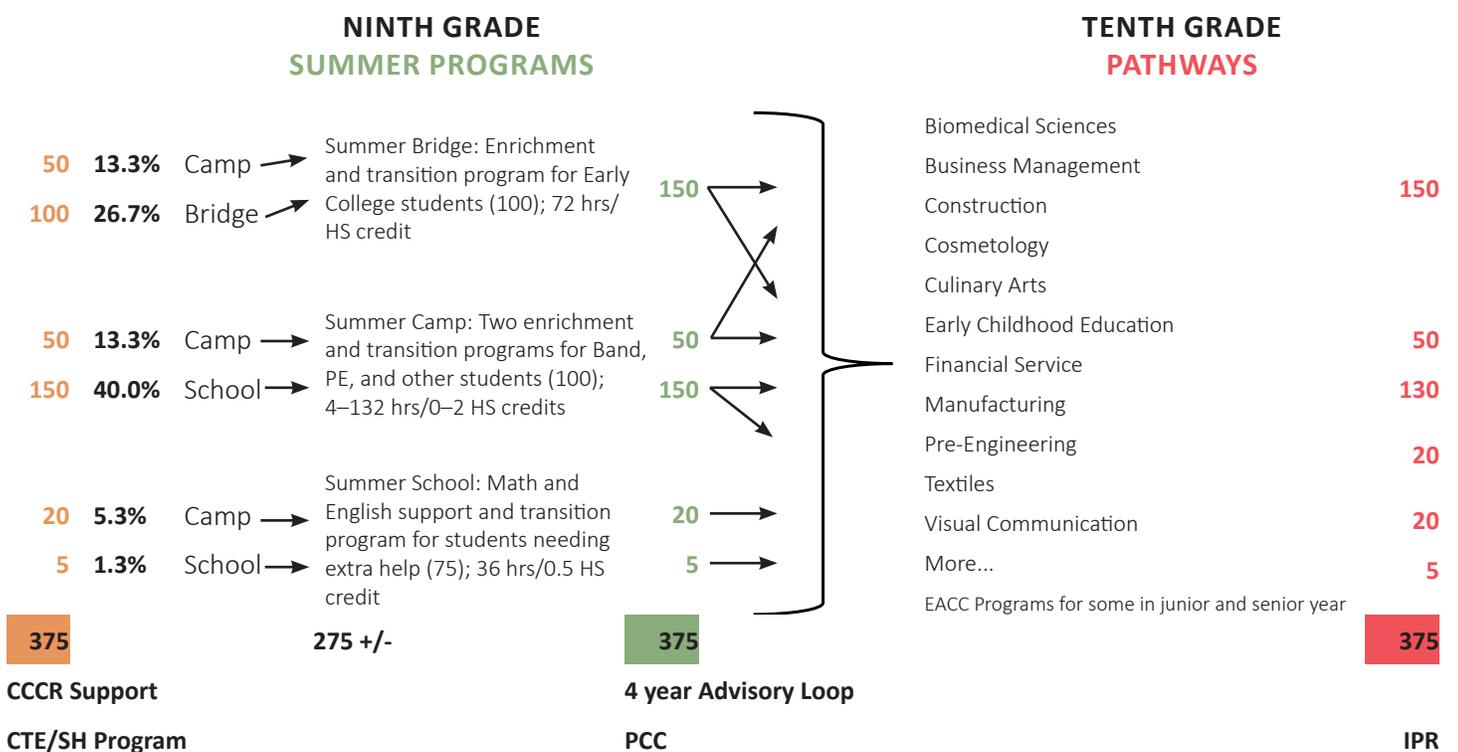
9 – 13 WORK GROUP

The group believes that Mishawaka High School should provide opportunities for all students to be college, career, and citizenship ready (CCC). They believe that the current structure of offering dual credit and Advanced Placement (AP) works well for students that may choose college as their next major life step. Part of the challenge for the 9-13 work group is identifying courses that are appropriate for both college and non-college bound students. The day of one-size fits all course offerings for high school students is no longer a viable option. SCM’s demographic includes a wide range of abilities, skill sets, and interests, and we need to provide educational programs and support that cultivate success for all students. The existing academic program choices appropriately emphasize diploma requirements interlaced with career and technical education, as well as dual credit opportunities. This scope of programming is being expanded to help students complete career pathways and/or earn 30 college credits. SCM needs to continue to refine and improve the four-year advisory loop that supports the teaching and development of soft skills, offers mentoring and provides individualized support from a dedicated teacher.

There is a need for a different strategy to transition eighth graders to Mishawaka High School as ninth grade students. Research shows that a successful freshman year experience is one of the largest predictors of high school completion and graduation. The group supports the addition of a transition program to existing summer programs (Early College Summer Bridge, Summer School, Summer Camps). This summer program could be provided as an inquiry/exploratory experience that would increase both engagement and success for ninth grade students. Currently, all freshmen are enrolled in Preparing for College and Careers as an exploratory course, leading to the identification of a college/career exploratory pathway.

All of the support and attention on transitioning students to successful high school completion can be achieved by creating Smaller Learning Communities (SLC) in ninth grade to create an intensive and intentional team of teachers working collaboratively to support each learner. This proposed “teaming” concept is similar to the teaming currently implemented at John Young Middle School. Teaming will allow the core content teachers (Math, Science, and Language Arts) to have the same students, which enhances the team’s ability to directly and indirectly support the students. In addition to teaming teachers, there is potential for a counselor and/or administrator loop in grades ten to twelve to provide a more personalized support system for students.

The information below shows a diagram of the intentional supports provided to freshmen, the potential for Smaller Learning Communities and ultimately the associated pathway options available to students.



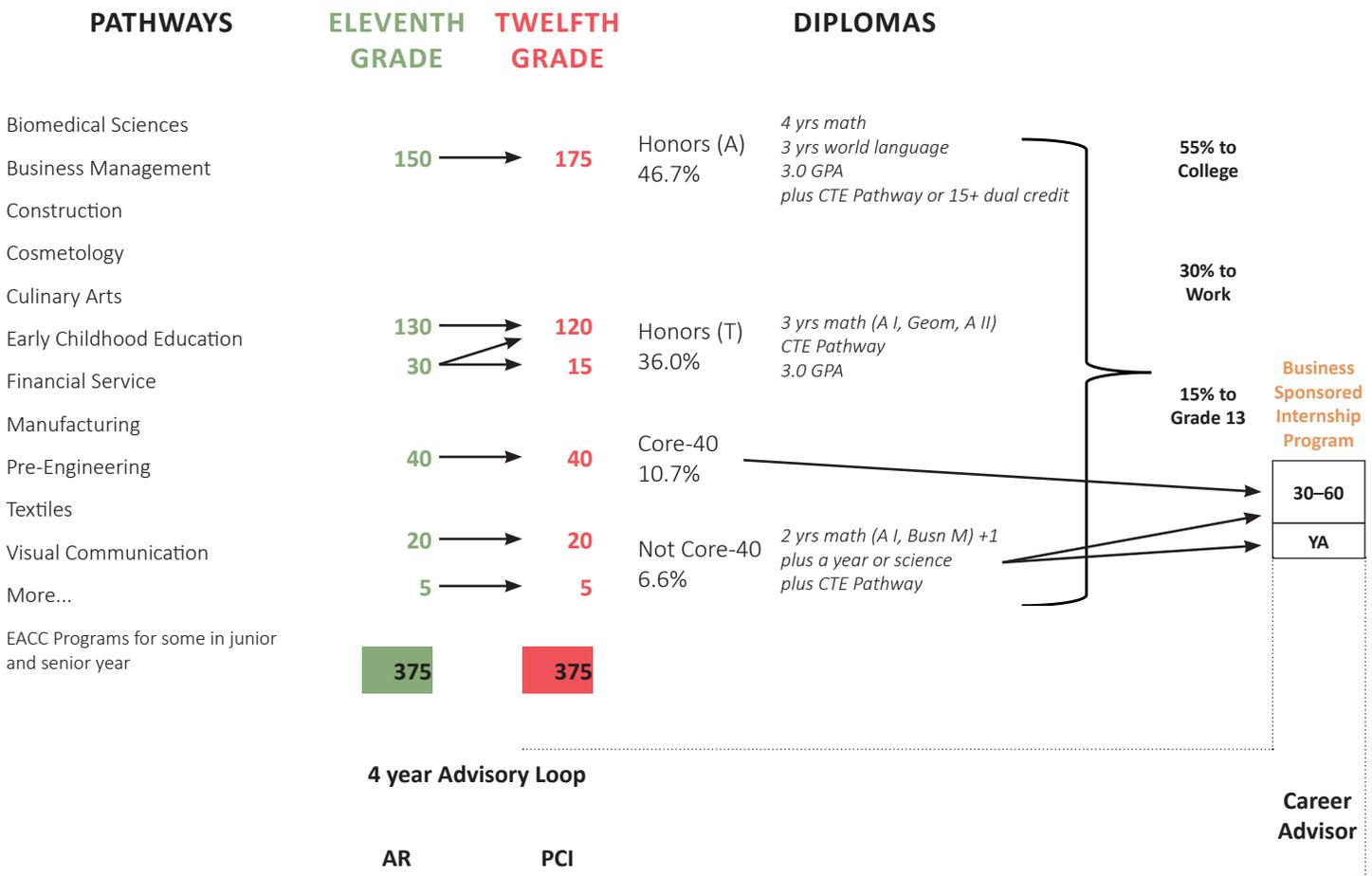
This group also focused on the need for transitioning SCM students from twelfth grade into college, careers and life. The goal for Mishawaka High School is to ensure that all students successfully complete high school and have a meaningful capstone experience in the twelfth grade that prepares them to be:

- College Ready (approximately 55%)
- Work Ready (approximately 30%)
- Life Ready (approximately 15%)*

**A small percentage of students will go into the Young Adult Program at Battell Center post twelfth grade.*

**The remaining 10+% will continue preparing to become "Work Ready" in a year thirteen paid internship supported program.*

The information below depicts how the pathway structure leads to the variety of meaningful senior capstone experiences as well as diploma track completion. Students who still need additional support beyond high school would be provided experience in a year thirteen business partnership paid internship program.



The group does agree that more refinement is necessary to bring community business partners into the fold for a Grade 13 paid internship. The community partners can help SCM by partnering through internships, coursework, and developing the soft skills necessary to go directly into the workforce. In addition, in collaboration with community partners, an SCM workplace certificate can be awarded to students upon graduation. The intention of strengthening these community partnerships will be to not only create pathways of career explorations, but also pipelines for skilled and competent future employees. This certification will mean that the student has accomplished the prerequisite coursework required by the community, making them eligible for entry level positions for those businesses that partner with SCM.

The information below depicts the numerous challenges identified and resolved to assist incoming freshman with their transition to Mishawaka High School. Identifying issues with transitions and the “Whole Child” does not stop at the elementary or middle school level. Additional training for all staff and enhanced community partnerships will be integral to overall solutions.

CHALLENGES



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND ADVISORY/STUDENT SUPPORTS:

- Curriculum development and refinement to support freshmen cohort “teaming”
- Additional FTE’s may be necessary to run schedule effectively

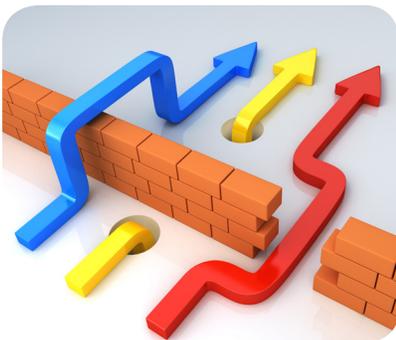
LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- Financial resources for professional development as well as sustained leadership for all MHS staff

CAREER PATHWAYS EXPLORATION:

- Identify space within MHS for the Career Pathway initiative
- Additional FTE to implement and monitor progress toward pathway completion
- Community/workforce collaboration on database and skill refinements

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND ADVISORY/STUDENT SUPPORTS:

- Purchase of curriculum or curriculum mapping, development, and refinement by teachers and guidance counselors to reduce negative outcomes during the freshmen transition to MHS
- Utilize Behavior Intervention Specialist and SJRMC resources to implement strategies targeted at the “Whole Child”

LEADERSHIP AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

- Train the trainer model or individualized professional development for Teacher Leaders

CAREER PATHWAYS EXPLORATION:

- Modify current MHS space to meet the requests of our community partners

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Grade Level
Transition Issues
and Solutions

Research indicates that some students experience difficulties adjusting to new schools, new teachers, new course work, and new classmates. Estimates suggest 20-25% of students change schools each year, and these figures do not include moving to an entirely new school district. Being a new student at school can be especially difficult. Youngsters entering a new school are confronted with multiple transition challenges.

(“Supporting Students in Their Transition to Middle School” AMLE, <http://www.npsd.org>).

SCM has three primary transition concerns in addressing school adjustment problems. The concerns are:

1. Providing targeted educational programming;
2. Implementing “Whole Child” social/emotional learning initiatives; and
3. Providing human resource supports for transitions.

PROVIDING TARGETED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Beyond the most obvious daily transitions, SCM has to be intentional in how we prepare students programmatically, even prior to their very first school transition. As specifically outlined in the Pre-K-5 work group, an increased focus on Pre-K programming can certainly help those students transition into school. Kindergarten teachers can quickly tell the difference between the students that have had quality day care and school experiences and those that have not. Those that have not typically have a more difficult transition into school. To help develop healthy children, a renewed focus on additional Pre-K programming is necessary. For families that may not be able to take advantage of Pre-K programming, increased participation in the Kindergarten Warm-Up summer school program funded by United Way is another excellent example of an SCM partnership, that improves student learning outcomes for the initial transition into school.

As early as the second semester (March 1, 2018), SCM believes there are opportunities to improve adolescent learning programmatically. SCM will implement plans to have current sixth grade teachers collaborate more closely with John Young Middle School seventh grade teachers so that transition obstacles to John Young can be identified, anticipated, and minimized. Currently, the time for these grade levels to collaborate instructionally are extremely limited and haphazard.

To best serve the needs of adolescent learners, SCM elementary school building leaders will be encouraged to “team” their fifth and sixth grade classroom configurations. It is believed that this configuration might further assist students in understanding the instructional differences they will encounter when they enter middle school where students may have different instructors for different content areas. Lastly, further refinement in curriculum mapping needs to take place in additional content areas and grade levels so that transient students within SCM elementary schools are in line with one another. The curriculum mapping has taken place for K-5 math and science, but needs further expansion.

When a student struggles during a transition period during their freshman year at Mishawaka High School, the school is predominantly reactive to their needs. A more relevant strategy is to engage eighth grade students with Mishawaka High School teachers and guidance staff. This interaction will not only help transitioning students feel more comfortable, but will also provide a great venue to discuss the graduation pathways that the SBOE may implement as early as the fall of 2018. In addition, providing professional development through structured PLC’s will help staff identify student needs.

Research suggests that a successful freshman year experience is one of the largest predictors of high school completion and graduation. Of the ideas discussed, there is support for the addition of a transition program to existing summer programs (Early College Summer Bridge, Summer School, Summer Camps). This summer program could be provided in an inquiry/exploratory experience that would increase both engagement and success for ninth grade students. Currently, all freshmen are enrolled in Preparing for College and Careers as an exploratory course, leading to the identification of a college/career exploratory pathway.

While some students handle the transition into a new school well, it can be expected that some will not. Those entering late in a school year often find it especially hard to connect and adjust. Making new friends at school requires finding ways to be accepted into a complex social scene that now includes social media. Teachers often find it difficult to determine how to pick up with a student’s academic program and how to connect with and engage the student in classroom activity.

IMPLEMENTING “WHOLE CHILD” SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL LEARNING INITIATIVES

An equally important issue that needs SCM’s immediate attention relates to the “Whole Child.” The “Whole Child” approach fundamentally believes that each child deserves to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. The “Whole Child” approach is not new educational jargon, but is a system that has been propelled into the spotlight for several reasons. The demands of the 21st Century require a new approach to education to fully prepare students to be college, career, and citizenship ready. Research, practice, and common sense confirm that a “Whole Child” approach to education will develop and prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow by addressing students’ comprehensive needs today. Educators generally want to improve the work they do for students, families, and their community. Though SCM cannot be responsible for the entire child, through services provided to students and families, SCM would like to provide opportunities to improve the quality of life for our students and their families.

Research also confirms that students perform better in school when they are emotionally and physically healthy. Generally these students miss fewer classes, are less likely to be engaged in risky and antisocial behavior, concentrate more, and achieve higher academic standards. If SCM is going to commit to the “Whole Child” concept, it will be an all or nothing approach to promote learning and the practice of healthy lifestyles. This may include, but is not limited to: access to mental health services, healthy menus at school, regular recess, physical and health education, school counseling, intramural programming, and access to basic health care services.

(“The Whole Child - Healthy” <http://www.wholechildeducation.org/about/healthy>)

PROVIDING HUMAN RESOURCE SUPPORT FOR TRANSITIONS

Starting school, changing schools, moving to the next grade level, during lunch, and when encountering hassles before and after school, students (and their families) are confronted with a variety of transitions every day and throughout each year of schooling. Transitions are critical times. Transitional problems can be viewed as stemming from external or internal factors or both. Whatever the cause, transition stressors can be barriers to school adjustment and thus learning and teaching. They also can exacerbate other factors that interfere with learning at school. Such stressors can lead students and their families, especially those who are particularly vulnerable, to behave in counterproductive ways.

The experiences of the adolescent learner can have life-shaping consequences. While the challenges are significant, addressing the transition to middle school presents opportunities to prevent problems and enable learning. A comprehensive approach to supporting daily transitions involves interventions within classrooms and school-wide, focusing on the full range of transitions (including daily transitions such as before school, changing classes, breaks, lunch, after school).

Supports through educational programming to improve engagement and social support are key, which is why something as monumental as the TCU Innovation Lab is one piece of the transition puzzle. This space will be an opportunity for students to collaborate with one another, have hands-on activities, and showcase their unique talents. In addition to programmatic changes, professional development to help prepare staff for the diagnosis and treatment of transitional issues will also be key. Though many of the social support structures are seen as part of the job description of the guidance counselor, new ownership needs to be placed with all staff to assist in these supports at all transition levels.

(“About School Adjustment” <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/adjust2.pdf>)

TRANSITION SUMMARY

SCM believes that proper preparation for transitions will provide numerous benefits specifically targeted at improving the lives of students. Numerous moving parts exist in planning for these transitions, but through increased professional development targeting the social/emotional needs of the “Whole Child”, SCM leadership is confident that the plan can be executed effectively. Further collaboration with field experts such as the Behavior Intervention Specialist will provide additional insight and leadership capacity. The proposed grade level configurations (Pre-K-5, 6-8, 9-13) are largely supported by the individual work groups and senior leadership, due to these proposed grade levels providing additional opportunities to support students in the future.

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Capacity Analysis for SCM

Much of the discussion around capacity is formed around several general administrative guidelines that have been in place since the fall of 2015. First, SCM adopted class size targets for all SCM elementary schools. Kindergarten and first grade have a targeted class size of 22 students, while grades two and three have a targeted size of 24 students, and grades four, five, and six have a targeted size of 26. Second, SCM has a goal to grow Mishawaka Schools by at least 100 additional students per year. Lastly, the current seven elementary, one middle, and one high school facility are the nine buildings SCM looks to utilize for at least the next five years. It is estimated that if 60 out of the 100 additional students were to attend elementary school, SCM would likely be close to 95% building capacity within two to three years.

PRE-K – 5 WORK GROUP

Current capacity is not a problem for growth at the elementary schools, but could be in the future if SCM continues to gain 100 students per academic year. Liberty is the only building that is near capacity in all of the general education classrooms. Battell, Beiger, Emmons, Hums, LaSalle and Twin Branch all have additional capacity prior to reaching SCM’s targeted class sizes. Currently, the six buildings listed do have additional capacity for the expansion of early childhood, but some of those spaces may be utilized for K-5 general education classrooms. Over the next three years, intentional strategic planning will be necessary to add additional K-5 general education classes throughout SCM while leaving growth potential for Pre-K programming. Once the 1:1 device initiative is completed, computer lab spaces may be potential options for additional classroom spaces.

If grade six were to move out of the elementary buildings and into a middle school setting, several rooms would be available for additional Pre-K-5 programming. The group believes that the additional space at the buildings would be best utilized for expansion of elementary makerspaces and early childhood classes. Both types of expansions would require additional dollars, but the group believes the learning enhancements would specifically benefit all of the Pre-K-5 learners long term.

The Pre-K-5 Work Group examined potential rooms that might be available for future school corporation expansion at the elementary levels.

POTENTIAL AVAILABLE ROOMS

SCHOOL	POTENTIAL AVAILABLE ROOMS	CURRENT USE	POTENTIAL AVAILABLE W/O SIXTH GRADE	COMPUTER LABS (AVAILABILITY IN FUTURE)
Battell	0		2	2
Beiger	0		3	2
Emmons	1	Open	3	0
Hums	1	Open	3	2
LaSalle	3 1	Intervention Homework	3	3
Liberty	0		1	2
Twin Branch	0		1	1

6 – 8 WORK GROUP

The physical capacity for John Young Middle School is a complex issue that cannot be stated too simplistically. John Young Middle School may indeed have the capacity to hold 1200 total students; however, having 1200 students at John Young Middle School creates some immediate concerns that would influence the quality of instructional and educational services to students and families. Below are some of the most pressing concerns with the facility as it is currently configured:

JOHN YOUNG MIDDLE SCHOOL “FACILITY CAPACITY & UTILIZATION STUDY”

April 26, 2016
Dr. Kenneth Blad

CLASSROOMS		86%
General Classrooms	40 x 28 = 1120	963
Computer Labs	3 x 30 = 90	77
Fine/Practical Arts	6 x 28 = 168	144
P.E. (Gym)	2 x 30 = 60	52
	TOTAL	1438 x .86 = 1236

“At the middle school level the consultant used a scheduling factor of 86% based upon the fact that the teachers have a seven period day in which each teacher has one preparation period. Therefore, teachers have six teaching periods divided by seven total periods equalling an 86% scheduling factor (6/7 = 86%). Classroom capacity standards for the middle school were set at a 28 student maximum class size for regular classroom spaces.”

The contents of this report rely heavily on the work of Dr. Kenneth Blad in his “Facility Capacity & Utilization Study” presented to the School City of Mishawaka Board of School Trustees on April 26, 2016.

The 6-8 work group seeks to accomplish three objectives through this report:

1. Explain the process and variables of a building capacity calculation
2. Review building usage and 2017-2018 master schedule
3. Encourage stakeholders to calculate JYMS building capacities for enrollment scenarios of their own design

THE CALCULATION JOHN YOUNG MIDDLE SCHOOL

TS x ACS x SF = Building Enrollment Capacity

TS = Teaching Spaces
ACS = Average Class Size
SF = Scheduling Factor

- Classroom spaces would be utilized at all times, including teacher prep times. This would mean that teacher prep times would most likely have to be in a space outside of their classroom. In addition, several teachers would have to function on a cart from room to room.
- The cafeteria would need to have increased capacity to hold a grade level at a time or additional lunch shifts would need to be added.
- Whole school convocations would be difficult to hold without half of the students seated on the gym floor.
- Student ingress and egress logistics with the start and end of the school day would present problems.
- Staffing considerations would come into play, as a new grade level would require additional “Core” and “Exploratory” teachers to fulfill the student coursework available.

The 6-8 work group was very thorough in their analysis of building capacity, staff, and programming. Below is some of the data that highlights their thoughts:

AVERAGE CLASS SIZE

2014-2015	742 / 41 = 18.1
2015-2016	708 / 44 = 16.1
2016-2017	753 / 45 = 16.7
2017-2018	805 / 48 = 16.8
2018-2019	1200 / 50* = 24.0

**50 Total classroom spaces available at JYMS*

2017 – 2018 STAFFING AT JOHN YOUNG MIDDLE SCHOOL

Math	6	Pe/Health	6		
Math Lab	1	Foreign Language	2		
ELA	6	Art	1		
Read 180	1	Music/Choir	2		
Science	6	Band/Orchestra	1.5		
Social Studies	6	Construction/FACs	2		
SPED	4	PLTW	2		
JRC	1	Practical Skills	1		
CORE	31	EXPLORATORY	17.5	TOTAL FTEs	48.5

PREPARING FOR SIXTH GRADE

(Projected)

	2017-2018 FTEs	FTEs ADDED WITH SIXTH	TOTAL
Core Content	31	15*	46
Exploratory	17.5	5**	22.5
Total	48.5	20	68.5

* 12 Core, 2 SPED, 1 Intervention
**1 Coding, 1 Art, 1 Music, 1 Dance/Drama, 1 PE

ANTICIPATED NEEDS FOR 2018 – 2019, IF JOHN YOUNG MIDDLE SCHOOL WERE 6 – 8

Classroom Needs:

- Core Content classrooms located in designated “grade level” areas
- Access to exploratory classes

Associated Needs:

- Safe, orderly passing patterns
- Lunchroom
- Student drop-off/pick-up
- Cocurricular offerings
- Athletics

9 – 13 WORK GROUP

The maximum capacity of Mishawaka High School is approximately 2,000 students according to the Blad Utilization Study completed on April 26, 2016. Currently (fall 2017), Mishawaka High School has approximately 1,500 students. Depending on the type of programming that may be created with the assistance of the community, it appears that classroom spaces for additional programming and students are available. Mishawaka High School has plenty of “typical” classroom spaces for academic classroom needs. They may need to think outside the box if the community has specific workplace certifications requiring space beyond what is available within the confines of Mishawaka High School.

BUILDING CAPACITY AND CONSIDERATIONS

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility Capacity & Utilization Study
<i>April 26, 2016</i> • MHS Capacity Determination
<i>July 24, 2017</i> • Came to the same conclusion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MHS Capacity is approximately 2,000 students • However, this does not completely address room/course specialization • A dedicated careers space would require reassignment of some existing rooms |
|---|---|

IMPACT ON SCHOOL CULTURE, CLIMATE, AND STUDENT LEARNING

Career Pathways Exploration: Outcomes

- Increased pathway completion
- Broaden scope of foundational courses for pathway exploration
- Simplified scheduling and improved communications with stakeholders

part

5

Recommendations
for SCM's
Preferred Future

After months of discussions and deliberations within the work groups, School City of Mishawaka leadership believes there are numerous viable options and recommendations for the Superintendent and the SCM Board of School Trustees to consider with the grade level realignment. The leadership team believes the focus should be on the Preferred Future for School City of Mishawaka. The Preferred Future portion of the study will come in the form of recommendations to the Superintendent and the SCM Board of School Trustees.

PRE-K – 5 OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As identified in the Pre-K-5 work group, an increased focus on Pre-K programming can certainly benefit student readiness for kindergarten. For families that may not be able to take advantage of increased Pre-K programming, participation in the Kindergarten Warm-Up summer school program funded by United Way is another excellent example of a partnership that improves student learning outcomes for the initial transition into school.

SCM plans to implement the “Whole Child” approach by leveraging a host of community partners to provide support for identified students. SCM’s recent partnership with St. Joseph Health System will add a Behavior Intervention Specialist and a Wellness Coordinator to support this strategic objective. The Behavior Intervention Specialist will interface with the services provided by SCM social workers and guidance counselors. It is projected that this collaboration will create more continuity throughout the school corporation, specifically shoring up SCM’s Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (PBIS) process.

PRE-K – 5 OPTIONS

- A. **SCM leaves sixth grade in each elementary building, with a focus on transitions and a vision for the future which includes a second middle school option.** The advantage of this option is that it provides ample time for planning, communication, and community engagement. The earliest a second middle school option will be possible is between 2023 and 2025. The disadvantage of this option is that it limits the potential growth of Pre-K programming.
- B. **SCM moves sixth grade to John Young Middle School.** One advantage to this strategy is that the members of the group believe that sixth grade students, as adolescent learners, fit best with seventh and eighth grade students. Another advantage to this strategy is that increased elementary building capacity would be created if a grade level were removed. This increased capacity will open numerous opportunities to build robust Pre-K programming. A disadvantage to this strategy is that 1200 students in the current John Young Middle School structure may not be beneficial to improved student learning outcomes and the education of these students.

PRE-K – 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

SCM Senior Leadership recommends “Option A”. This option leaves the sixth grade in their current elementary buildings while also providing time to implement and refine many of the transition and “Whole Child” initiatives outlined. It also keeps 1200 students from potentially crowding John Young Middle School over the next 5 years.

Recommendation 2:

The recommendation of an additional Pre-K classroom is recommended for implementation at LaSalle for the 2018 – 2019 school year. Additional expansion of early childhood beyond LaSalle will depend largely on Pre-K accreditation (each site has to be accredited separately) and elementary building level capacity.

Recommendation 3:

As mentioned earlier in the report, the Pre-K-5 work group believes that continued space is available in several SCM elementary schools for expansion of programming through the 2021 – 2022 school year. During this time, it will be important to refine curriculum and reorganize instruction for fifth and sixth grade students. SCM elementary schools will be encouraged to “team” their fifth and sixth grade classroom configurations. It is believed that this reconfiguration might further assist students in their transition to John Young Middle School.

6 – 8 OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As early as the second semester (March 1, 2018), SCM believes that opportunities exist to improve adolescent learning programmatically. SCM will implement plans to have current sixth grade teachers collaborate more closely with John Young Middle School seventh grade teachers so that transition obstacles to John Young Middle School can be identified, anticipated, and minimized. Currently, the time for these grade levels to collaborate instructionally are extremely limited. Some work group members have associated the current elementary to John Young Middle School transition as purely “a John Young Middle School issue”. Assisting the staff, students, and parents in understanding that this transition is an SCM team approach should improve outcomes for all SCM stakeholders.

6 – 8 OPTIONS

- A. **SCM leaves the grade level configuration as it is currently.** An advantage to this strategy is that it provides time for “teaming” to become a consistent methodology implemented at John Young Middle School. It also provides time for the new TCU Innovation Lab and media center maker space to be re-imagined and redesigned. A disadvantage of this strategy is that it delays the full complement of supports to sixth grade students as adolescent learners.
- B. **SCM moves sixth grade to John Young Middle School.** An advantage to this strategy is that sixth grade students will be exposed to expanded curricular offerings and social/emotional support systems. The sixth grade students will also have the opportunity to collaborate in the new TCU Innovation Lab. Another advantage to this strategy is that it will create additional building capacity for the elementary buildings. This increased capacity will open up numerous opportunities to build robust Pre-K programming. A disadvantage to this strategy is that 1200 students in the current John Young Middle School structure may not be beneficial to improved student learning outcomes and the education of these students.
- C. **SCM leaves sixth grade in their elementary buildings, focuses on transitions, and casts a vision for the future which includes a second middle school option.** The advantage of this option is that it provides ample time for planning, communication, and community engagement prior to a move of sixth grade into the middle school setting. The earliest a second middle school option will be possible is between 2023 and 2025. Each middle school will have a student population of 600 students or more. With two middle schools, SCM can examine options to provide early pathways to students prior to the graduation pathways they may choose at Mishawaka High School. (This is actually a current recommendation from the Pathways Panel recently adopted by the SBOE.) The disadvantage of this option is that it limits the potential growth of Pre-K programming.

6 – 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

SCM Senior Leadership recommends “Option C”. This option leaves sixth grade in their current elementary buildings and leaves grades seven and eight at John Young Middle School. In addition to facility concerns, John Young Middle School will continue to make educational and organizational improvements to enhance student learning. One of these educational programming initiatives is the move to “teaming” in the core subject areas at John Young Middle School. Another educational improvement is the new TCU Innovation Lab, which is expected to be operational in the fall of 2018. This recommendation provides time to implement and refine many of the transition and “Whole Child” initiatives outlined. It also keeps 1200 students from potentially crowding John Young Middle School over the next five years.

During the work group discussions, it was noted that the 6-8 grade configuration is the ideal configuration for SCM’s Preferred Future. In discussion with senior leadership, one option that should be considered is the addition of a second middle school. The ideal location of the middle school may be somewhere on the east side of Mishawaka. If SCM is to build a second middle school to house grades six to eight, John Young will also house grades six to eight. Both buildings will contain more than 600 students. After the fiscal cliff has run the course on SCM’s debt service fund, the fund is projected to be reduced in 2023. At that point in time, it will be possible to go to the community for a substantial capital referendum for a second middle school. The capital referendum proposed in 2023 is estimated to have an incremental tax rate very close to the 2019 projected debt service rate. The tax impact for this proposed capital referendum will be less than \$0.05 due to previous debt obligations being paid off in 2023 and 2024. This debt would not appear on the debt service rate until 2024 at the earliest.

Recommendation 2:

Organize and deliver instruction to adolescent learners differently; specifically grades five and six. SCM elementary schools will be encouraged to “team” their fifth and sixth grade classroom configurations for at least two of the four core content areas (Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies). It is believed that this reconfiguration might further assist students in understanding the organizational structure and educational delivery approach they will experience at the middle school level.

Recommendation 3:

SCM transportation will need to be reconfigured to effectively execute a two middle school operation. The current transportation fund and bus replacement fund will not fiscally support the proposed reconfigured student transportation system. The current operating levy approved by taxpayers in November 2016 expires at the end of the 2023 calendar year. It is suggested that the Board of School Trustees consider renewing the operating levy at some tax rate level prior to the expiration of the levy at the end of 2023. One of the line items in the 2024 renewal operating levy could be transportation to support the increased costs of the proposed transportation system reconfiguration to efficiently implement the proposed middle school operation. The proposed reconfigured transportation system is essential to balancing student demographics between John Young Middle School and the proposed new middle school. Balancing student demographics between the two middle schools is critical as Mishawaka Schools strive to continue their excellence.

The proposed reconfigured transportation system will be designed on a “spoked wheel” approach. Middle school students and their families will be responsible to get to and from their nearest neighborhood elementary school each day. Students will be transported to and from each middle school each day. Students living within a mile of either middle school will walk to their respective middle school. A late bus will be available to transport students who are participants in co-curricular and extracurricular programs from each middle school. This approach does not include home to home or neighborhood pickup.

9 – 13 OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Currently, when a student struggles during a transition period during their freshman year at Mishawaka High School the student needs are met in a reactionary manner. A more strategic approach would create more eighth grade student interaction with Mishawaka High School teachers and guidance staff. This approach would not only help transitioning students feel more comfortable, but would also provide a great venue to discuss the graduation pathways that the SBOE may implement as early as the fall of 2018. Providing professional development through existing PLC’s that will help staff identify student needs will also be a top priority. The recommendation for creating Smaller Learning Communities at the ninth grade level will allow for the delivery of summer transition experiences, personalized contact and support by a team of teachers, an administrator and a guidance counselor, as well as the supports provided through a structured advisory curriculum and career exploration.

9 – 13 OPTIONS

- A. **SCM continues with the existing Mishawaka High School structure.** An advantage to this strategy is that it provides consistency with what our current students and families expect. It also does not necessitate additional staff. A disadvantage is that it does not fully address student transition issues from eighth grade to ninth grade, may not prepare students to best meet new state mandated graduation requirements, and continues to leave some of our students ill prepared to transition to life after high school.
- B. **SCM adds a “focus on transitions at Mishawaka High School”.** This focus should include transitions into high school at the ninth grade level, into College and Career pathway exploration, and into successful post-secondary roles. The advantage to this strategy is that it is purely student focused on the “Whole Child” and ensuring student success through systematic supports and programmatic structures at Mishawaka High School.

The following three initiatives will further position Mishawaka High School staff and leadership to effectively serve students:

- a. Incoming freshmen will be provided a supportive Smaller Learning Community environment and intentional curriculum to ensure successful student transition into high school through personalized staff mentor relationships and a focus on social/emotional learning.
- b. Students in grades 10-12 will participate in robust college and career pathways centered on inquiry based learning, course and skill exploration, completion of either an Academic Honors or Technical Honors diploma, and ultimately culminate in a capstone experience that showcases evidence of student skills and mastery learning.
- c. The aforementioned strategies are systematic approaches to ensuring that Mishawaka High School graduates are college, career and life ready. Yet, there is still a need for some students to be provided further support beyond graduation through a “grade 13” community partnership and paid internship program.

9 – 13 RECOMMEDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

SCM Senior Leadership recommends “Option B”. It is recommended that SCM execute a plan for incoming ninth grade students that provides “teaming” or Smaller Learning Communities for staff and students. John Young Middle School has shown success with the implementation of teaming. Much of that success is credited to the additional support structure that students currently have on their core team. A similar methodology needs to be created and executed for Mishawaka High School ninth graders. Students entering Mishawaka High School will be placed in SLCs allowing a small group of cross-discipline teachers to collaboratively focus on the success of each individual student, addressing the needs of the “Whole Child” beyond academics. Additionally, ninth grade students would be supported through the intentional placement of a social/emotional curriculum focused on age appropriate issues that many students struggle with, negatively impacting student’s ability to be successful in high school. This structured curriculum will be provided through the advisory period, by one of their SLC teachers with which their have a strong relationship and connection. It is believed that this type of structure will help in building the “Whole Child” experience while creating a smooth transition during grade nine and beyond.

Recommendation 2:

The State of Indiana is advocating for changes in diploma requirements that include an increased focus on career pathways. While Mishawaka High School has successfully laid the groundwork to transition to new state diploma requirements, there is a need for expanded college and career exploration pathways, programs, courses and relevant and authentic experiences outside of the classroom. In the first six months of 2018, the 9-13 work group would like to continue the collaborative discussions that have taken place with community businesses and stakeholders to help grow additional pathways for students to productive careers and life. There is need for a focus on transitioning our students from twelfth grade into college, careers and life. Recommended action steps would include: the continued leveraging of established partnerships as well as a strategic plan for increasing community involvement and business partnerships, completing a program and course audit for career pathways with a focus on filling gaps and providing engaging and relevant courses for students in high demand career pathways, and creating meaningful senior experiences that provide relevant hands-on learning opportunities in the career pathways. The goal for Mishawaka High School is to ensure that all students successfully complete high school and that selected students have a meaningful capstone experience in the twelfth grade.

Recommendation 3:

While it is our goal to ensure that all Mishawaka High School students are college, career or life ready, there are some students who are still in need of further support beyond graduation. It is recommended that Mishawaka High School create a “Grade 13” program to support graduating seniors who are not yet career ready. The Adult Education Program will meet the need of a very small group of Mishawaka High School students who need further support becoming life ready. For the remaining students who are not career ready, currently there is no additional support beyond graduation. “Grade 13”, in collaboration with our business and community partners, will allow Mishawaka High School students in need of further support gain and practice work skills in paid internship settings. Which may result in full time employment upon successful completion. The “Grade 13” initiative will be further developed during the 2018 calendar year. This initiative has the potential to be far more than a workforce development project.



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