

District 97 Middle School Redesign Update

Board of Education Meeting
February 10, 2026





Middle School Update

DR. LUIS FERNANDO DE LEÓN
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT
MIDDLE SCHOOLS

MS. APRIL MORIARTY
PRINCIPAL
BROOKS MIDDLE SCHOOL

MR. NICK FILIPOWSKI
PRINCIPAL
JULIAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

MS. MICHELE CAPIO
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT WELLNESS



Middle School Redesign Update Agenda

- **Introduction**
- **Schedule**
- **Advisory**
- **Career Exploration**
- **MS Connection**
- **Questions**

Updates and Highlights in Our Students' Learning Experiences

2025-26





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

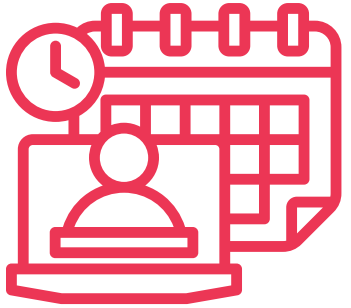
Master Facilities Plan
Comprehensive Safety Plan

We Learn Everywhere

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



Middle School Schedule Redesign



Our Guiding Principles for the 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.

Celebrating the Work





Shout Out: Girls and Boys Basketball Teams

Girls Basketball

Coaches:

Ashley Kannan (JMS)

Nia Kerr (JMS)

Kina Brown (BMS)

Sam Fishman-Strait(BMS)



Boys Basketball

Coaches:

Connor Fuller (JMS)

Darren Haus (BMS)

Tanya Thigpen(BMS)



JV & Varsity #1 Conference Champs





Celebrating the Work: Progress in Panorama Data

Topics	Score	National benchmarks	Change since last surveyed
School Safety	59%	Around the 50th percentile	↗ 14
Sense of Belonging	49%	Around the 30th percentile	↗ 12
Teacher-Student Relationships	49%	Around the 20th percentile	↗ 7
School Climate	34%	Around the 20th percentile	↗ 10
Engagement	27%	Around the 20th percentile	↗ 6



Celebrating the Work: Progress in Panorama Data

Student Special Education Status	Background Questions	Engagement	School Climate	School Safety	Sense of Belonging	Teacher-Student...
⚙	⚙	⚙	⚙	⚙	⚙	⚙
All Responses	—	27%	34%	59%	49%	49%
No	—	27%	33%	60%	48%	49%
Yes	—	25%	35%	56%	49%	49%



Celebrating the Work: Progress in Panorama Data

Student FRPL Status	Background Questions	Engagement	School Climate	School Safety	Sense of Belonging	Teacher-Student...
All Responses	—	27%	34%	59%	49%	49%
Free	—	26%	33%	58%	43%	48%
Full Price	—	27%	34%	59%	50%	49%
Reduced Price	—	23%	27%	51%	41%	46%



Celebrating the Work: Progress in Panorama Data

Student Race	Background Questions	Engagement	School Climate	School Safety	Sense of Belonging	Teacher-Student...
—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All Responses	—	26%	33%	59%	48%	49%
Asian	—	27%	35%	57%	37%	40%
Black or African American	—	24%	29%	56%	45%	46%
Hispanic or Latino	—	26%	35%	60%	48%	52%
Multiracial	—	24%	30%	55%	45%	47%
White	—	27%	34%	60%	50%	49%



Middle School Schedule: What's Working

- Students Experience instruction daily for core subject areas and a year-long elective
- Access to the Field at both Middle Schools daily during each grade level social time
- WIN tiered supports. More students are receiving additional support in Math, Reading and Executive Functioning.
- Both Middle Schools are in alignment, and opportunities for cross-school collaboration





SY 26-27 Master Schedule: February - March Elective / Course Selections

What we have done so far:

- Adjust the Elective selections timeline from April to December
 - Electives Course Selections Review
 - Update MS Elective Guide
 - Google Form - Rank of electives
 - Earlier Communication regarding Electives with families

What is next...

- Complete our needs analysis for courses
- Confirm our master schedule structure
- Load students' requests into our scheduling system
- Ensure balanced classes
- Finalize teacher schedules in alignment with contractual requirements and student learning needs.



**2026-
2027**

Middle School Elective Guide



**Gwendolyn Brooks
Middle School**



**Percy Julian
Middle School**



Supporting our students and Families

<i>Month</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Audience</i>
April	6th Grade Student Panels will visit each Elementary school for Q&A about the Middle School Experience	Rising 6th grade students
May	Virtual orientation	Families of rising 6th grade students + any new students to Oak Park D97
May	Student-Led Brooks/Julian Building Tours for Students and Families	Families of rising 6th grade students + any new students to Oak Park D97
August 18-20	Middle School Connection August 18-20, 2026	Rising 6th graders
August/September	Host site-based “Welcome Back” events	Families of rising 6th grade students + any new students to Oak Park D97

Re-Evaluating and Defining Advisory





Priority Trend: *Redefining Advisory to Increase Connection*

Re-evaluating and clearly defining the purpose and goals of SOAR and Advisory to maximize their impact.

SY25 CURRENT SCHEDULE

- No soft start in the middle schools
- SOAR offerings are not consistent
- Inconsistencies in use of resources

SY26 NEW MASTER SCHEDULE

- Change SOAR to WIN
- Same course offerings at both middle schools
- Interventions and enrichment
- Development and advisory structure and resources revision/adoption process

SY27-28 FUTURE WORK

- Implementation of advisory structure
 - Structure
 - Resources
 - Professional development
- Collection of feedback to inform adjustments
 - Students
 - Families
 - Staff



Meet Our Committee:

Angela Cataldo, ELA Teacher

Carin McKinney, ELA Teacher

Caroline Delia, Math Teacher

Chasity McComb-Williams, Associate Principal

Clare Brooks, Social Science Teacher

DaWanda Fountain, Associate Principal

Kathryn Libbey, PE Teacher

Kristen Michaels, Student Support Specialist

Laura Clark, Science Teacher

Dr. Luis De Leon, Assistant Superintendent of Middle
Schools

Mallory Mowery, Instructional Coach

Megan Wilson, Special Education Teacher

Michele Capio, Director of Student Wellness

Miranda Tucker, Science Teacher

Patrick Carter, Special Education Teacher

Phillip Mundine, Special Education Teacher

Sergio Torres, Student Success Coach



Advisory: Highlights and Next Steps



The Successful Middle School Advisory (AMLE)

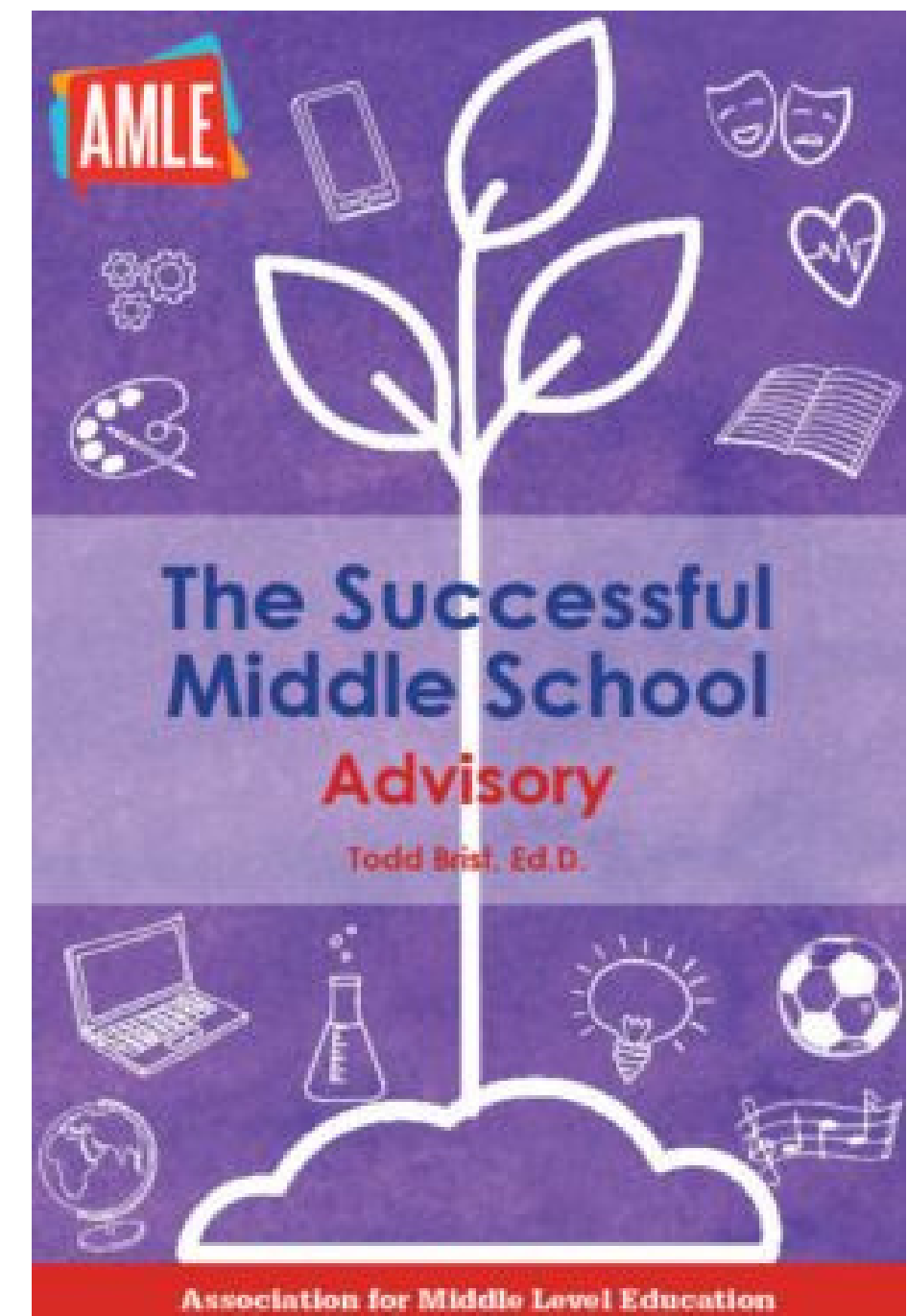
Why #1: To build relationships and foster belonging.

Why #2: To provide each student with a trusted adult/advocate.

Why #3: To advise students on academic, social, emotional, and behavioral matters.

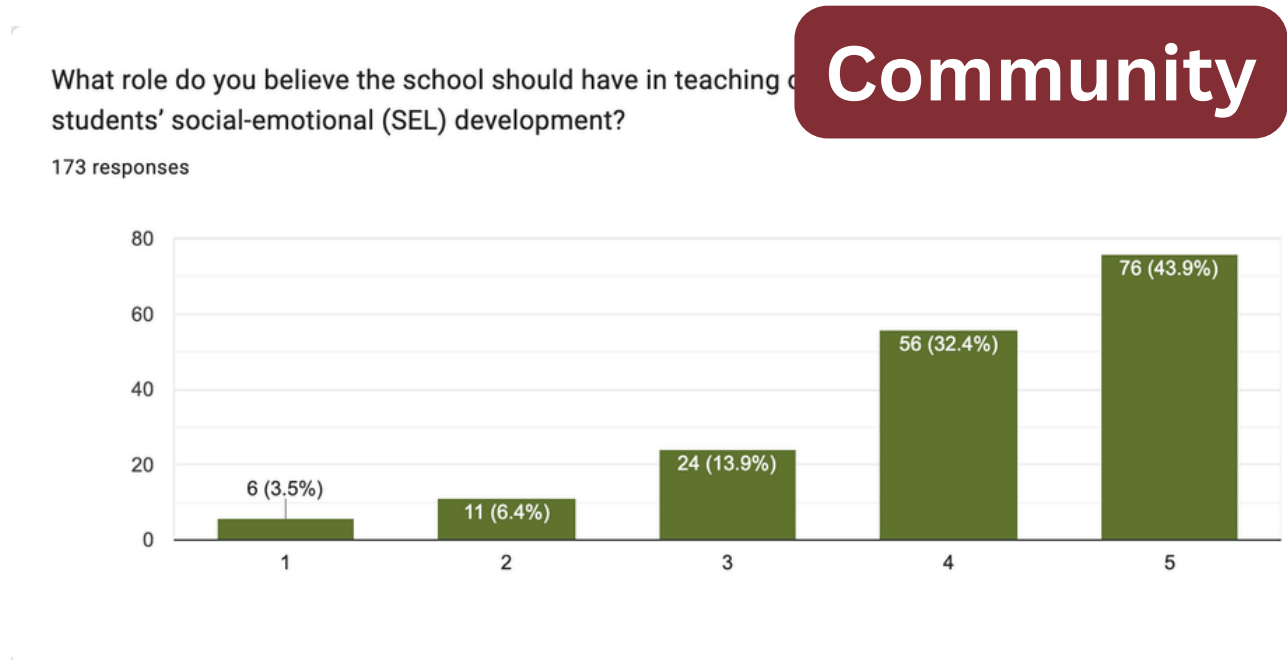
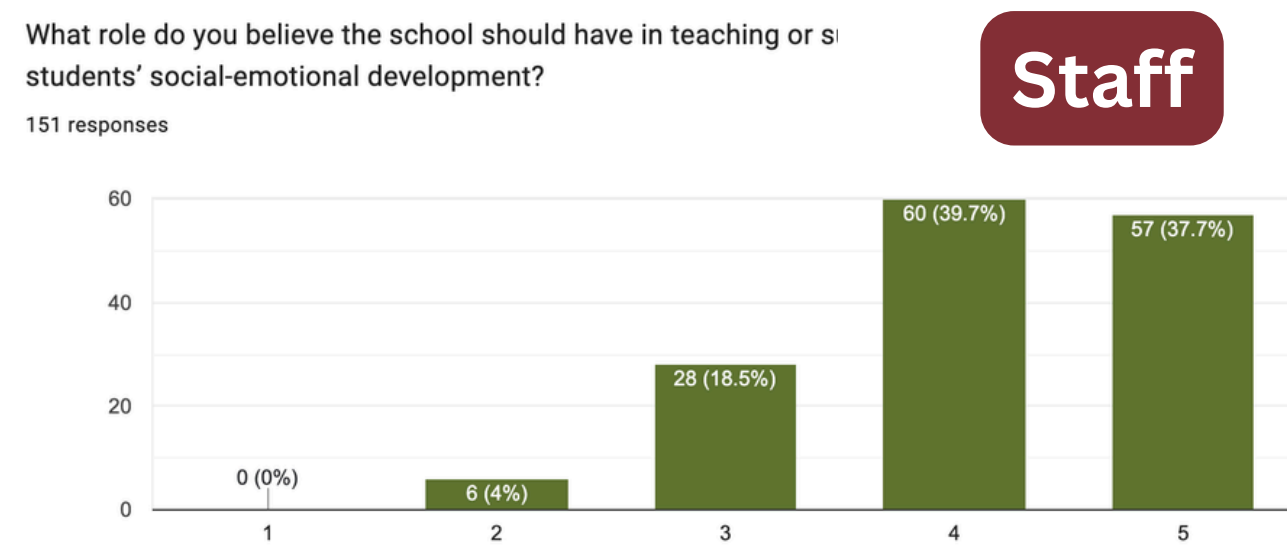
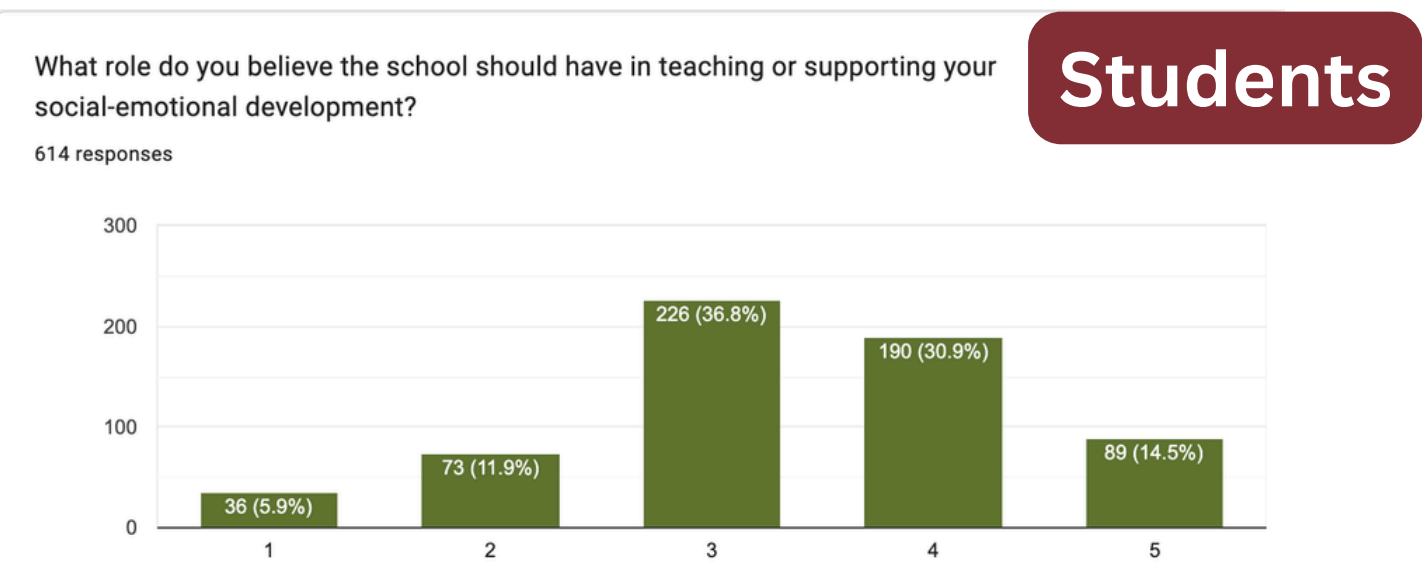
Why #4: To teach and build personal, social, and relational skills.

Why #5: To enhance digital citizenship and technology use.



Survey Question:
What role do you believe the school should have in teacher or supporting your social-emotional development?

Feedback:
Data indicate that staff and community feel that schools should play a central role in socio-emotional development



- To inform Advisory planning this January, we:**
- Surveyed students, staff and families about social emotional learning.
 - Previewed “The Social Institute” as a resource around digital citizenship.

- Next Steps:**
- Creating a professional learning plan for staff for 2026-27.
 - Focusing on the “5 Whys” before moving to decision making on schedule and format.

Designing Career Exploration Experience for All Our Students





Meet Our Committee:

Marvin Childress: Curriculum-Learning and Entrepreneurial Coordinator

Adrienne Court: Associate Principal Julian

Dr. Luis De Leon: Assistant Supt. of Middle Schools

Angelica Degante: Multilingual Teacher

Dr. Denise Gildon: Associate Principal, Brooks

Nancy Guarino: Math Teacher

Anne Hufnus: Science Teacher

Katelyn Jaffe: Special Education Teacher

Michael Konecki: Science Teacher

Dr. Eboney Lofton: Chief Learning Innovation Officer

Mallory Mowery: Instructional Coach

Becca Murray: Student Success Coach

Jen Nelson: Teacher Librarian

Cas Scaman: English Language Arts Teacher

Audrey Schoen: Student Success Coach

Karintha Shaw: Student Support Specialist

Georgia Tsaganos: Social Sciences Teacher



Timeline

Summer 2025

- ✓ • Convene a design team
- ✓ • Develop D97 Career Exploration Website.
- ✓ • Evaluation of Career Exploration software - "School Links"

Winter 2025/ 2026 (Trimester 2)

- ✓ • Inventory career exploration experiences to create consistency between schools
- ✓ • Data Analysis of Find Your Path Assessment
 - Planning Career Day

Fall 2025 (Trimester 1)

- ✓ • Develop a certified educator design team and create a cadence of meetings throughout the year
- ✓ • SchoolLinks Training for all teaching staff
- ✓ • Complete a career exploration audit

Spring 2026 (Trimester 3)

- Deliver a common career exploration unit at both schools to prep students for career day
- Hold a common culminating event (Career Day)
- Design and expand framework for SY27



SchoolLinks Career Interest Inventory Data

Julian

#1 Arts, Entertainment, & Design

#2 Healthcare & Human Services

#3 Management and Entrepreneurship

#4 Digital Technology

#5 Hospitality, Events, & Tourism

94% of students
completed

Brooks

#1 Arts, Entertainment, & Design

#2 Healthcare & Human Services

#3 Management and Entrepreneurship

#4 Hospitality, Events, & Tourism

#5 Digital Technology

94% of students
completed



Career Day: Vision + Presenter Recruitment

Our team is committed to creating a cohesive and engaging Career Day experience for all D97 middle school students, ensuring equitable access to career exploration, future-ready learning, and meaningful connections to real-world opportunities. Students will participate in structured grade-level and career-pathway cohort rotations to support an inclusive, organized, and enriching experience for every learner.

Julian CED



Date: Wednesday, April 22, 2026



Time: 12 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.



Location: Percy Julian Middle School

Brooks CED



Date: Thursday, April 23, 2026



Time: 12 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

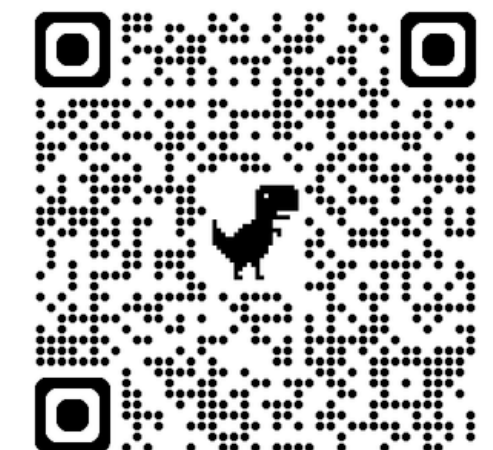


Location: Gwendolyn Brooks Middle School

Draft Schedule

	6th	7th	8th
12:54-1:29	Session 1	Session 1	Session 1
1:32-2:07	Session 2	Session 2	Session 2
2:10-2:45	Session 3	Session 3	Session 3
2:48-3:23	Session 4	Session 4	Session 4
3:23- 3:30	Reflection	Reflection	Reflection

SCAN ME



Become a presenter: scan the QR code to sign up.



Next Steps:

- Committee to continue the Coordination of Career Day at both middle schools
- Launch SchoolLinks Career Exploration Unit (Career Day prep)
- Build 3-year CCR scope & sequence for grades 6–8

Smoother Transitions Between Fifth to Sixth Grade:

*Middle School Connection
Tentative Dates: Aug. 18-20, 2026*





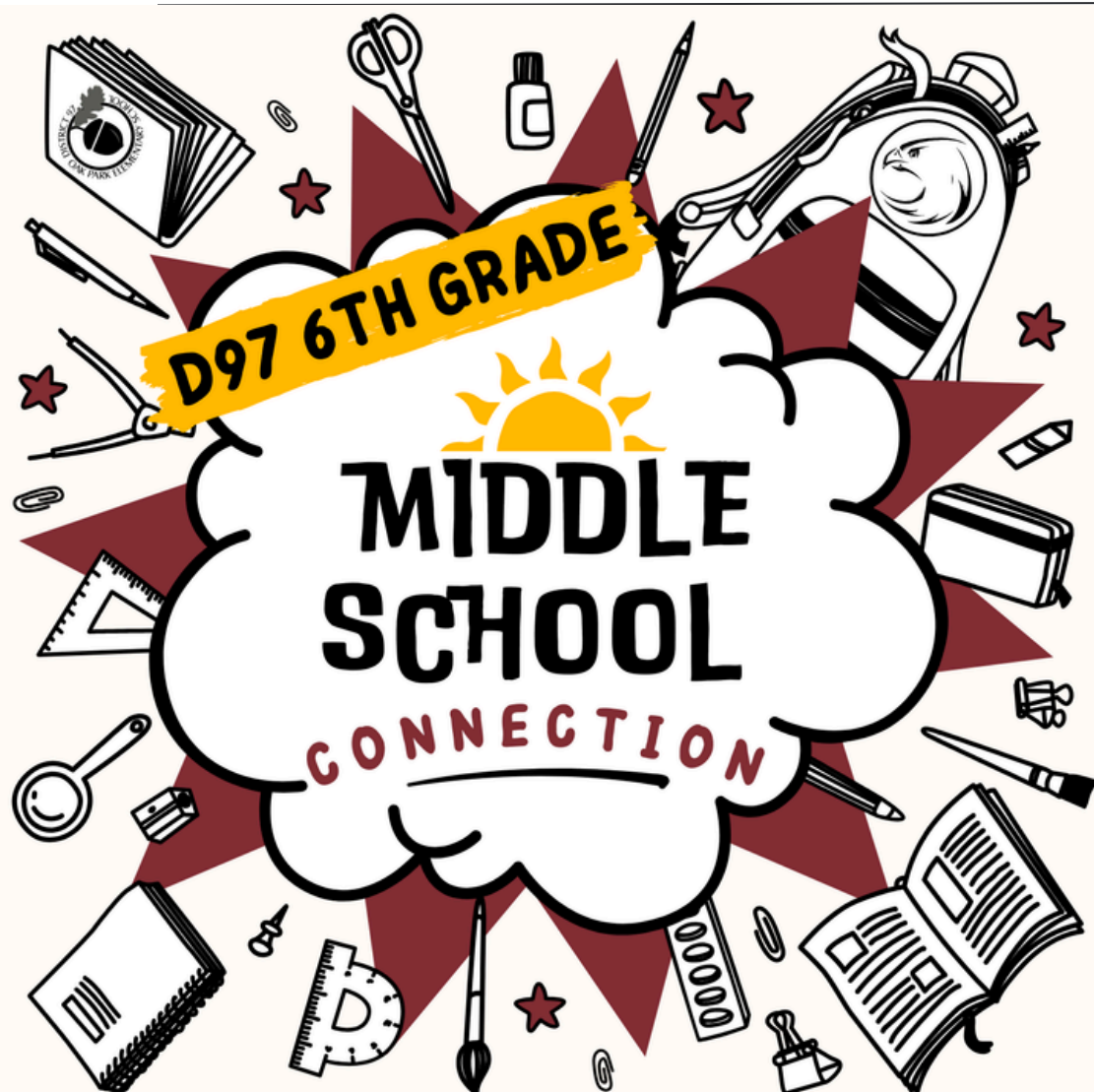
Middle School Connection Budget - SY 2026-27

Item	Number	Total
Staff	82	\$60,600
Coordinators	2	\$3,200
Transportation	4	\$2,800
Resources		\$15,450
Food	2	\$2,000
	Total	\$84,050



Middle School Connection Save the Date

(pending approval)



August 18-20, 2026

- ✓ Make New Friends, Get to Know Teachers and Learn about MS Clubs
- ✓ Find Classes, Walk Schedule and Practice Opening Your Locker
- ✓ Learn Tips/Tricks for Success in Middle School

REGISTRATION
INFORMATION WILL BE
EMAILED DIRECTLY TO
FAMILIES OF INCOMING
6TH GRADERS.

JULIAN MIDDLE SCHOOL
AUG. 18-20, 2026
9 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.
[» LEARN MORE AT BIT.LY/3WKFSPP](https://bit.ly/3WKFSPP)

**FREE AND OPEN TO ALL
D97 6TH GRADERS.**
NUT-FREE SNACKS WILL BE
PROVIDED. TRANSPORTATION
AVAILABLE FOR THOSE WHO
QUALIFY.



18-20 DE AGOSTO DE 2026

- ✓ Haga nuevos amigos, conozca maestros y aprenda sobre los clubes de escuelas secundarias
- ✓ Encuentre clases, horarios de caminatas y practique cómo abrir su casillero
- ✓ Aprenda consejos/trucos para tener éxito en la escuela secundaria

LA INFORMACIÓN DE
INSCRIPCIÓN SE ENVIARÁ POR
CORREO ELECTRÓNICO
DIRECTAMENTE A LAS
FAMILIAS DE LOS
ESTUDIANTES QUE
INGRESARÁN AL SEXTO
GRADO.

**BROOKS Y JULIÁN
ESCUELAS INTERMEDIAS**
AUG. 18-20, 2026
9 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.
[» REGÍSTRATE EN BIT.LY/42QXA61](https://bit.ly/42QXA61)

GRATIS Y ABIERTO A
TODOS LOS ESTUDIANTES
DE SEXTO GRADO DEL D97
SE PROPORCIONARÁN
REFRIGERIOS SIN NUECES.
TRANSPORTE DISPONIBLE PARA
AQUELLOS QUE CALIFIQUEN.



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Thank you!

