



# WFB Middle School Elective/Exploratory Wheel Update

Board of Education  
September 27, 2017



# Committee Establishment

*“A District committee should be established to study the Whitefish Bay Middle School elective wheel. When the WFBMS implemented the block schedule changes in 2014-2015, the elective wheel was not part of the overall work of the original committee. We have found that we have many competing priorities in the current wheel, which may or may not be beneficial for meeting the District’s Focus Plan.”*

# Historical Background

Prior to beginning a review of the current elective/exploratory programming, it was necessary for us to review the historical background of the Whitefish Bay Middle School through the historical lens of the MS committee members. Curriculum files of the time are not readily available and not stored electronically.

The Middle School was opened in 1989. The district previously had K-8 buildings. Its original design was to create a schedule and offerings tailored to meet the needs of the middle school/adolescent learner.

- Past administrators made decisions that were not clear to staff (scheduling, staff opening and then courses would be added or removed over the summer);
- Many changes in courses over this extended period of time;
- Read 180 and Math Support pulled students out of electives;
- It was called an exploratory wheel in 6-7 (and all kids had 5 choices) and elective in 8. (Students with disabilities this was not already the case) ;
- In the Early 2000s the Board decided that seventh grade WL would go every day and students prioritized languages in sorted students based on interest.

# Legal Requirements

## State Law Requirements:

Grade	World Language	Music	Art and Design Education	Physical Education	Health/ HGD
6	None	Required- under direction of licensed teacher	Required- under direction of licensed teacher	Required- under direction of licensed teacher  Three times a week or 90 minutes	Required- under direction of licensed teacher  Once a week for the entire school term  HGD- Not required by law
7-8	receive regular instruction in sufficient frequency and length to achieve objectives of OUR curriculum  **Note that our current curriculum is more rigorous	Music instruction including general music, vocal music and instrumental instruction shall be available and taught by a licensed teacher	Art instruction shall be available and taught by a licensed teacher	Each week for the entire school year taught by a licensed teacher.  Minutes and amount of time is not specified	.5 health credit requirement in grades 7-12 (**CPR Requirement)  HGD- Not required by law

# Legal Requirements

## Additional Law Requirements for Consideration

Topic	Information/impact
<b>Instructional Minutes:</b>	Grade 6: 1,050 hours Grades 7-8: 1,137 hours  You can include up to 30 minutes a day of recess.
<b>Vocational Skills</b>	Need to teach them in some type of program and does not specify what grade, level, etc...
<b>Personal Development</b>	Need to teach them in some type of program and does not specify what grade, level, etc...
<b>Reading Instruction</b>	Developmental reading program for all grade levels at all levels. You need to have a comprehensive reading program, etc...

# Exploratory Wheel Defined

Exploratory wheels are designed to have “choices within fences” for students. Our current sixth grade programming is similar.

For example: if we require ALL students to take a World Language we give them choice and voice around which language they can select to learn. The “fence is world language, the choice is what they would like to study in world language.”

# Elective Wheel Defined

Elective wheels are designed to have “choice and voice” for students. Students select the courses that they are interested in (except where we are legally required).

For example: we have a menu of electives and students select the ones they would like to take (more like the HS).

# Current WFB Sixth Grade

- “Exploratory” Wheel- 4 classes (health, general music, art, and design and modeling)
- World language/PE
- Select or Placed in 1: Additional Music/Study Hall/Intervention
- There are some students with disabilities that do not a WL and take an additional study hall/intervention, etc...

# Current WFB Seventh Grade

\*majority of students 1 & 2, Intervention and students with disabilities in 3 & 4. No “entry” points in some electives.

## Option 1:

- World Language
- Exploratory Wheel (Art, PLTW, Leadership, Life Skills)
- PE/Music (Every other day)

## Option 2:

- World Language
- PE/Elective Options: (Life Skills required/Art/Hands-on Drumming or Hands-on Guitar)
- 2 Music

## Option 3 (no WL):

- Exploratory Wheel (Art, PLTW, Leadership, Life Skills)
- 2 Music
- Elective Options/PE

## Option 4 (no WL or music):

- Exploratory Wheel (Art, PLTW, Leadership, Life Skills)
- Study Hall
- Elective Options/PE

# Current Eighth Grade

\* 3 electives to fill. Phy. ed/Health a Must

- World Language
- Elective Offerings (quarter based offerings): Music ( $\frac{3}{4}$  of year), Art, PLTW, other music offerings, etc...
- For students with disabilities or students who need an intervention it comes from an elective at this time.

# What we are learning....

## Defining the Qualities of a Middle School Person

Need 9 hours of sleep

Social

Puberty- body changes, brain growing

Impulsive

Identity- who am I?

Honesty

Positive Role Models:

Role in decision making (Gradual release of responsibility)

Need to feel a sense of belonging

Be heard

Self-expression without rejection

Autonomy- develop their own individual voices

“Right of passage”

Sense of invincibility and/or invisibility

Present moment thinking

# What we are learning...

## Defining the Qualities of a Middle School Learner

Scaffolding/ Modeling

Engage emotions (emotional content; link to feelings, memories or personal association) and social structures

Think about their thinking....

Relevance- Real life pursuits

Make mistakes in a safe space

Active

Positive Social Relationship

Small group

Initiate their own learning: if given a significant role in determining the learning, it will fuel the motivation to learn

Opportunities of self-expression

Metacognition: Shift in their ability to think- Into the formal operational stage of cognitive development: They can think about thinking themselves.

Integrated curriculum

Health and wellness: How to stay healthy rather than how to avoid disease?

Setting goals- Connecting your present-self to a future-self

# Market Comparables- Themes

- Every District is unique in offerings- but all have a sixth grade exploratory (more aligned to legal requirements)
- ALL District's reviewed offered something in Computer Science (coding, gaming, etc...) and Business
- None reviewed required general music at 6th grade (a choice based on if the student was NOT taking a Band, Orchestra, or Choir option)
- World Language was an elective not a requirement (except for one district); no one offered it every day
- Mostly quarter-based offerings, a few moved to trimester offerings
- Most are on an A/B format (every other day for the semester)

# Elective/Exploratory Key Considerations in Design:

- Qualities of the MS Learner and Person
- Social-emotional learning: It is important especially at the middle school level
- ACP and E4E Requirements
- State Instructional Minute Requirements
- Local context (what does our community desire?)

# Administrative Inclusions

- There is no *instructional reasoning* behind how we have electives organized in time (semester, quarter, every day versus every other day etc...)
- Current structure and course selection are heavily focused on consistent FTE at the MS
- We are WELL above needed State requirements in some areas; health, physical education, music and world language
- To meet our legal vocational requirement (and not have it one at the HS) requires us to require some at the MS
- We have a heavy academic focus on our electives, we are quite traditional in offerings except for FACE.

# Next Steps

- Stakeholder surveys (Families, Current and Alumni Students) and data review
- Continued learning of the committee around the learner
- Data review of the survey results
- Board discussions around: Do we want a 7-8 exploratory versus elective Wheel (Levels of Choice and Voice)? Are we supporting the seven thriving dispositions in our elective course offerings? Do we want to provide some small incremental improvements? Do we want to have a more extended (three year) implementation plan for more significant improvements in the wheel?