

Academics Agenda

July 13, 2020

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

Google Meet link:

meet.google.com/bsk-dmxr-zmp

Members: Michelle Kurkoski, Maggie Burggraaff, Tom Johnston, Joell Pundsack, Emily Graveen, Cheri Howe, Hannah Kostichka, Noah Langseth, Teresa Ward, Kirstin Knutson, Tara Richert, Noelle Haland, Kassie Larson, Wendell Sletten, John Gawarecki, Jennifer Heydt-Nelson, Angie Haverland, Rob Krueger, Jennifer Bartle

1. Recording notes (Maggie still willing or do we select a new volunteer?)
Maggie will still take notes moving forward.
2. WBWF Updates (Tom) 3 minutes
No update. This fall will be interesting in determining what comes from MDE as these are based on MCA scores, which weren't taken Spring 2020. We will still need a plan, but will need different data. We will know more when MDE makes decisions.
3. Placement Exams Update (Noah and Kassie) 3 minutes
Math - Most of the 6th graders have been tested for math. Continuing to meet and schedule times as needed.
Kassie - Only two placements tests have been given, only two more need to be scheduled.
Noah says one good thing to note for math, students are testing lower than they normally do, and while there has been a downward trend in general, with distance learning this was expected. Hopeful this is a one year thing. Ideally students will be placed where they are successful.
Is this affecting scheduling?
Joell says it does affect the schedule. MS Math I and II are being put into additional sections. It does impact the schedule. However, this might be changing anyway based on decisions yet to come from MDE.
4. Recruiting Diverse Staff Update (John) 2 minutes
Two teaching positions (choir and special education for high needs students) and two coaching positions are open. This group has not met yet this summer.
We have attracted more diversity in our applications.
The idea was to have small committees to do interviewing. There were people interested, but unfortunately their timeline did not match up with interviewing for the Spanish position.
5. MSA Tours Update (John, Tom, Shannon) 3 minutes
Virtual tours are being filmed. Tom recorded his voice over. Justin says it will be online by Wednesday. Regardless of what happens in the fall, we will only be offering virtual tours.
6. Orientation Update (John, Tom, Shannon) 3 minutes
No update for 6th grade at this time.

No update for 9th grade at this time.

Waiting to see what MDE recommends will drive these decisions.

7. Supplemental Online Learning Update (Emily) 3 minutes

Not much is happening on this front. If students are taking these courses to meet a graduation requirement, this may be free. Emily is looking into this once students who are taking these courses over the summer make decisions.

Not many students are currently seeking this out. Decisions are made case by case.

8. Changing to One Platform Update (John) 5 minutes

Justin and John have not been able to meet yet. They are hoping to discuss this today. Communications to the staff will be sent out later regarding preferred/mandatory platforms or LMS (Learning Management Systems). Make sure the explanation is clear when sending this information to the staff about platform versus education sites.

9. Enrollment update (Joell) 3 minutes

We are still enrolling students.

2 openings in 6th grade

4 openings in 9th grade

2 openings in 12th grade

- One student may be interested, not sure if the student is on track to graduate at this time

Do we still take students after 10th grade?

We need to fill the BOD capacity. 60 for 12th. Currently we have 58. Joell's responsibility is to fill the spots.

We have been at capacity for the past few years. After school begins, no new students in grades 9-12 will be allowed, 6-8 are still open.

Legally we need to allow enrollment in all grades for capacity. The BOD can always change the capacity when needed. This could appear to look exclusionary if adjusted during the year, unless this is adjusted to fix financial needs. We need to fill spots since we are not in session.

Adding high school students in the middle of the year has not worked out well, so that is why the decision that was made.

In the upper HS classes, if we have been low, we have added exchange students as a possibility as well.

Are we adding a senior? Unless the BOD has a measure to cap it for a year or two.

Joell follows the BOD capacity that was approved in January.

We have no other 12th graders on the waitlist right now.

10. Scheduling update (Joell) 5 minutes

In person scheduling was being worked on until last Thursday. That schedule was put together last January. These classes had to be moved to work with the current scheduling.

We still need to fill the schedule for 6th. More sections may need to be made. This throws other classes off with balance.

6-7 grade scheduling is challenging. This year was extra challenging.

Joell has halted this due to the hybrid schedule decisions.

11. Math Curriculum changes updates (Noah) 5 minutes

a. How will it be adjusted for distance learning?

There is a difference, but this is not a gigantic change from what has been done in the past.

The same thing that other schools are needing to do with math curriculum are being done. Trainings are being planned and scheduled for distance learning to help determine what is best for our students' success. We still need to wait and see what will be happening moving forward. Hybrid curriculum looks different from distance learning curriculum.

b. Why have parents and students not received communication before receiving a schedule with the changed course(s)?

An email has been drafted and is being edited and reviewed by administration and the math department.

c. Have course names been changed to have Math in the name? (ex: Integrated Math 1)

The course names were not given to Joell after the June BOD meeting. Soon, they will get these to her to make the changes so that it will become a part of the vernacular.

Joell will adjust the names to add "math" to the course titles.

This will help parents understand the course is still a math course. Academic agreements and the course guide should be updated as well.

For now, it will just be changed on Skyward. Later, the agreements and guide can be adjusted. Tom has offered to help update the agreements.

d. How have the numbers been kept down in other electives? For example, BOD discussion included Mike F. study skills classes not being overwhelmed because those in math skills were now added to study skills, and that there may need to be sections of study skills added that Caitlin teaches to compensate.

Math numbers would still be skewed regardless of the curriculum changes. If the curriculum hadn't changed, numbers would be thrown off anyway based on how students have been testing in math entrance tests. We can only guess prior to the students enrolling and being tested, what the math schedule will look like.

Some adjustments will be needed for high school classes as well.

This makes balancing the schedule difficult. Some courses have 5 options for 6th grade courses to help balance the schedule, for example Spanish 6.

Mike F. will have all 88 6th grade students for study skills this year as well as all 88 6th graders in English classes.

Every other day he will see these students.

In the past he had 10-15 students below this number in study skills because of band and math skills courses. These will not be alternating with study skills this year.

- Is this considered an overload for him?
- Is adding sections an option?
- Has he been checked in with to discuss these numbers?

Because he sees these 88 students twice and teaching all 6th grade all day is already a challenge, he should be talked to about these changes so he understands where these decisions are coming from.

12. Planning for Next Year Update (John) 20 minutes

- a. Where is the planning at right now? Calendar for completion and posting to MSA website?
- b. Should enrollment be a concern if we don't follow what other districts are doing?
- c. Review results of parent survey
- d. Review results of student survey
- e. Review results of teacher survey
- f. When will the draft plan be sent to teachers for input/questions/concerns?
- g. What about rigor for next year and how it balances with our mission and vision?

We have been directed to plan for three different scenarios as we plan for 20-21 school year. When the Governor, MDE, and MDH make an announcement, currently scheduled for the last week of July, we will be able to move forward with one of the three plans.

Regardless of which plan MSA moves forward with, there is a consensus to minimize confusion and to go to a full block schedule no matter what scenario is put into place. That way if changes need to be made with a scenario (ie: going from Hybrid to Full Contact to Distance Learning and any combination of that), students will still follow the same schedule. This will minimize confusion and maximize the instruction for the teachers as far as planning goes. This full block schedule will be teaching odd/even days. No matter what, students will have classes everyday.

When distance learning took place spring 2020, the block schedule was favorable. However, many students have expressed an interest in synchronous courses, rather than asynchronous.

Joell will share a schedule at tomorrow's Teaching and Learning meeting (7/14/20 at 11:00 A.M.).

John thinks the Governor will put these decisions on local districts to decide.

- What is right for MSA?

There is a lot of concern about what 833 will implement.

- Will we lose students if we are using Distance Learning and they use Hybrid (or vice versa)?

Possibly.

The survey results are leaning toward Distance Learning.

So far, if we had the right health mitigations in place, parents would like to have kids back in school.

However, a number of the staff is uncomfortable coming back if we are in person. 60% are willing to return to work. 40% of teachers are unwilling or unsure of coming back if we are in person.

If there are not enough staff members on campus, we could not allow students back.

- Is the staff member who does not want to be in person replaced?

Some schools think that is what they would do; John is not comfortable doing

that. He thinks there is a better alternative. Staff members who are not willing to come back make this a legitimate reason to look at Distance Learning. For MSA, coming back in person raises numerous possible issues that could force Distance Learning anyway.

- If a staff member does contract COVID or is ill and needs to wait for testing, what does MSA do in the meantime?

We'd need to shift into Distance Learning anyway. It is unlikely there will be enough willing substitutes to fill MSA's needs.

We are really waiting for MDH guidelines to provide a threshold for determining what numbers of COVID cases would require a school to revert to Distance Learning.

As a school you are allowed to be in a more restrictive environment than a less restrictive environment. We cannot ensure who is and who isn't a carrier of COVID. This is John's biggest concern if safety is the priority.

The safety of everyone is what is paramount until we can ensure the safety of 99.9% of everyone on campus.

- For parents who want to send kids to inperson school and we offer distance learning, will parents leave the school?

It is a possibility, as is the reverse. We may attract students/families who are looking for distance learning options.

If a Hybrid schedule is implemented, the block schedule allows us to keep cohorts smaller. This keeps the number of students to a minimum in the building. This makes for less passing time in hallways. This will allow for the least amount of issues to pop up.

The staff will have the most exposure to COVID. Another issue is lunch schedules. Even with a hybrid schedule, the lunch rooms may not be an option.

Some districts will have teachers travel, not students. This is not very viable at MSA, though it is an idea.

One of the challenges with a hybrid schedule is that we do not have a true gage of what this will look like right now.

Staff will have used all, if not more than they are allotted, of their PTO if they contract COVID. You will go from things working great to being in crisis mode. There are significant impacts that could occur.

- How do you find subs? Workers comp? Sick time?

- Can staff choose between being at home or on campus? Can there be a combination?

The problem is that there will be students who do not have a place to go during that course.

- Who would supervise them?

Legally we need to have someone supervising students even if a teacher decides to stay home and teach.

Our budget has very little wiggle room to add staff to do this.
This could add to classroom management issues.

- What about bussing? How will a hybrid thing work with this?
If 833 does distance learning, we must do distance learning. If they have bussing, we can probably do a hybrid scenario.
- How do we check the students before they get on the bus?
This is out of our hands and will be dictated by 833.
- Can we require parents to drive their students to school?
This becomes an equity issue, so it cannot be required.

The Governor and Commissioner want education to be equitable. We have traditional school districts; we will compete with their model. We may lose or add people depending on family decisions. This is difficult to plan for. This is a decision for MSA to make once more information is provided by the state. But, if you don't have a staff, you won't have a school. If there isn't a work force a school won't work.

- Has there been communication about this with families?
Not yet. You cannot replace staff at this point in time, and this is a terrible way to handle the situation. If we are going distance learning, what is your preference in this framework.

- Have teachers been working on distance learning curriculum?
John will reach out to teachers via email to encourage them to begin planning for this. Something should be sent out today about planning for distance learning because some people need to be told they need to start to do that. The idea was that teachers should begin planning for online learning over the summer, as this can be changed to in person easier. Teachers are waiting for the plan.
Remember, many staff members may be able to work on curriculum in the summer, but that is not true for all staff members. Our staff are not paid the same as in larger districts, so many of them have summer jobs. We do not have extra money to provide them for this planning. Our budget is tight.

Some classes will need to be adjusted if classes are distance learning.

If there is a course that cannot be done online, teachers need to communicate with John and Joell about what that course will be.

Send out information that we will be moving to a block schedule no matter what. Include the reasons why this block schedule will be utilized this year: keeps rigor, minutes of instruction, follows the mission and vision.

13. Changing Electives for next year because of possible distance learning update (5 minutes)

Updates need to be sent by 17th of July to John/Joell.

- Can there be a blanket statement at the front of the course guide regarding the pandemic?

This can be about while this is not ideal/normal, it takes into consideration what could happen. We need to explain how we offer a safe and rigorous environment for our students and staff. We should focus on what we can do and develop so our distance learning plan is still viable. The safety issues are real. This needs to be communicated with families about why the staff feels this way. We need a cohesive plan moving forward. This is not a short term issue. This is something we need to show meets the needs of our students the best.

- Can professional development (PD) be added with the specific goal of supporting online teaching?
- How are we making sure staff feels supported in maintaining the rigor of the school?

It is imperative we have PD prior to the school year to support students with distance learning to offer our families with a quality education. But the planned PD for the school is also important, and it should not be pushed aside. It focuses on microaggressions and racism.

It would be good to focus on the distance plan.

- Can enrichment classes be winnowed down?

There are a few ideas floating around. Some districts are reducing enrichments. Some are making enrichments P/F. Some are deleting enrichments.

- Could teachers be partnered up to help with supporting teachers in Core courses?

HS electives are different from MS enrichments. 9-12 need to be different than 6-8.

- Could 6-8 faculty help with the overloaded core curriculum courses?

Enrichment courses can be a way to change activities and give students a mental shift, which is good.

Cutting enrichment could be detrimental to MS student mental health. These courses are at a different pace and are a way students get to be creative or work differently. This allows for trying different things.

- Is P/F an option?

This goes back to a rigor issue. The grades are more important for HS. For Band and Choir it would not be ideal, but for other courses it might work.

Letting kids choose P/F is an equity issue.

- If we are implementing Distance Learning, can we have scheduled planning days for staff/teachers? Can it be an e-learning day?
- How many students can we lose before it becomes an issue? Is there wiggle room for this?

If we lose students, we will need to cut staff. Losing one student puts us in a deficit.

a. Engineering

astronomy

b. Taste of Science

Name stays, curriculum changes

- c. MS Art (3 courses)
?
- d. HS Art (7 courses)
Some units will need to be changed; ceramics would need to be handbuilding instead
- e. Performing Arts (9 courses)
N/A
- f. MS English Language Arts (3 courses)
Speech - poetry
- g. HS English Language Arts (4 courses)
Speech - ?
- h. HS Social Studies (3 courses)
N/A
- i. From Last Meeting Notes - Other districts are suggesting not offering enrichment courses so students have time to focus on core courses. Should some of these courses be removed?
We need to do what is best for MSA and MSA students.
- j. Have teachers been given some direction about whether they can make changes for courses moving forward and how much they can change? Have the students been updated as to the changes?
Staff needs to be aware of this. Students need to be notified as well.
- k. Deadlines for changes? Placement?
Students/families have not been notified of these changes yet. For MS it is not a big issue because they are placed in courses.
Schedules cannot be accessed by families/students at this time on Skyward.

HS Speech students need to be notified ASAP about what the course will be changed to. These decisions should be made now.
It takes time to schedule students so let's get things done as quickly as possible. Maggie will connect with Joell today.

Emily is willing to send out emails to students regarding course changes for HS courses.

PE is essential for kids at this time. Block schedule will be a benefit. Aaron and Tara will meet and go through what will work for their courses.

- What subscriptions and tech will we have in the fall? What is available that we can work with?

This should be communicated to teachers soon.

Because of what needs to be loaded on their computers, Justin needs this information as soon as possible.

Michelle will be offering tech help for the staff moving forward.

14. Merit Promotion Procedure and Electives (Tom) 10 minutes

- a. Students who fail Middle School electives (not needing repeat). What do we categorize as electives and core?

Grade agreement says students must pass the class.

The confusion came from a student who failed Art 8. This student did not need to repeat Art 8 according to the Art Department. A core course is different from an enrichment course.

MS students only choose Band, other courses are assigned.

Departments are fine with enrichments moving on. Health does have a concern about students not putting forth effort.

Core courses must be passed. We need to agree that this is only for the MS enrichment courses. A core course is math, English, Spanish, science, or social studies.

This can be remedied in course descriptions by including prerequisites for HS courses. This could be inequitable in regards to transfer students.

Scheduling is a factor in this decision. Our schedule does not offer flexibility with this issue as students move on to the next grade if they fail an enrichment course. Would changing from an every other day schedule work as semester long for some courses? PE/Health should be an exception to this because this should be elongated throughout the year. Some teachers do not want students back who fail an enrichment course. HS courses can ask for prerequisites. Michelle will ask the staff what their thoughts/opinions are moving forward on this issue.

Potentially we should consider staying as a block schedule moving forward.

This helps with other issues that could arise moving toward the future.

- b. Review academic agreements, what needs to be repeated? What needs to be changed?

This may need to be changed in the wording of the academic agreement.

Once survey results are received, this will be decided.

- c. Continuing Questions: Who are the students who aren't moving on and why? What can we address here? How can we help and what changes can we make to help them?

Next Meeting: Will be August 10 (time?)

10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

Michelle would like to have this meeting on GoogleMeet.