

The Student Experience Project

Phase 3: *Middle Schools*

Report of Findings

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CONTENTS

- 4 Overview and Process**
- 5 Middle Schools Student Experience Themes through the Whole System View FrameWork™**
- 6 Summary of Middle Schools Key Themes Through the Whole System View**
- 7 Culture Arena**
- 9 Work Arena**
- 11 Organization Arena**
- 13 Chippewa Middle School**
- 14 Edgewood Middle School**
- 15 Highview Middle School**
- 16 Recommended Next Steps – Middle Schools**
- 18 Appendix**

OVERVIEW

The focus of this report is to describe the student experience among middle schoolers in the Mounds View Public Schools and how students and adults contribute to the student experience. As part of the District’s operational goals for 2018-19, this report is a reference point — at the request of the district superintendent, the Board of Education and the middle school principals — for understanding the current context of how students feel about their education and how they interact with each other and with the adults connected with the district’s middle schools. Chippewa, Edgewood and Highview middle schools participated in this project in the fall of 2018. Additional schools included in The Student Experience Project, which occurred between May and November of 2018, include Mounds View High Schools and Middle schools.

The process of change and the desire to ensure that students receive the best possible educational experience brings with it both intended and unintended outcomes and consequences. Periodically checking in with school stakeholders allows district and school leaders to take a deeper look at how assumptions and decisions have shaped the current reality of the schools and what future assumptions, decisions and steps may be considered to improve upon the positive experiences already occurring.

Participating stakeholders understood that *themes* around their input would be carried forward from their comments in facilitated group conversations, interviews, or via surveys. When using thematic analysis, unique comments (both positive and negative) may seem to have been minimized. An individual may feel that his or her voice may have been left out or muted – this is a consequence when keeping the confidentiality promised to each participant. This confidentiality is critical to establishing the initial data. We appreciate everyone’s willingness to discuss openly and would ask that the report is considered as a reflection tool as leaders, students, staff and families look at others’ (and also consider the impact of their own) style, behavior, and practices on the dynamics of the student experience.

PROCESS

This report communicates the findings from facilitated group conversations, interviews, and surveys designed to gather perspectives and information to inform potential improvement of the student experience in Mounds View middle schools. Consultants from TeamWorks International, Inc., facilitated all group conversations and interviews and developed the majority of questions in the stakeholder surveys. The surveys were administered by the school district to allow for comparison of responses of the student experience in subsequent years, as well as to use the detailed results for specific program improvements.

Data about the middle school student experience was gathered between October 8 and November 16, 2018.

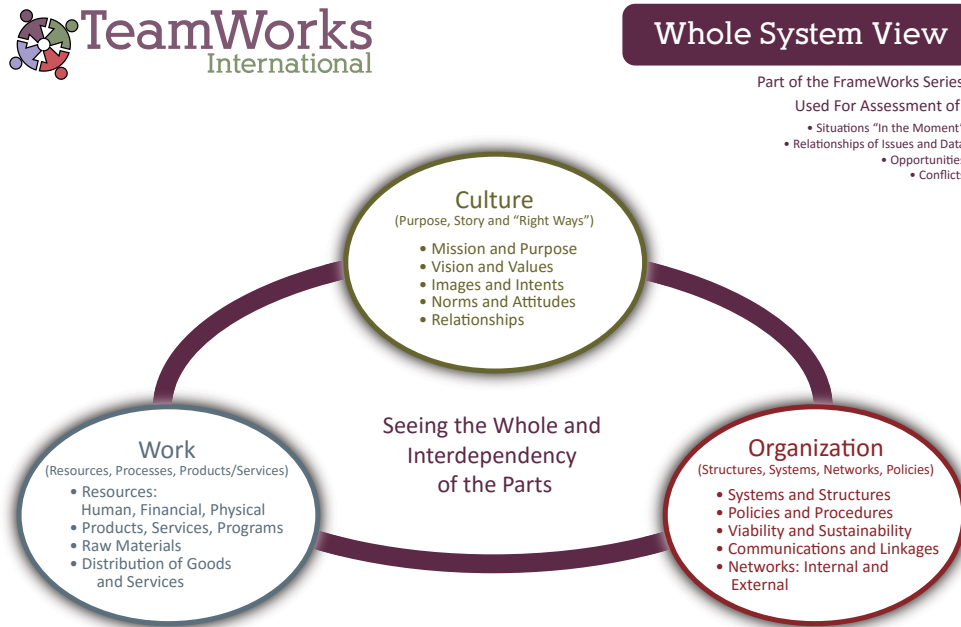
Information was gathered through facilitated group conversations, interviews and surveys as follows:

1. Twenty-six groups of middle school students representing all grades and a variety of achievement levels, student involvement, and race, ethnicity and gender. More than 250 students participated in the group conversations across the three middle schools.
2. Sixteen groups of staff representing all grades and a variety of positions across the middle school. About 100 staff members participated in the group conversations.
3. Seven parent groups, including a total of 61 parents, representing students in all grades and a variety of student achievement and involvement.
4. Nineteen staff interviews with school leadership and office/support staff.
5. Volunteer surveys completed by 2,280 students, 417 parents/guardians, and 128 staff members. (See tables on pages 13-15 for more information about the survey respondents from each middle school.)

The information herein serves to 1) identify the recurring themes that shape the student experience in Mounds View middle schools, and 2) suggest ways that the schools and district can refine their practices in order to move forward to improve upon the student, staff and family experience at the school and in the school district.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT EXPERIENCE THEMES THROUGH THE WHOLE SYSTEM VIEW FRAMEWORK

Within organizations, there isn't just one facet that defines the whole. Rather, it is a combination of the work, issues, opportunities and challenges that exist within human organizations. The Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA) created a model for mapping many of the relevant characteristics present in most organizations as a "Social Process" development tool. The *Whole System View FrameWork™* is an adaptation of that model's top layer; it shows the interdependency of the *Work, Organization, and Culture* arenas of an organization.



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Work Arena

The *Work* arena is the economic portion of the organization and the human, physical and financial resources needed to provide for that work. It consists of many of the tangible inputs of skills and tools for the work.

Organization Arena

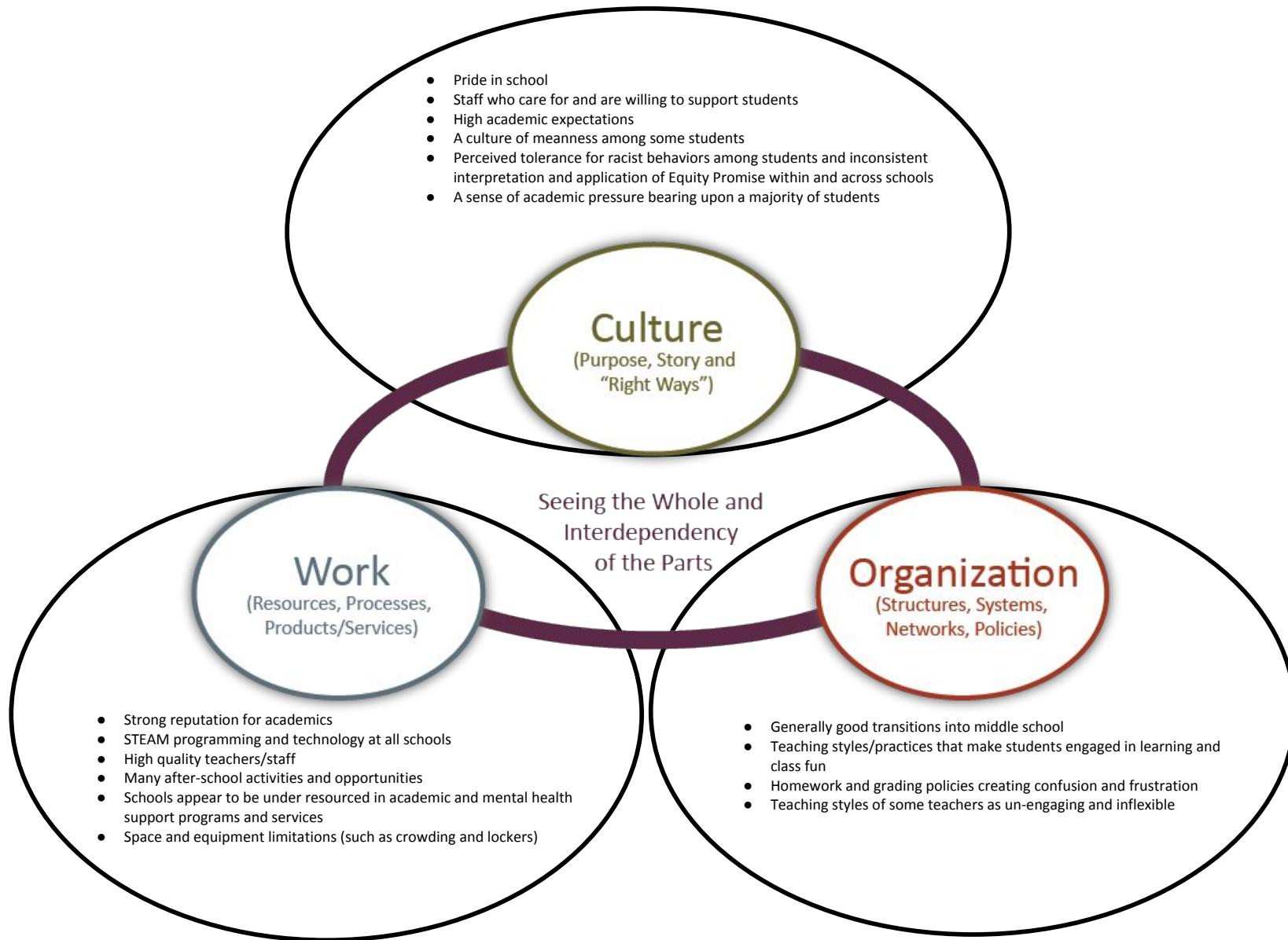
The *Organization* arena is composed of the internal structures and systems and external networks that provide the "order" and "connections" of the organization. An example would be the procedures for utilizing the resources in the work arena.

Culture Arena

The *Culture* arena holds the mission, purpose, story, spirit and relational norms and expectations of an organization. It defines the meaning and purpose for the existence of the organization and exerts a strong influence over the allocation of efforts and resources for both the Work and Organization arenas.

In organizing the perspectives of stakeholders for this project, we will present it using the Whole System View FrameWork™.

Summary of Key Themes of the Middle Schools Student Experience as Seen Through the Whole System View Framework



CULTURE ARENA (PURPOSE, STORY, AND “RIGHT WAYS”)

Across all three Mounds View middle schools, the majority of students, parents and staff participating in groups and individual conversations took pride in their schools and in their place in them. Students and parents alike noted that they chose their school and the school district largely due to the reputation of a strong academic focus and of academic success. Students noted that teachers and staff — for the most part — cared about their success and about them as students. And most students also commented that they had friends at school.

What also was commonly expressed was variability in the culture of student and teacher/staff relationships. As stated by students, some teachers and staff members can be counted on to always be willing to lend an ear or be there for the students, while some can consistently be counted on to be distant and uninterested in anything beyond their classroom instruction.

A common theme shared across the middle schools was a struggle with students’ meanness to each other, outright bullying each other, and in some cases, racist comments among students. In addition, students reported their experience is sometimes unintentionally minimized by staff based upon the staff members’ connection to certain students and their families. If students have easy access to social media, the bullying and “drama,” as noted by students, is amplified. While this theme was less evident in the results of the student surveys, the theme was much more apparent in student conversations, particularly for students who are not the majority, are not popular, or who are less affluent. This phenomenon was most apparent at Chippewa Middle School, but was observed to some degree at all three middle schools. Compounding the effects of such behaviors are the following cultural factors:

- A hesitancy by students to report the behavior for fear that they will be further targeted by the offending student, or that the school will inform parents and, according to the students, making matters worse.
- Students reporting to teachers/staff/coaches of being treated badly by other students and the offenders not being held to account, particularly if the offender’s family is connected, well known by staff, or if the offending student is generally viewed favorably by staff.
- That some students say they are sometimes not believed when they report name calling, or racist behaviors, because they are told the offending students are “not like that.”
- Students’ experience that they are treated differently than others due to race, ability, or socio-economic factors. Examples included harsher and more quickly applied consequences for students of color when misbehaving or making mistakes, higher tolerance for errors or misdeeds by white students or by students who are better known to staff, and a blindness to offenses committed upon students of color. (Use of the N word, for example, appears to be highly tolerated at all of the schools, according to students.)
- The absence of, or limited visibility of, consistent, intentional and clear programs, protocols and images with regard to social emotional and behavioral expectations. For example, middle schools elsewhere will offer consistent themes, messages, and student kindness groups to mitigate mean behavior and encourage positive behavior among students. (Highview and Edgewood have started to address this issue with the creation of student groups to assist students in different ways such as the Hawk Pride Ambassadors at Highview and girls’ and boys’ leadership development groups at both schools.)

Students also commented on a desire to be treated more respectfully by adults in the middle schools, in general, in terms of personal space and being allowed to use the restrooms when needed. (Passing time, they stated frequently, does not allow enough time for restroom stops if students are to be to class on time.) As to encroachment on personal space, some students stated that teachers, staff and administrators touch their head/hair (especially students of color), hug them, or squeeze their shoulders/hands when students would rather them not do so. While students generally do not feel the gestures are ill intended, they are unwanted and, in some cases, felt to be culturally insensitive. (Parents of students of color also commented on the phenomenon of white teachers, staff and students feeling free to touch and play with their students’ hair.)

When asked on the volunteer survey if they feel a lot of pressure to succeed, more than 70 percent of students at each of the three middle middles agreed as noted below.

Middle School Student Survey Results: Feel pressure to succeed?						
	Chippewa		Edgewood		Highview	
Strongly agree	38.3%, 412	80.4%	38.4%, 198	76.6%	30.1%, 269	71.4%
Somewhat agree	42.1%, 453		38.2%, 197		41.3%, 284	
Somewhat disagree	7.25%, 78		8.1%, 42		8.0%, 55	
Strongly disagree	3.53%, 38		3.9, 20		3.5%, 24	
Don't know	8.8%, 95		11.4%, 59		8.1%, 56	

When asked where the pressure to succeed came from, the sources were ranked similarly across all three schools as follows.

Middle School Student Survey Results: Where does the pressure come from?		
Chippewa	Edgewood	Highview
1. My parents/family, 36.3%	1. My parents/family 33.5%	1. My parents/family, 33.7%
2. Me, 29%	2. Me, 32.0%	2. Me, 27.3%
3. Everyone around me, 11.5%	3. Everyone around me, 12.0%	3. Everyone around me, 10.2%
4. Teachers, 8.1%	4. Teachers, 7.2%	4. Teachers, 10.2%

While students at all three schools noted that they are expected to achieve, the pressure for students to achieve academically was more pronounced at Chippewa Middle. One student at Chippewa, in fact, noted that the student is punished by a parent if the student does not receive all As. (For this student, the prospect of the new grading system was particularly problematic and stressful). Other students also commented that it is not clear under the new grading system how they can receive an A. In contrast to Mounds View High School, we did not hear from students about *academic* bullying at the middle school level.

Success Themes: Pride in school, staff who care for and are willing to support students, high academic expectations.

Challenge Themes: A culture of meanness among students, tolerance of racist behavior, a sense of academic pressure bearing upon a majority of students.

WORK ARENA (RESOURCES, PROCESSES, PRODUCTS/SERVICES)

Across all three middle schools, the strength of the district’s and their school’s respective reputation for academics was noted positively across stakeholder groups. While all three middle schools were perceived to offer strong academic programs, Chippewa’s students, parents and staff held their school in extremely high regard, to the point that students there consistently said their school was either the best, or one of the top schools, in the state. When students were asked how they came to that conclusion, some stated because their parents told them so, or because the school was ranked as such externally.

Among students surveyed at all three middle schools, *teachers* ranked among the top two greatest assets, as noted below. For Highview and Edgewood, *teachers* were noted by students as the schools’ greatest asset, while *academic excellence* was listed as Chippewa’s greatest asset.

<i>Middle School Student Survey Results: Greatest Assets by School</i>		
Chippewa	Edgewood	Highview
1. Academic excellence, 43.4%	1. Teachers, 42.8%	1. Teachers, 40.8%
2. Teachers, 41.0%	2. Academic excellence, 33.1%	2. Students, 31.5%
3. Safe environment, 32.0%	3. Athletics, 27.1%	3. Academic excellence, 30.5%
4. Students, 23.5%	4. Students, 26.9%	4. Safe environment, 25.3%
5. Athletics, 23.2%	5. Ability to prepare students for high school 22.9%	5. Staff, 24.0%
6. Ability to prepare students for high school, 22.0%	6. Safe environment, 20.7%	6. Athletics, 23.3%
7. Reputation, 20.5%	7. Staff, 19.6%	7. Ability to prepare students for high school, 19.3%

Like the high schools, the availability of activities in the middle schools was largely perceived to be a strength. Students expressed that, while there are many activities at their schools, the students aren’t able to access all their preferred activities, likely due to different activities being held at the same time and day. Parents also expressed a desire for the schools — especially at Edgewood and Highview — to offer a wider variety of after-school activities. (For example, students requesting an after-school book club said they were told they could not do so due to the need for supervision that was unavailable.)

STEAM programming was also referenced as a positive aspect of all three middle schools, though it was highlighted differently at each school. At Chippewa, for example, students and parents commented positively on the new direction of the school to focus on STEAM and the seemingly special opportunities and technology available at Chippewa that they perceived to be unique to Chippewa. At Edgewood, which has included STEAM programming for years thanks to its magnet school designation and partnership, stakeholders noted that the school is at a transition point regarding STEAM. Many stakeholders suggested that Edgewood would benefit from an assessment of its current STEAM programming and how STEAM will evolve at the school in the coming years. And at Highwood, students noted technology (such as 3D printers and Chromebooks) and classes such as “Innovation” as positive and unique to their school.

A common theme across all of the middle schools (and also in the high schools) is the need for more explicit, comprehensive and intentional academic and mental health support systems for students. The number of students requiring mental health services has grown and continues to grow, staff reported. Students are coming in to school with needs that they have not seen in previous years, and those needs can sometimes get in the way of their learning and the learning of other students in class. And while the deans are considered a first line of support in all the schools, they and staff across all three schools commented that there are simply not enough of them. They, and some parents, questioned whether deans even have the appropriate experience and training to give students the kind of professional

support they need. Meanwhile, the number of therapists, psychologists and Special Education staff in the schools are also considered to be inadequate to the task. They also appear to be near burn out and feeling systemically unsupported. While many appreciate the autonomy that is a hallmark of the Mounds View district for teachers and staff, they also noted that the structures currently in place are inadequate to serve all of the students currently requiring extra help. Therapists/psychologists on site are too few, staff stated across all of the schools, and access both mental health and academic supports is too limited.

Limited space, building design and equipment policies at the schools has also created challenges, such as:

- Students not having a place to go when they need to take a time out, be disciplined, or down regulate. At Edgewood, for example, the limited space has resulted in students sitting in the school's front office or the waiting area of Student Services.
- The location and size of lockers, and locks that jam frequently. Highview students often commented on their lockers being too small to hold their belongings, as well as on locks that regularly jam. Students at all three schools noted the distance they have to go to get to their lockers between classes that are sometimes at opposite ends of the school making them late for some of their classes.
- Extremely crowded hallways during pass time increasing behavior issues and tardiness for class.

Success Themes: Strong reputation for academics, high quality teachers/staff, many after-school activities and opportunities.

Challenge Themes: Schools appear to be under-resourced in academic and mental health support programs and services; experiencing space and equipment limitations.

ORGANIZATION ARENA (STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS, NETWORKS, COMMUNICATION AND POLICIES)

Stakeholders generally considered the transition of students into all three middle schools to be positive, particularly having the first day of the school year be one only for sixth graders. Advanced meetings with deans, student and parent tours of the middle schools in the spring and summer, and planning between fifth grade teachers in elementary schools and staff in the middles were all noted as proactive and positive aspects of the transition into middle school. For students, having siblings or friends in the middle schools, or having participated in a middle school summer or music program, made the transition even easier. For sixth graders, the transition in each school was generally positive. The adjustment from being with one teacher most of the day in elementary school to having seven different classes and teachers across the school – and managing so many different courses — in middle schools was noted frequently by students as a significant change. For some students, having multiple teachers offers more opportunity for growth, and even fun. For others, it was a major adjustment that created stress in the first weeks of school.

Variability of teaching styles and application of grading policies was common across all three schools. Students knew and commented on which teachers/classes are the ones where the teaching is done in a more traditional, lecture style (and for the students less fun way), and those done in ways that are engaging, inclusive and interesting to the students. Edgewood students, for example, frequently commented on how fun some teachers were at their school, and how they learned to enjoy subjects they never would have thought because of how engaging the teachers made the subject matter. Student confusion, and deep concern by some, about grading practices was also common in all three schools. For example, some students stated their hard work on assignments is useless if they do poorly on summative tests. And even if they re-test, those re-tests, students said, take them away from other learning time. Some students also commented on having a great degree of test anxiety as a result of the weighting on summative assessments.

New homework policies were also commented on by all groups of stakeholders. Parents questioned the intent and practicality of the new policy, with some parents requesting more homework for their children to keep them occupied during non-school hours. (And this was noted by parents across different races and cultures.) This contrasted with students requesting more time during school to complete assignments and homework, though other students stated they can complete their work during school with very little difficulty.

While the transition into sixth grade from elementary school was generally positive, seventh and eighth grade students in all three schools commented that the change from sixth to seventh grade was startling for many of them, with much less flexibility of teachers for tardiness and for students who tend to ask questions about assignments or course content. (This was more acute for students of color, but common across most races and cultures.) Students across all three schools noted that some teachers have a practice of holding entire classes of students in their room beyond the bell if some students have been misbehaving during the class, resulting in the students being late for their next period (and in resentment for the students perceived to be disruptive). Other students stated that, for some teachers, when students ask questions about assignments or about the subject matter to better understand what is intended, certain teachers will tell them that they should have paid closer attention and make the students feel embarrassed. These students feel frustrated, they say, because they were paying attention, but were confused by how the teacher shared the information and wished the teachers were more open to questions, or to re-stating the information in ways that are more approachable for them.

Tardy policies and practices varied by school, but a common theme across all three schools was students saying that passing time is too short, particularly if they have to make their way across the school, or if they have to use the restroom. And if students are taking swimming during Phy Ed, the time allowed to shower, dress and get to class was commonly perceived to be problematic. Compounding the passing time issue was a restriction on students to use backpacks during school because students who wished to bypass their lockers, in order to get to class on time and avoid a tardy slip, cannot do so.

Success Themes: Generally good transitions in to middle school, teaching styles/practices that make students engaged in learning and class fun.

Challenge Themes: Homework and grading policies creating confusion and frustration, teaching styles of some teachers as un-engaging and inflexible.

CHIPPEWA MIDDLE SCHOOL

Data about the student experience at Chippewa Middle School was gathered between October 22 and 30, 2018. Information about the student experience was gathered through facilitated group conversations, interviews and surveys as follows:

1. Nine groups of students representing all grades and a variety of achievement levels, student involvement, and race, ethnicity and gender. 80 students participated in the group conversations.
2. Six groups of staff representing all grades and a variety of positions with the school. More than 30 staff members participated in the group conversations.
3. Three parent groups, including a total of 18 parents, representing students in all grades and a variety of student achievement and involvement.
4. Five staff interviews with school leadership and office/support staff.
5. Volunteer surveys completed by 1,076 students, 247 parents/guardians, and 52 staff members. (See tables on pages 4 and 5 for more information about the survey respondents.)

Students Participating in Survey = 1,076			CM Students 2018-19 = 1,169	
Self-reported demographic Info by 1,038 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number	Percent/%	Number
White	63.5	659	68.6	802
Black	4.8	50	5.2	61
Hispanic	2.9	30	4.4	52
Asian	15.5	161	15.8	185
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.3	3	.1	1
Native American	1.1	11	.3	3
2+ of the above categories	6.1	63	5.6	65
Other	5.9	61	*	*
6 th grade	35.7	370		
7 th grade	31.0	322		
8 th grade	33.3	346		

Parents/Guardians Participating in Survey = 247		
Self-reported demographic Info by 238 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number
White	81.9	195
Black	2.1	5
Hispanic	0.0	0
Asian	8.8	21
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0
Native American	0.0	0
2+ of the above categories	2.1	5
Other	5.0	12
Student(s) in 6 th grade		70
Student(s) in 7 th grade		93
Student(s) in 8 th grade		75

Staff Participating in Survey = 52		
Self-reported demographic Info by 46 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number
White	91.3	42
Black, Hispanic, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American, 2+ of the above categories, Other	9.7	4

EDGEWOOD MIDDLE SCHOOL

Data about the student experience at Edgewood Middle School was gathered between November 6 and 15, 2018. Information about the student experience was gathered through facilitated group conversations, interviews and surveys as follows:

1. Eight groups of students representing all grades and a variety of achievement levels, student involvement, and race, ethnicity and gender. More than 80 students participated in the group conversations.
2. Five groups of staff representing all grades and a variety of positions with the school. More than 30 staff members participated in the group conversations.
3. Two parent groups, including a total of 24 parents, representing students in all grades and a variety of student achievement and involvement.
4. Seven staff interviews with school leadership and office/support staff.
5. Volunteer surveys completed by 516 students, 247 parents/guardians, and 52 staff members. (See tables on pages 4 and 5 for more information about the survey respondents.)

Students Participating in Survey = 516			EW Students 2018-19 = 664	
Self-reported demographic Info by 500 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number	Percent/%	Number
White	43.8	219	52.9	351
Black	11.8	59	15.7	104
Hispanic	7.4	37	11	73
Asian	11.0	55	11	73
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.2	1	.3	2
Native American	3.4	17	1.1	7
2+ of the above categories	9.8	49	8.1	54
Other	12.6	63	*	*
6 th grade	31.2	156		
7 th grade	33.6	168		
8 th grade	35.2	176		

Parents/Guardians Participating in Survey = 72		
Self-reported demographic Info by 66 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number
White	77.3	51
Black	6.1	4
Hispanic	1.5	1
Asian	7.6	5
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0
Native American	1.5	1
2+ of the above categories	3.0	2
Other	3.0	2
Student(s) in 6 th grade		27
Student(s) in 7 th grade		26
Student(s) in 8 th grade		20

Staff Participating in Survey = 41		
Self-reported demographic Info by 35 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number
White	97.1	34
Black, Hispanic, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American, 2+ of the above categories, Other	2.9	1

HIGHVIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL

Data about the student experience at Highview Middle School was gathered between October 8 and 16, 2018. Information about the student experience was gathered through facilitated group conversations, interviews and surveys as follows:

1. Nine groups of students representing all grades and a variety of achievement levels, student involvement, and race, ethnicity and gender. 90 students participated in the group conversations.
2. Five groups of staff representing all grades and a variety of positions with the school. Nearly 40 staff members participated in the group conversations.
3. Two parent groups, including a total of 19 parents, representing students in all grades and a variety of student achievement and involvement.
4. Seven staff interviews with school leadership and office/support staff.
5. Volunteer surveys completed by 688 students, 98 parents/guardians, and 35 staff members. (See tables on pages 4 and 5 for more information about the survey respondents.)

Students Participating in Survey = 688			HV Students 2018-19 = 867	
Self-reported demographic Info by 655 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number	Percent/%	Number
White	51.5	337	55.9	485
Black	10.8	71	15.8	137
Hispanic	9.5	62	12.6	109
Asian	6.9	45	8.3	72
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.2	1	0	0
Native American	0.5	3	.6	5
2+ of the above categories	10.4	68	6.8	59
Other	10.4	68	*	*
6 th grade	26.1	171		
7 th grade	36.5	239		
8 th grade	37.4	245		

Parents/Guardians Participating in Survey = 98		
Self-reported demographic Info by 95 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number
White	84.2	80
Black	4.2	4
Hispanic	2.1	2
Asian	2.1	2
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0	0
Native American	1.1	1
2+ of the above categories	2.1	2
Other	4.2	4
Student(s) in 6 th grade		34
Student(s) in 7 th grade		25
Student(s) in 8 th grade		36

Staff Participating in Survey = 35		
Self-reported demographic Info by 31 of survey respondents	Percent/%	Number
White	80.7	25
Black, Hispanic, Asian, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Native American, 2+ of the above categories, Other	19.3	6

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

Based upon the Key Themes of Strengths and Challenges across the three arenas of Culture, Work and Organization, the following recommendations are submitted for discussion and consideration.

Arena of Whole System View FrameWork	Culture	Work	Organization
Key Strengths Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride in school • Staff who care for and are willing to support students • High academic expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong reputation for academics • STEAM programming and technology • High quality teachers/staff • Many after-school activities and opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally good transitions in to middle school • Teaching styles/practices that make students engaged in learning and class fun
Key Challenges Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A culture of meanness among students • Perceived tolerance of racist behavior among student and inconsistent interpretation and application of Equity Promise within and across schools • A sense of academic pressure bearing upon a majority of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools appear to be under-resourced in academic and mental health support programs and services • Space and equipment limitations • Inconsistent implementation of Equity Promise across schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homework and grading policies creating confusion and frustration • Teaching styles of some teachers as un-engaging and inflexible

- A. Move from an equity promise to clearly defined, aligned and structured equity practices. (Some of these practices also address needs of students experiencing social emotional challenges and inequities.) Such practices include:
 - a. Training and support of teachers more deeply in equity practices, trauma-informed instruction, and restorative justice practices.
 - b. Developing, among all teachers and staff, a real interest and understanding of students’ lives, cultures and the daily challenges that they experience.
 - c. Recruitment, support, and retention of teachers and staff of color.
 - d. Communicating and implementing equity practices and structures that are clear, visible and developed into standard work at of all of the schools in the district.

- B. Assess and improve the effectiveness of academic and behavioral intervention and mental health support structures and practices with an eye toward the needs of current and future students (including students who are behind grade level, Special Education students, and English Language learners.) The district, and all schools included in this project to date, appears to be under-resourced in *structured academic and mental health supports*.
 - a. Based on conversations and interviews for this project, secondary students in the Mounds View District are coming to school with a variety of social and emotional challenges for a variety of reasons. While academic pressure may be part of, or contributing to, student mental health challenges, it should not be assumed that academic pressure is a primary cause of mental health challenges.

- b. As noted in Item A, the implementation some practices may serve to address both equity and social emotional challenges. Those practices may include trauma-informed instruction and school faculty/staff having an interest in and understanding of students' lives, cultures and the daily challenges that they experience.
 - c. Such structures and practices should be aligned from classroom to student support services to administration so the expectations, resources, steps and systems are clear and consistent.
- C. Review and clearly redefine the role and responsibilities of the dean in areas of academic and behavior support. Ensure student mental health responsibilities are being provided by licensed professionals rather than by deans. (Deans report having varying degrees of experience, training and comfort in this area.)
- D. Assess and address the East/West structural and identity divide within the school district and assess how feeder patterns influence and affect schools and students across the district.
- a. Current secondary boundaries reinforce the East/West divide.
 - b. Within the East, there is hyper-reinforcement and a legacy of perceived academic superiority at Mounds View High School and Chippewa Middle School. And within the West, there is a perception of district decisions being driven by what is started or demanded by the East side.
- E. Restructure passing time, and what affects it, in the middle schools. Consider:
- a. The amount of time allowed between periods
 - b. Lockers (location, size and locks themselves)
 - c. Time to return to class after swim class
 - d. Tardy policies and practices, official and unofficial. For example, assess why teachers hold students in their classes beyond the bell resulting in students being late for their next class.

APPENDIX

STUDENT AND PARENT QUESTIONS FOR GUIDED CONVERSATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

1. What do you enjoy most about being a student/parent here?
2. What are your current impressions about the direction of:
 - a. Mounds View Public Schools, in general?
 - b. What are your current impressions about the direction of *your school specifically*?
3. What was your/your student’s transition like from elementary school to middle school?
4. How have you/your student been supported here? (This may include people or services.)
5. What successes have you/your student experienced here?
6. What challenges have you/your student experienced here?
7. Do you/does your student feel comfortable asking for help here when they need it? Why or why not?
8. What do you see as the school’s greatest strengths or assets?
9. Where, or how, do you think the school can improve?
10. What are your/your student’s aspirations for high school and beyond?
11. Is there anything else you want to add?
12. For Parents: What are the three most important ways you, as a parent judge the quality of the student experience in this school?

STAFF QUESTIONS FOR GUIDED CONVERSATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

1. What do you enjoy most about being a teacher/staff member here?
2. What are your current impressions about the direction of:
 - Mounds View Public Schools, in general?
 - *Your school specifically*?
3. How has school changed since you started working here?
4. Describe how ___ Middle School helps students through middle school transitions.
5. How are students supported here? (This may include people or services.)
6. What successes have students experienced here?
7. What challenges have students experienced here?
8. Do students feel comfortable asking for help here when they need it? Why or why not?
9. What do you see as the school’s greatest strengths or assets?
10. Where, or how, do you think the school can improve?

11. What are the three most important ways you, as a teacher or staff member, judge the quality of the student experience in this school?
12. Is there anything else you want to add?

ABOUT TEAMWORKS INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Teamworks International has been a partner with Mounds View Public Schools for more than decade and has been supporting mission-focused organizations for more than 22 years. Our clients come from education, community, faith and government settings, but they share a common aspiration: to achieve their goals while remaining healthy, responsive and accountable. From stakeholder engagement and analysis, to data interpretation and reporting, to strategic change guidance, TeamWorks International enhances organizational capacity for strategic and constructive change.