

**Core Instruction Restructuring Subcommittee
Brainstorm and Discussion
December 18th, 2008**

Essential Questions

- How do we strengthen our core instruction?
- How do we challenge all students in all classes?
- How do we support all students in all classes?

Summary of What Works in 90/90/90 Schools Research

- Culture of high expectations and rigorous academic achievement as the norm (common expectations for performance)
- Ongoing, job-embedded professional collaboration about student achievement
- Informational writing emphasized across levels in all classes
- Formative assessment and accompanying data analysis and collaboration about student achievement
- Curriculum choices are differentiated, engaging, culturally sensitive; curriculum pathways and flexibility in scheduling

Final Recommendations from the Core Instruction Subcommittee

- **Standardize 7th and 8th grade content-area reading classes to move toward an aligned curriculum that includes a focus on writing (with curriculum writing time, materials, and professional development support)**
- **Support and monitor implementation of the common expectations for writing across the curriculum (with on-going professional development, materials, and possible peer mentoring)**
- **Professional Learning Communities model for collaboration (with site visits, training, and dedicated time)**
- **Review quarter exams as they fit within a balanced assessment system:**
 - Do they measure what we value?
 - What is the purpose?
 - Do they serve this purpose in the current format?
 - What might be a better format? Can writing be part of every exam?
- **Investigate flexible schedules and other middle school models**
- **Focus professional development on differentiation (show and tell, best practices, being in colleagues' classrooms, differentiation coach?)**
 - Classroom management
 - Concrete, practical planning and tools
 - Peer observation
- **Investigate ways we might build a building culture that values learning**
 - Student survey
 - Building-wide, classroom-based, and community initiatives
 - Continuity with elementary and high school

Struggling Learners Subcommittee

Discussion and Recommendations

Essential Questions:

- What interventions are working and how do we know that they are?
- How do we accelerate reading and math achievement for special education students?
- How do we meet the needs of special education students in the regular education classroom?

Recommendations for action:

Special Education

1. Revise the structure of SPED services in order to:

- Increase direct instruction in deficit areas in reading, math, writing (by creating a SPED Department vs on-team SPED staffing)
 - Teachers will have areas of specialty in: *Language!* A-B, C-D, E-F; *Rewards/Read Naturally; Corrective Reading*; Math; Writing)
 - This will increase the efficiency of service by assigning students to teachers who specialize in certain areas instead of assigning kids to teams and asking one special ed teacher to be a specialist in every content area
- Increase co-teaching opportunities in general ed reading and math
- Increase accommodations made by general education teachers in assignments for SPED students
- Increase general education teachers' capacity to provide differentiated instruction for SPED students

2. Develop/improve service model for students with emotional/behavior disorders.

3. Develop a process to insure a smooth transition of services from elementary to middle school for SPED students and students receiving tier 2 and 3 services.

4. Redistribute, utilize, and train TAs and teachers with TAs in classrooms to maximize their effectiveness in improving academic skills and behaviors.

Academic RtI

1. Determine data collection tools and procedures for Academics and Behaviors

- benchmark screening tools (Thinklink, AIMSweb, etc.) and benchmarking process for all students 3 times/year
- progress monitoring tool/s and frequency of assessment

2. Develop a Problem-Solving Process in order to

- analyze student data and determine which students need Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports
 - ensure effectiveness of core instruction for all students
3. Enhance Core Instruction (Tier 1)
- Revise and rewrite the curriculum for Content Area Literacy classes, including the Incorporation of Writing Across the Curriculum Guidelines into Content Area Literacy
 - Provide professional development in Differentiation
(Develop concrete examples of what differentiated instruction looks like at a middle school)
 - Review of Quarter Exams – do our assessments match our mission?
4. Revamp and revise additional supports in reading and math
- A. Reading Supports
- Enhance Tier 2 Reading by revising the curriculum for Connections classes
 - Define entrance and exit criteria for Tier 2 supports
 - Determine entrance and exit criteria for Tier 3 support classes - Reading Dimensions
- B. Math Supports
- Develop Math Dimensions classes at all grade levels
 - Define entrance and exit criteria for Tier 2 supports
 - Determine entrance and exit criteria for Tier 3 support classes - Math Dimensions
- C. Other Supports
- Expand Homework Connections for students exiting Math Connections
 - Use homework connections as a transitions class between math/reading connections
 - Develop summer program for all students performing below grade level in math or reading
 - Consider alternative times to provide math and reading supports (i.e. after school, Saturday) to allow students the opportunity to participate in elective classes and get needed support

Behavioral RtI

A. Implement Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and establish school wide behavioral expectations.

B. Provide electives that build on Social/Emotional Learning with research-validated curriculum.

Climate Subcommittee

Essential Questions:

- How do we provide a safe, respectful, and equitable environment?
- How do we create a representative community of students, educators, and families?

Recommendations:

Establish student community expectations, pride and commitment

- PBIS
- UMS school pride, cultural awareness, and student enrichment (activities, assemblies, concerts, and organizations)
- Advisory or homeroom period with character building or community service
- Re-visit Refocus materials and expectations

Enhance / establish parent involvement and community relations

- Parent events and activities (expo night, picnic, computer access, etc)
- Form a Parent Advisory group (representative of the population)
- Re-visit P / T conferences (student-led?, mandatory?, different schedule?, transportation?)
- Expectations contracts or pledges for behavior, academics, parent involvement
- Utilize community outreach staff more efficiently, possibly to educate staff
- Create a parent pamphlet (resources, academic tips, define parent expectations)

Foster staff camaraderie

- Form a social committee
- Longer, more meaningful retreats

Governance Subcommittee

Essential Questions

What will be the framework for decision-making at UMS?

How will we make decisions using data?

Recommendations from the Governance Subcommittee

Urbana Middle School will have a new framework for decision-making

- The School Improvement Team will be the main decision-making body at UMS
- Members of the School Improvement Team will be volunteers to their elected positions; they will represent all grade levels and departments
- First elections will be held this May members may serve no more than two consecutive years
- These team members will receive training this summer in facilitating and SIP writing with funding support from ROE
- Parent Advisory Committee - Recruited from cross section of parents (grade levels, ethnicity, socio-economic status). Meet quarterly with Principal and two members of School Improvement Team. Cover issues and agenda set by parents. With School Improvement Team, PTSA, and UMS administration, work toward increase parent involvement
- Each UMS task force will be a small group of teachers and administrators focusing on a specific topic for a short period of time (like a semester) and preparing a recommendation for the School Improvement Team
- The idea to form a task force will often come from the School Improvement Team based on concerns of the team members or their constituents
- UMS task forces will be open to all teachers who would like to serve on them, and will have narrow goals that are tied to the mission and vision of the school
- They will each be a place for new teachers, or those who do not currently hold leadership positions, to have their voices heard
- The task force structure will be a vehicle for developing teacher leadership, as well as a thoughtful and efficient means for making recommendations on a variety of topics to the School Improvement Team

Urbana Middle School will become a Professional Learning Community

- All teachers will receive a copy of *Getting Started: Reculturing Schools to Become PLCs* this year and *Learning By Doing: A Handbook for PLCs at Work* next year
- Ericka Uskali from ROE will facilitate UMS PLC discussions starting in mid-February
- As many teachers as possible will attend PLC training this summer with funding support from ROE
- UMS mission and vision will be the first discussions of the 09-10 school year
- All meetings (team, department, faculty, task force, etc) will be PLC meetings with goals that point to the school's mission and vision