

World Class Middle School Community Survey Summary

Approach

In March 2019, the district surveyed Westport families and educators to elicit feedback on supports and structures to advance a world-class middle school experience for students in our district. Respondents were asked to provide feedback for each of the following areas:

- Student Learning and Academic Programs (i.e., course offerings, programs of study, study skill development);
- Healthy Learning Environment (i.e., school culture, opportunities for student connections with peers and/or adults);
- Co-Curricular Activities (i.e., after-school or enrichment activities); and
- Scheduling (i.e., homeroom structures, timing of classes).

In all, we received responses from 196 families and 32 educators over a five-day period.

Feedback

Across the four areas, the responses centered on four themes.

Students need more opportunities to connect individually with adults in the school for both academic support and for their general sense of well-being.

- “We should be teaching students that they need to advocate for themselves and have more time to meet with teachers to go over things individually.”
- Specific suggestions related to this topic include: access to classroom teachers before and after school for academic support; homework café or homework lab both before and after school; use of homeroom for individual student conferences or social-emotional learning activities; sixth-to-eighth grade student buddy program; and guidance counselor meetings.

Co-curricular offerings should be expanded to include non-competitive opportunities to build social connections and support students to explore their world.

- “Let’s keep the kids kids and let them participate regardless of ability...Please don't deny middle school kids the chance to explore, participate, belong.”
- “Have more short-term activities that do not require a full year commitment...It would also be nice to have activities that are just a month or two... let kids sample what they might be interested in.”
- “Let the kids run more things - dance committees, paper, or a school store that sells logo wear. Do fun school wide things for holidays, community service-based events. Let the kids create these and run them, not the PTA.”

Parents would like to see deeper connections to the broader Westport community through speaker series, mentoring, and coaching.

- “Parents, as well as teachers, could assist with the programs and contribute their gifts, hobbies and talents.”
- “We need to think outside of the classroom and leverage resources and opportunities for partnerships and experiences to supplement classroom learning.”

Parents would like to see a greater emphasis on study skills and writing across the curriculum.

- “A greater focus on reading and writing skills will improve critical thought and communication.”
- “Our kids need to spend more time learning to think and express themselves.”
- “How to study for the sake of learning and not in preparation for a test”
- “Ongoing, consistent, and continuous instruction and practice on note taking and summarizing”

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