

Principal Turner Chat – DES Media Center, February 1

Instructional Preparation

- Working to make sure the SMS teachers are ready for the new students Day 1
 - SMS has been moved from West Learning Community and to the Central Learning Community (which includes Piedmont IB Randolph IB, DES, EES and AG, among others) and will train with the middle schools in this community.
 - Participating in ILT (Instructional Leadership Team Training) process within CMS since September – SMS Assistant Principals, Academic Facilitators and Principals have been training with AG, Randolph IB, Piedmont IB & McClintock
 - Reviewed reading strategies, project and assignment development, have reviewed collaborative rubrics used at AG etc. to grade essays, projects, tests, etc.
- Efforts to Understand DES Students – On Feb. 7th, SMS Academic Facilitator will walk 4th and 5th grade classrooms with Ms. Schick during instruction
 - This is the second visit Principal Turner has had with Ms. Schick, however, the Feb. 7th visit will be the first of several visits with SMS staff during classroom instruction. The goal is a seamless transition of DES students to Middle School with the same expectations, rigor and engagement while keeping children as excited in middle school to learn as they have been at Dilworth.
 - This focus will continue at SMS in order to prepare them to go to Myers Park High School with the continued love of learning.
 - As appropriate, Principal Turner will bring the teachers from SMS over to observe Dilworth classrooms as well as facilitators.
- Preparing for Gifted Students -- Has met with Lisa Pagano (CMS executive over TD program) in identifying the appropriate channels for preparing SMS for the significant number of gifted students who will be joining SMS in 19-20.
 - Researching and planning units based on curriculum from William and Mary Center of Gifted Learning – national leaders in gifted education.
 - Principal Turner is requesting additional funding to send all 6th grade teachers to a summer program at the William and Mary Center of Gifting Learning – most appropriate use of funds in light of the coming changes rather than AVID training as usual.
 - Funding dependent, he would like to send his 7th grade teachers as well.
 - This will require incremental funding from CMS.
 - This is a shift in professional development from current programs due to needs of incoming students.
 - This training is expected to begin the summer prior to the 18-19 school year and continue as part of the “new normal”.
- Additionally, plan to use Title 1 and Extended Employment funds for vertical planning over the summer

- Additional Summer Planning for 6th, 7th and 8th plan together make unit plans, create projects, assessments, quizzes, etc.
- This is a significant shift from current state when only 6th grade focus on remediation due to current high percentage of students arriving below grade level

AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) –

- This elective falls under the Advanced Studies Department at CMS
- Middle grade programs in the Advanced Studies Department include Horizons (only at Randolph IB), International Baccalaureate (IB) -Randolph & Piedmont IB and AVID.
- SMS is not a magnet school and will not have IB or Horizons Middle Grades – It will have AVID Elective and integration of AVID organizational strategies throughout other classes.
- Myers Park High School will be bringing in AVID in 18-19.
- Highly selective for elective students – begin recruitment at elementary feeder schools
- Interview process, essay, teacher recommendation, and meet clear requirements (EOG 3 or above, community service requirement, 2.5 GPA or above)
- AVID elective includes a community service component – similar to
- SMS has an accelerated goal to receive national recognition as a demonstration site within 3 years
- AVID techniques are used throughout all classes at SMS including a focus on executive function skills such as organization strategies, Cornell note-taking and critical thinking.
- Refer to AVID handout for more detail.

Questions from audience:

- Where else in CMS is AVID being used? *Morehead STEM, Phillip O Berry and two other middle schools. Next year it will be implemented at Myers Park High School.*
- AVID targets “middle” kids, how does that apply for the “higher” kids? *Originally created as first generation pathway to college. This is only a portion of what AVID offers. There is some flexibility in how kids are selected. AVID is focused on college exposure and community service. Selection could be adjusted to address the different levels of students.*
- Does AVID layer onto course leveling? *AVID is an elective – not tied to the leveling. Most of my MATH 1 students are in AVID elective (year long). The AVID components, such as Cornell Notes, are integrated into all classes.*

Staffing Preparation

Principal Turner addressed head on the overarching questions that he continues to hear from parents: Who do you have in the building currently? Do they want to teach are students?

- He has moved up the intent (to return) process from March 12 to Feb 2. It's non-binding, but it is necessary to understand for planning and adjustment of recruitment strategy.
- Being strategic at looking at the strengths of teachers I have – strong 8th grade honors teach may need to be moved to 6th grade.
- Staffing decisions are made on a teacher-by-teacher basis

Teacher Recruitment / Interview Process:

- Feel it is the most strenuous / rigorous in CMS. Modeled after his own interview process when applying to be a fireman with CMPD and later a principal with CMS.
 - Selection Day
 - Step 1: Resume screen
 - Step 2: phone interview
 - Step 3: Selection day invitation. SMS has 2 selection days (8:30 – 4:30 – March and April)
 - Looking for teaching skills, stamina, and how they engage with the stakeholders
 - Written Assignments – write parents a letter;
 - Teach a demonstration (weeds out “professional interviewers”)
 - Submit a lesson plan – need to know how they think about rigor, standards, differentiation
 - Principal is not in the room (students would behave exceptionally well) – rather teacher leaders act as observers
 - Shadow “irreplaceable” teachers for an hour
 - Panel interview with current teachers (Teachers submit feedback via rubric)
 - Observe a planning meeting – department or grade level
 - Panel interview with scholars – leadership opportunities (students submit feedback via same rubric as teacher panel)
 - Parent and community partners Interview Panel
 - Observe student dismissal process
 - Debrief with administrative staff
 - Mr. Turner weeds out a lot of candidates with this process
 - He understands the impact of hiring the wrong people – especially during the complex transition over the next few years
- Principal Turner is requesting additional funding for a 6th grade orientation / “middle school boot camp” on Aug 13 -15, 2018 for kids only to get acclimated.
 - Get their computer, bus info, etc.
 - Meet other new students across the feeder elementary schools.
 - Come to middle school comfortable and confident before the 7th and 8th graders arrive.
 - Will need funding commitment to continue this boot camp each year going forward.

Questions from the audience:

- How long will the boot camp be? *8:30 – 12:30 but depends on funding.*
- How is it different with the Central Learning Community- is that significant in terms of what the staff experiences? : *Yes. In West, we were the only traditional (not-magnet) Middle school. Now I have three other middles school that I can plan with and exchange ideas and best practices.*
- Is your staff excited about this change? *Most of them are. The tone of the inquiries is sometimes being interpreted as them not being capable. Many are scared of changing. Many are very excited to work with students who are motivated and have parents who are passionate about education.*
- Are they ready? *All teachers were trained on standards. Most are trained to teach kids who are at grade level, not 2-3 grade levels behind. 80% of teachers have indicated they are intending to come back to SMS.*
- Who should we harass to get you funding? *Talk to the transition team. They work with Tara and Akeshia (CMS project managers), and we have been specific clear on the things we have been asking for. See target state document (insert link).*
- As transition occurs, how are your teachers going to go from current Honors class to a more rigorous Honors classes? *Curriculum is the same as AG, but the performance is different. Challenge is that it is taking longer to cover same rigorous curriculum. Biggest difference will be the pacing.*
- What are the most important things to rally around?
 - *First: Rally around the bell schedule. Have vocal support to 8:15 – 3:15 and 8:30 -3:30. Would love that decision before the transfer season. Buses don't leave until 4:45 or 5. Super late for teachers. Earlier schedule is a huge recruitment tool.*
 - *Second: To be held harmless with the staffing formula, regardless of how the student population reduces during the transition. This year, I was able to keep my same staffing allocation levels despite my dip in students. Being able to continue that will create certainty that will help me be able to hire and invest in teachers now regardless of how my volume of students change throughout the transition.*
- Back in May, you mentioned staff would not all stay and would all have to reapply. *We are not at a point that we have decided that. Through the intent process, I've been given flexibility to decide on who is in the building. I have the freedom to select who is in the building. It's a collaborative process.*
- From a professional development standpoint, will that be a multi- year process? *The professional development laid out at the beginning is what we will continue to do. That is our new normal. We'll tweak and adjust based on data as needs of incoming students are identified.*
- How many teachers do you have and how many of them came for you? *We have 73 teachers. I was hired on July 1, 2015 had 23 vacancies to fill before August. Mass exodus occurred before I was hired. Following year there were 14 vacancies. I have hired the majority of the current teaching staff.*

- How many AVID elective seats are there? *Right now there is one AVID site coordinator and teacher. Goal would be to double it based on enrollment and staffing model.*
- What is your philosophy on hiring and what do you evaluate as teaching strengths. I'm sure that some teachers are more effective than others- how do you determine this? *Looking for deep content knowledge is critically important. Once a teacher has a solid grasp, they can comfortably "play" with it. Engagement strategies – how do we make the students love it. Communication Skills -- a lot of research that shows correlation with students' success with the teacher's communication skills. Do they like kids? Specifically middle school students.*
- Are there electives, sports, languages, etc.? *Project Lead the Way, 2 CTEs, Chorus, PE/Health, Dance, Band, Orchestra, Spanish, no Drama right now.*
- What are you most excited about? What is the most concerning?
 - *Most excited to serve a different group. I've worked hard to serve the families the last 2 years. I am excited to stay in the same building and to serve a different sector of Charlotte. To personally widen my influence. This is personal to me as a native Charlottean. I've fought the good fight with one community for three years, and now I get to fight the good fight with a new community.*
 - *Most concerned that I won't be given the chance to be the one to make the difference with this new school.*
- How do the current SMS families feel about the transition? *Honestly, I don't know. Haven't heard a lot of feedback even from our PTO. Huge language barrier – there are approx. 43% ESL students. We are working through barriers of a large immigrant population. I'm afraid that many don't understand their options and the timing. Some don't realize they are grandfathered in. Frustrating – that means I don't know who is going to be in my building next year. It's difficult to plan around that.*
- As a parent considering having a 5th grader go to SMS next year, we are experiencing difficulty in overcoming the message that is going on with our kids. The reputation needs to be changed. Do you have a plan to market to our students? *Marketing strategy right now is student achievement and safe place in the near term. Thinking about what it means to have a better report card.*
- What's your mascot? *The Spartans*
- Do you do a Pep Rally similar to the Pup Rally at AG for rising 6th graders during the spring of 5th grade? *Yes. There is also a spring open house for rising 6th graders to come over. They go on campus tours.*
- Are teachers ready for the extra demands? Are they going to be ready to go faster? *It's a struggle for teachers to remediate/more difficult to go slower. They know how to teach at and above grade level and are ready to go faster. They are also going to be trained at William and Mary for gifted students to be able to extend beyond their grade levels. Currently we make an investment in professional development at remediation and instead they are going to be switching to extension training to prepare for the changing demographic.*
- What about safety? *Our School Improvement Plan (SIP) starts with safety. The element we serve at the campus that is a tough group to serve. We have a zero tolerance for misbehavior, profanity, etc. Our job is to not normalize those behaviors*

although they may see these behaviors as normal in their home life. The culture is always under attack. Having parental support to reinforce the school culture values makes HUGE difference. I've left my son there tonight at the basketball game and I feel that he is safe. I transferred my son from a small private Christian school 2 years ago when I came. I may have been less comfortable then (in 2015), but I'm confident now about his safety there.

- Please provide some specifics on changes that you made upon arrival in 2015 that impact school safety. *Established zero tolerance on behaviors and profanity. Profanity is a gateway behavior – if you normalize that, it will escalate to physical aggression. Now we have a behavior strategy that is scaled. We also changed the configuration of the school – formerly set up by subject and now we have 6th grade, 7th grade, 8th grades separated by halls. There are teams per grades and they have a staggered bell by grade-level team.*

This is a critical time to prep for EOGs for instruction. Principal Turner will significantly scale back any one-on-one meetings with parents so that he can serve his currently population as he prepares them for EOGs.

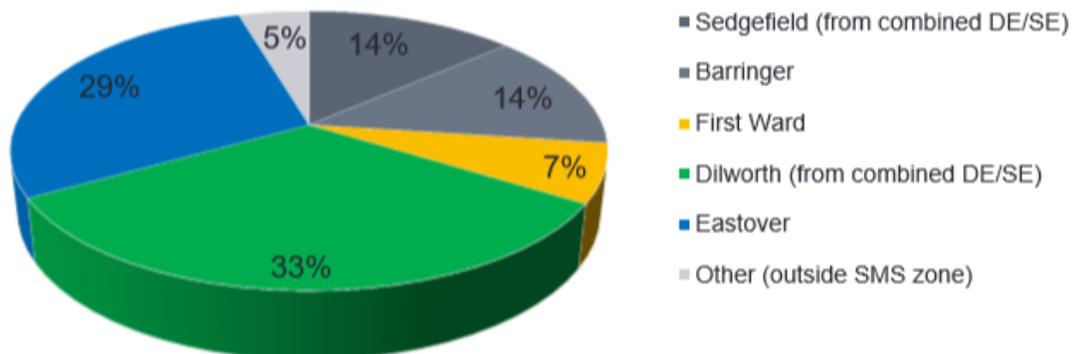
The next community meeting will be March 6th at Sedgefield Middle School. Time TBD.

The chart below was shared at the October Community Meeting. It illustrates the changing population at SMS with the new assignment plan. The chart below shows the changes:

2019-2020 SMS Estimated 6th Grade Composition by Home Elementary School; Estimated Total SMS Enrollment

- SMS gains Eastover attendance area and loses all Pinewood and Montclair attendance areas
- Combined Dilworth/Sedgefield Elementary attendance areas assigned to SMS

Home Elementary Schools: 635 Students



Note: pie chart percentages reflect estimated 6th grade composition