

District 97 Middle School Master Schedule Redesign Update

Board of Education Meeting
Jan. 14, 2024



What's our big idea?





Middle School Schedule Redesign

January 2025

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2024-25 District 97 Transformation Goals

We Learn, Lead and Celebrate Together

Our District Culture
ALL Employee Professional Learning

We Design for ALL

Elementary Core Instruction Foundations
Middle School Redesign

We Align Resources

Master Facilities Plan
Comprehensive Safety Plan

We Learn Everywhere

Portrait of an Oak Park 8th Grade Graduate
Early Childhood Education



Our Vision for Middle School Transformation

Tier 1 Practices/Behavior Expectations

Create alignment and clarity in social, emotional, and behavioral support systems across both middle schools.

Supportive Transitions

Ensure students are prepared for transitions to and from middle school (e.g., Middle School Connection).

School Improvement Logic Models

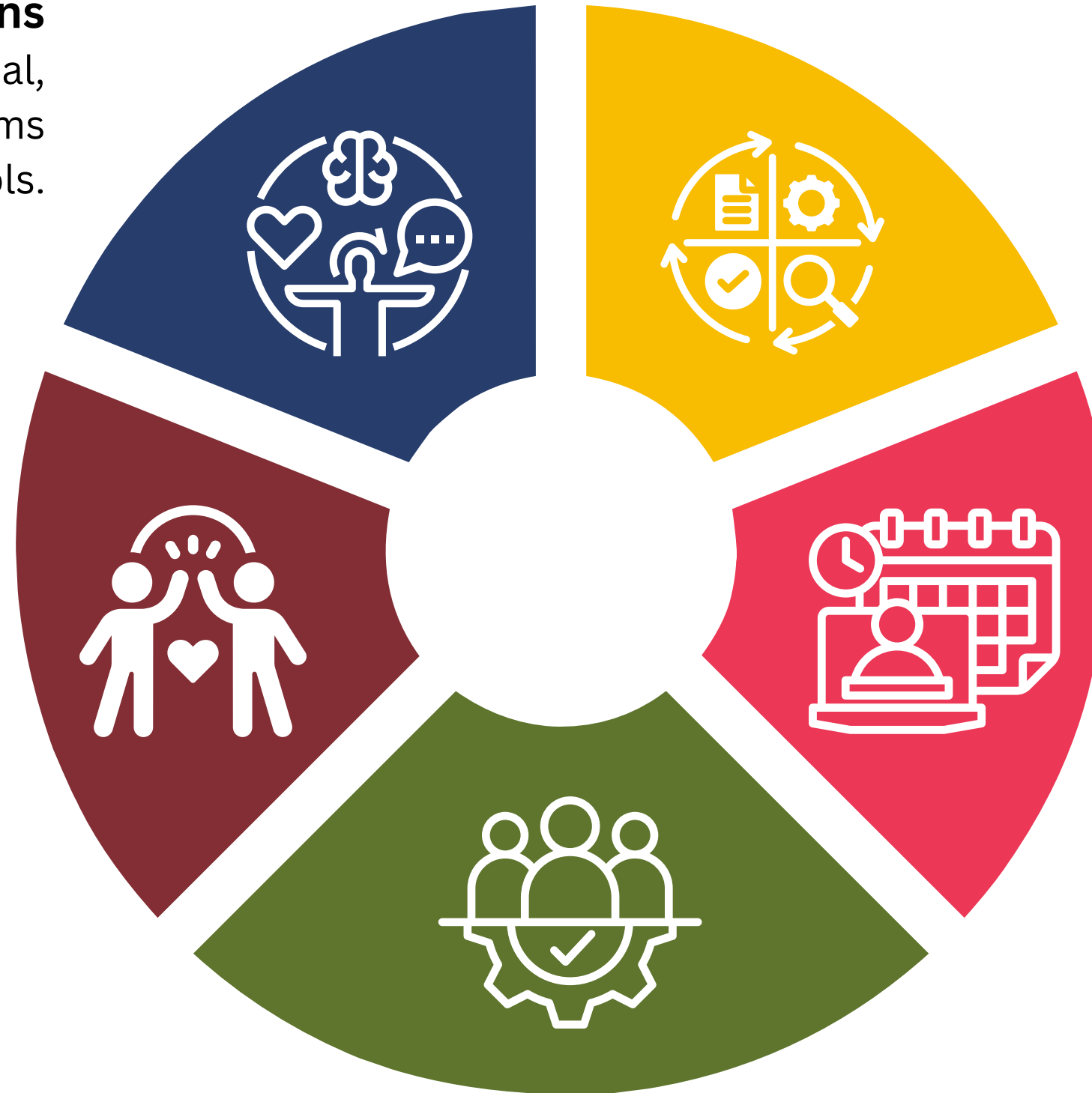
Engage school-level teams in identifying resources, adult practices, and professional learning opportunities that lead to high-quality core instructional practices.

Schedule Redesign

Collaboratively design schedule that aligns with best practices, as well as student and staff needs.

Staffing

Align resources to better support student success.





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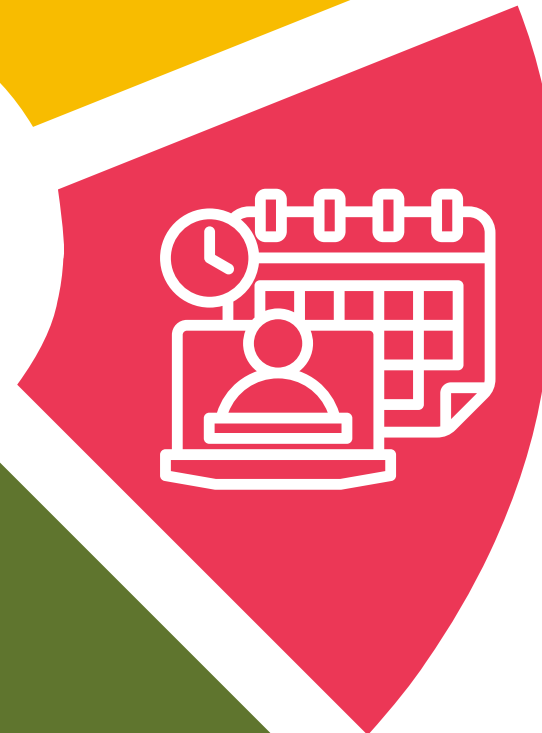
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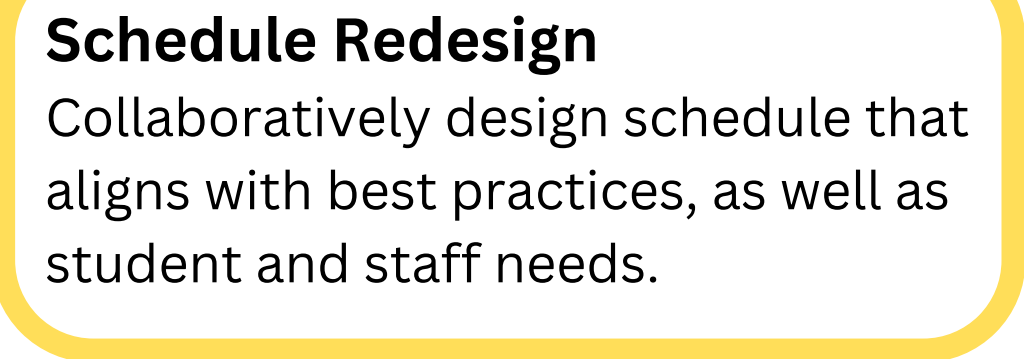
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Staffing

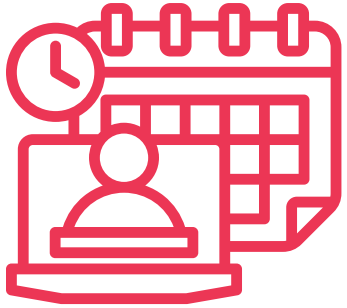
Align resources to better support student success.



Tonight's Update



Middle School Schedule Redesign



Our Vision: Universal Student Success

In D97, our goal is for **every student to succeed**. This redesign supports that vision by creating consistent structures across both middle schools, ensuring all students have equitable access to a culturally responsive, standards-based curriculum. We believe that by empowering students with voice and choice, we're setting them on a path to lead with confidence as they progress toward graduation.

Our Guiding Principles for Redesign

Guided by the Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), D97's equity policy and Illinois State Board of Education standards, this project is based on creating a school experience that is:

- **Responsive:** Centered on students' unique needs, identities, and voices.
- **Challenging:** Setting high expectations to support each student's growth.
- **Empowering:** Providing opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning.
- **Equitable:** Ensuring inclusive, just learning opportunities for every student.
- **Engaging:** Fostering a relevant, interactive environment that motivates and inspires.

Middle School Schedule Redesign Team





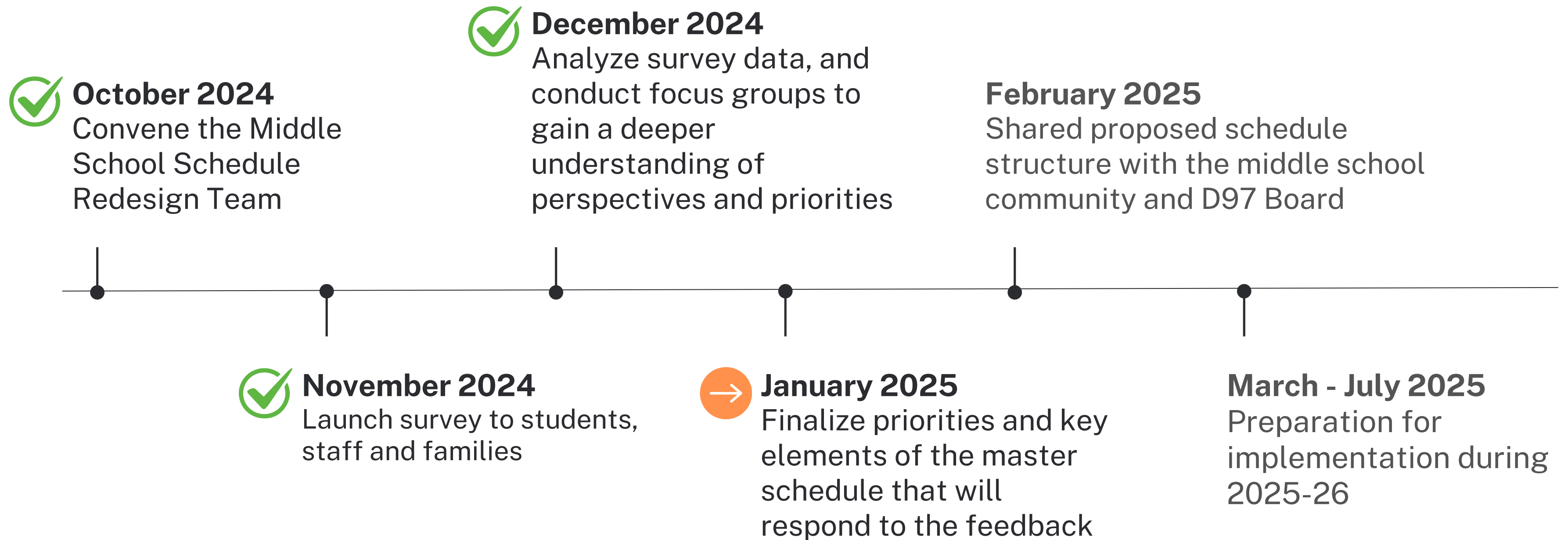
Meet the MS Schedule Redesign Team

Jen Baldassarre - Julian ELA Teacher
Yael Berenson White - MTSS Teacher
Abby Berman - Social Worker
Cate Brinkman - Julian PE/Health Teacher
Michele Capio - Director of UDL
April Capuder - Brooks Principal
Fernando Carrillo - Julian/Brooks Orchestra Teacher
Rahwa Casselle - Julian MTSS Teacher
Emilie Creehan - Director of UDL
Angelica Degante - Brooks Multilingual Teacher
Quinn Ebert - Brooks Math Teacher
Dr. Luis Fernando De León - Assistant Superintendent of Middle Schools
Nick Filipowski - Julian Principal
Tracy Hamm - Director of UDL
Liz Hill - Brooks Special Education Teacher
Katie Kelly - Julian World Language Teacher
Anna Kinnaman - Social Science Teacher

Dr. Tawanda Lawrence - Senior Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Casey Leiby - K-8 Science, Social Science and Special Areas Curriculum Coordinator
Donna Middleton - Senior Director of Student Services
Mallory Mowery - English Language Arts Teacher
Jennifer Nelson - Teacher Librarian
Veena Rajashekar - 6-8 ELA/Math Curriculum Coordinator
Raul Reynoso - Julian Social Science Teacher
Patrick Robinson - Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools
Courtney Southward - Julian Math Teacher
Laura Stamp - Science Teacher
Nichelle Stigger - Student Success Coach
Sergio Torres - Julian Student Success Coach
Samantha Tracy - Julian Special Education Teacher
Lawrence Vincenti - Julian Science Teacher



MS Schedule Redesign Timeline





Role of the Design Team

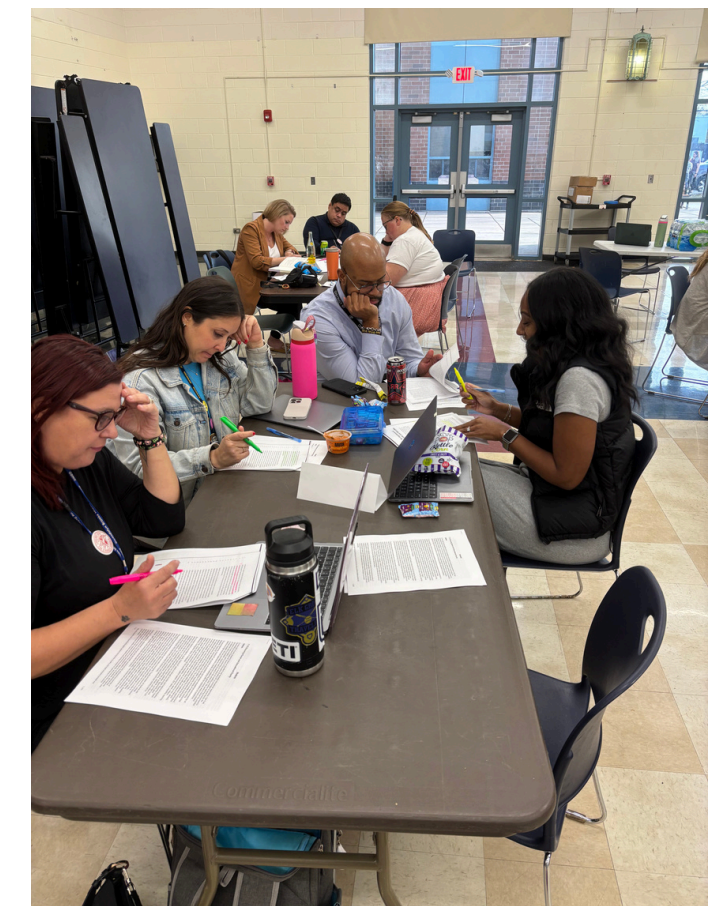
- **Identify beliefs and best practices** that need to be included in a responsive Middle School schedule guided by Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE), and D97 Equity Policy, and ISBE requirements.
- Review, develop and provide feedback on our **engagement plan** for students, parents and staff.
- **Analyze data** collected by our engagement plan and **identify priorities** for building our schedule.
- Possible school visits for team members participating to **see various schedules in action**.
- **Provide feedback on proposed schedules** that meet the identified priorities.





Team's Project Driving Questions

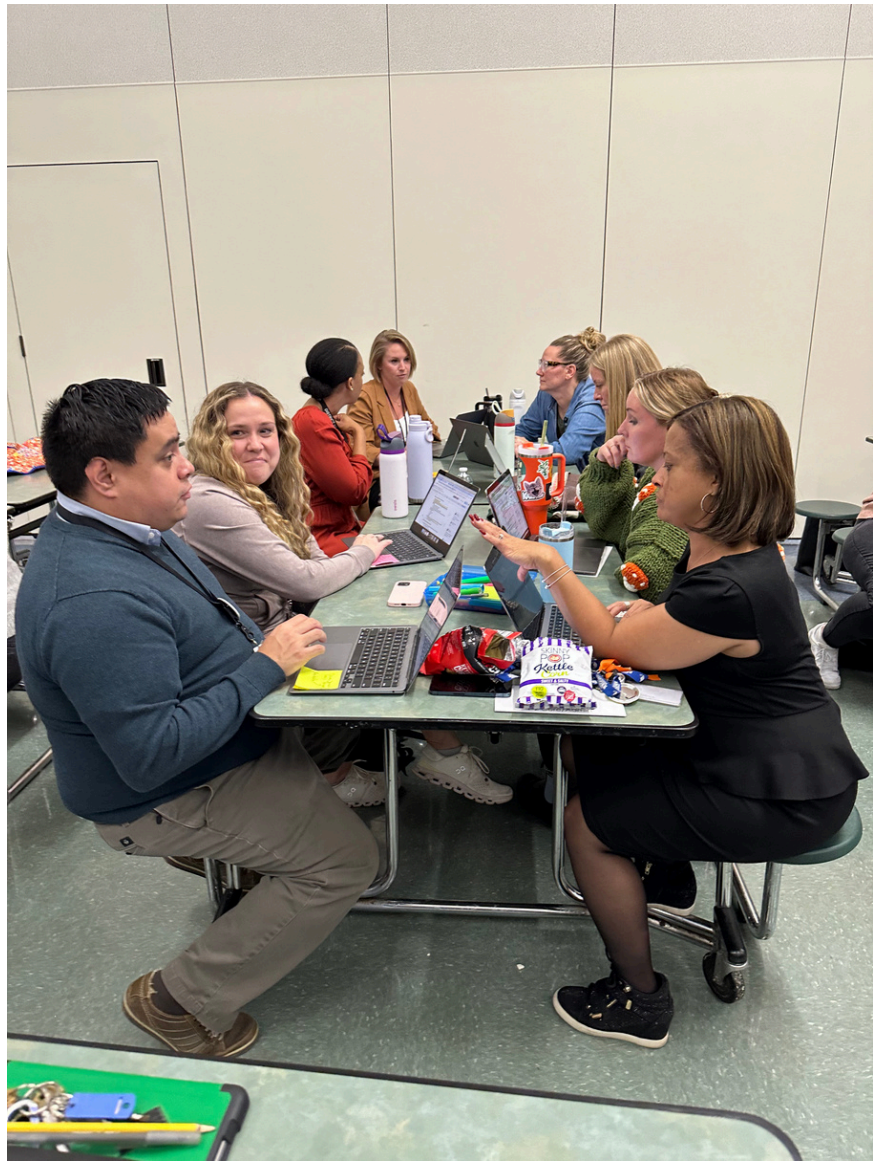
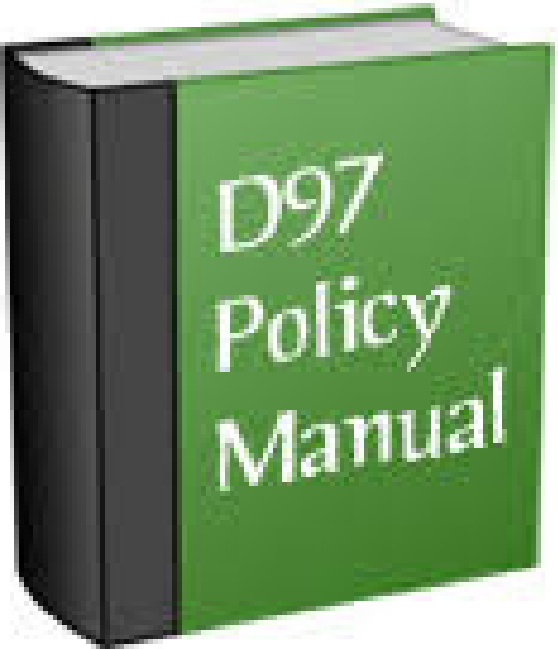
- How are we developing a middle school schedule that is **responsive** to our students and community needs?
- How we ensure that we keep our **students at the front**?
- How are we engaging with each other in this **collective work**?
- How are we engaging and elevating **students voices** in this process?
- How are we engaging and elevating **families voices** in this process?
- How are we leveraging in **best practices** and each other strengths (**staff**)?





Belief Statements

Action Words	Shared Beliefs or Values	Is there a Why?	Is there a How?	Is there a What?	Language Specific to Young Adolescents
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[View All Policies](#)



Our Team's 5 Belief Statements



Our curriculum is rigorous, exploratory, and integrative, offering a diverse and robust selection of elective courses that inspire student curiosity and growth.



Every student's growth and development is supported through intentional systems and structures that promote success.



Strong organizational structures are essential to fostering purposeful learning and building meaningful relationships within our school community.



Each student's academic and personal development is guided by a trusted adult advocate who provides ongoing support and encouragement.



The schedule should prioritize daily opportunities for physical activity in P.E. classes, social interaction, and engaging school-wide programming.

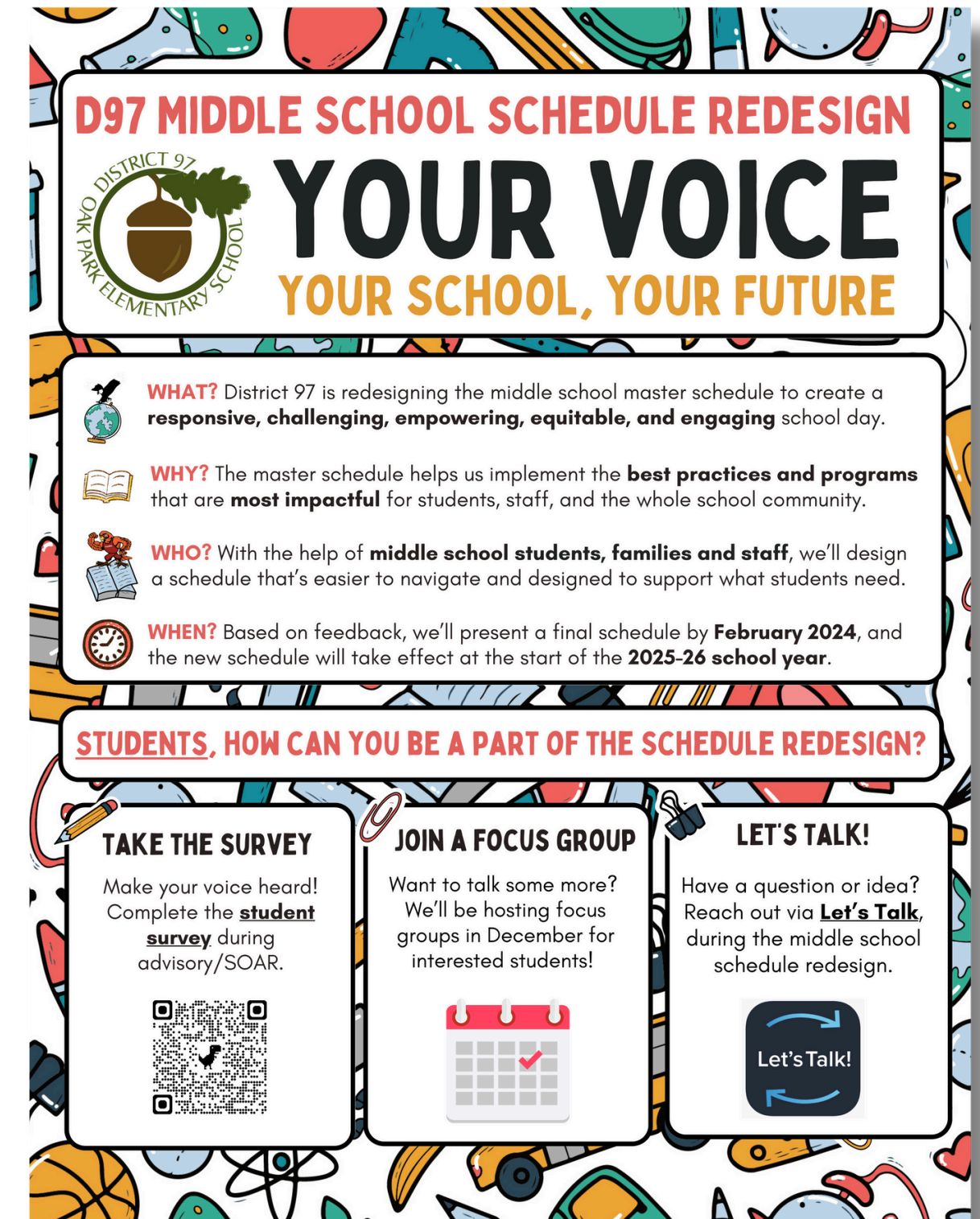
Community Input





Elevating Community Voices

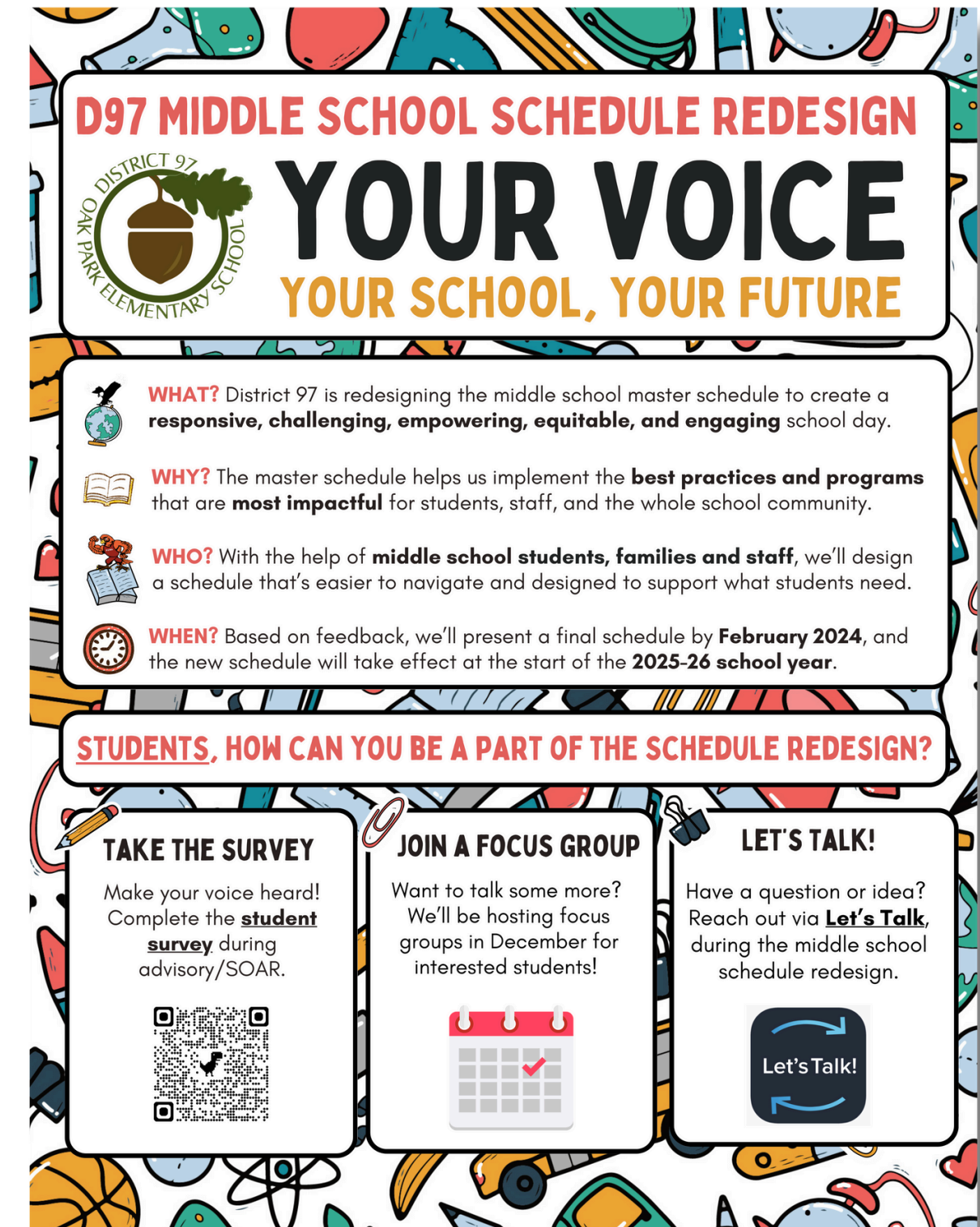
- Stakeholder Surveys (Students, Families, Staff)
 - Collection of feedback through targeted surveys developed by our MS schedule redesign team.
 - The survey was administered Nov. 20, 2024, through Dec. 2, 2024.
 - Responses:
 - 944 students
 - 141 staff members
 - 193 family members





Elevating Community Voices (cont.)

- **Focus Groups (Students, Families, Staff)**
 - Feedback from small focus groups helped deepen our team's understanding of our community's perspectives on the schedule.
 - Students:
 - Three sessions - one per grade level
 - 14-16 students per session
 - Diverse groups (gender, ethnicity, programs)
 - Families
 - PTO meeting
 - Let's Talk
 - Staff
 - Middle School Schedule Redesign Team that represented all content areas

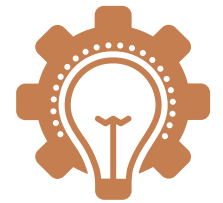


Insights from Our Community Surveys





What does the data tell us?



How can we use this feedback to inform the redesign?

Consider...

Student Survey

(n=944)

- Students are looking for **shorter, more engaging class periods** that better align with their focus and energy levels.
- **Daily teacher interactions** may help strengthen relationships and improve retention.
- A **softer start to the day**, such as incorporating SEL time, could improve morning engagement.
- Expanding elective options is a priority to meet diverse student interests and needs.

- Adjusting the **length and structure of class periods**, with an emphasis on daily schedules for core subjects.
- Expanding the variety of **elective offerings** (e.g. a rotating elective “wheel.”)
- Exploring options for a **soft start to mornings**, including social-emotional learning.
- Redesigning the lunch experience to make it longer, more structured, and more supportive.
- Assessing the **space and staffing needs**

Staff Survey

(n=141)

- A **daily class schedule** could improve student engagement, retention, and executive functioning skills.
- There is a **misalignment** between Brooks and Julian in their overall vision, beliefs, and goals, which impacts scheduling consistency.
- **Current structure may limit** elective options opportunities for some groups of students

- Developing a **shared vision** across both middle schools to ensure consistency and alignment.
- **Shortening class periods** while prioritizing daily instruction for ELA and Math.
- Reevaluating and clearly define the purpose and goals of **SOAR and Advisory** to maximize their impact.
- Expanding **elective opportunities** to better meet diverse student needs, including cross-team or mixed-grade level options

Family Survey

(n=193)

- Families prioritize opportunities for **social time, lunch improvements**, and a wider range of **elective choices**.
- There is a strong desire for a **transition structure** that better mirrors the high school experience to support students moving from fifth to sixth grade and from middle to high school.
- **Block scheduling** poses challenges for both students and families, including concerns about continuity and workload.

- **Strengthen family outreach** to ensure all perspectives are represented in the redesign process.
- Expand **elective diversity**, including options for mixed-grade level classes and unique offerings.
- Adjust scheduling to improve **lunch and social opportunities**, making them more supportive and intentional.
- Focus on **smoother transitions** between fifth to sixth grade and 8th to high school to ensure alignment and continuity.



Priorities Trends

- Adjusting the length and structure of class periods, with an emphasis on daily schedules for core subjects.
- Expanding elective opportunities to better meet diverse student needs, including cross-team or mixed-grade level options and unique offerings.
- Exploring options for a soft start to mornings, including social-emotional learning.
- Redesigning the lunch experience that is more structured, and more supportive.
- Consistency and alignment across both Middle Schools.
- Reevaluating and clearly defining the purpose and goals of SOAR and Advisory to maximize their impact.
- Smoother transitions between fifth to sixth grade and 8th to high school to ensure alignment and continuity.

Next Steps for the Middle School Schedule Redesign Team

- Translate student, staff, and family priorities into schedule structures and develop sample schedules
- The Middle School Schedule Redesign Team will collaboratively determine the final schedule that best meets the different needs that have been identified, recognizing that no solution will satisfy every voice
- Coordinate with Power School internal team and consultant to review scheduling needs and set software system
- Develop communication plan for students, staff, and families (*including Board update: February 2025)
- Prepare for implementation of the new schedule in SY26



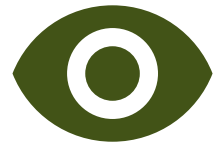
Thank you!
Any Questions?

Appendix



Student Voice: School-Wide Survey

*A total of **944 students** from Brooks and Julian participated in the survey, providing valuable insights into their experiences, needs, and priorities for middle school redesign.*



What did we notice/see in the student survey data?

- Nearly **65% of middle school students** want shorter class periods.
- **37.6%** prefer a mix of block and non-block scheduling.
- **41% of eighth-graders** want to see their teachers every day.
- Only **31.1% of middle school students** feel current class period lengths are appropriate.
- **Sixth- and seventh-graders** feel rushed in ELA, while **eighth-graders** feel rushed in Math.
- **Almost half of students (47.2%)** want more elective and activity options.
- **Morning are the most challenging part of the day** for the majority of middle schoolers, whereas only **10%** say lunch is the hardest part of the day.



What does the data tell us?

- Students are looking for **shorter, more engaging class periods** that better align with their focus and energy levels.
- **Daily teacher interactions** may help strengthen relationships and improve retention.
- A **softer start to the day**, such as incorporating SEL time, could improve morning engagement.
- Expanding elective options is a priority to meet diverse student interests and needs.



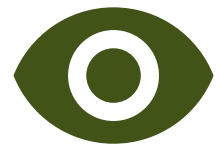
How can we use this feedback to inform the redesign? Consider...

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- Exploring options for a **soft start to mornings**, including social-emotional learning.
- Redesigning the lunch experience to make it longer, more structured, and more supportive.
- Assessing the **space and staffing needs** required to support an expanded elective program.



Staff Voice - All Staff Survey

*A total of **141 teachers and staff** across Brooks and Julian participated in the survey, providing critical insights into the challenges and opportunities for improving middle school schedules and student engagement.*



What did we notice/see in the staff survey data?

- **65% of staff** prefer daily classes over block scheduling for improved consistency and engagement.
- Nearly **44% recommend class periods be 50–59 minutes** to balance instruction and focus.
- The biggest challenges with A/B schedules include:
 - **Class periods are too long**, leading to reduced student engagement and retention.
 - Inconsistent daily opportunities for core subjects like **ELA and Math**.
- Staff emphasize the importance of **daily P.E. and core instruction** for student success.
- **SOAR and Advisory** are viewed as underutilized or ineffective and need a clearer purpose.



What does the data tell us?

- A **daily class schedule** could improve student engagement, retention, and executive functioning skills.
- There is a **misalignment** between Brooks and Julian in their overall vision, beliefs, and goals, which impacts scheduling consistency.
- **The current structure may limit** elective options opportunities for some groups of students

How can we use this feedback to inform the redesign? Consider...

- **Developing a shared vision** across both middle schools to ensure consistency and alignment.
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- Reevaluating and clearly define the purpose and goals of **SOAR and Advisory** to maximize their impact.
- Expanding **elective opportunities** to better meet diverse student needs, including cross-team or mixed-grade level options.





Community Voice - Family Survey

*A total of **193 families** from Brooks and Julian participated in the survey, offering valuable perspectives on their priorities for scheduling, electives, and overall middle school experiences.*



What did we notice/see in the family survey data?

- Many families expressed **dissatisfaction with elective options**, with **42.2% at Brooks** and **53.5% at Julian** noting limited choices.
- Comments highlighted a need for:
 - **Longer or more structured lunch periods**
 - **Increased ELA and Math instructional time**
 - **Greater diversity in electives** to meet student interests.



What does the data tell us?

- Families prioritize opportunities for **social time, lunch improvements**, and a wider range of **elective choices**.
- There is a strong desire for a **transition structure** that better mirrors the high school experience to support students moving from fifth to sixth grade and from middle to high school.
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