

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
Wilmette Public Schools

INFORMATION ITEM

Date: April 23, 2018

To: Members, Board of Education

From: Building Principals
Grade Level Administrators
Assistant Principals

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Subject: Grades 5-8 Related Arts Course Progression

INTRODUCTION

On October 23, 2017, the Board of Education approved the implementation of the 2017-2018 District 39 Strategic Plan. The yearly planning cycle includes Strategic Plan updates. This executive summary report will focus on mid-year updates of the action steps identified under Continuing Strategic Initiatives and Annual Business. This month's reports will focus on updates of the New Strategic Initiatives.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction formed a committee of grades 5-8 teachers and administrators to review the current related arts course offerings at Highcrest Middle School and Wilmette Junior High School and reflect on the progression of learning experiences in grades 5-8. The goals of the committee are:

- Develop a District 39 position/philosophy statement regarding the learning experiences offered through the related arts courses.
- Revise/update/create curriculum maps to reflect District 39 position/philosophy statement.
- Revise/update report card descriptors to reflect changes to course goals/objectives.

POSITION/PHILOSOPHY

The district provides many opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills through authentic performance, grow in confidence and learn how to think positively about themselves and learning. Students learn to observe, interpret, analyze, synthesize, and see different perspectives. In particular, District 39 believes that the related arts courses offered to students foster a culture of innovation, positive achievement, and collaboration.

Related arts courses foster higher levels of thinking that enhance learning in other academic subjects as well as to life outside of school:

- Art, music, and theater enrich learning about historical periods and understanding literature as student examine conflict, power, emotion, and life itself. It helps students understand the power of words and promotes empathy for others.
- Graphic designs and technology-based creations, such as those made by inventors, engineers, and programmers, complement learning about scientific and technological principles and innovations.

Students experience how to be active members of a community and to work as a team to determine and achieve common goals:

- In developing a theatrical production, group performance, or any type of collaborative artistic endeavor, students practice teamwork. As they work together, they learn to understand differences and diversity and realize the ways that teamwork contributes to a great performance.
- Teamwork contributes to making schools safe, peaceful learning environments. In the arts, students learn to articulate their intentions, receive and offer constructive criticism and listen actively to others' ideas.
- Students who participate in the arts develop leadership skills, including decision-making, strategy building, planning and reflection. They also prepare to use these skills effectively by developing a strong sense of identity and confidence in their ability.

Based on these principles, the committee has drafted a philosophy statement for District 39's related arts program which will be revisited once all of the curriculum maps have been revised and/or created.

District 39 believes that the arts reflect our culture while celebrating the unique identities, perspectives, and learning styles within and beyond our community. Exposing students to a variety of learning experiences will allow them to cultivate their creativity and critical thinking skills through collaboration within an inclusive environment. Students will explore diverse content with the goal of becoming artistically literate in each of the disciplines: Music, Media, Visual and Performing Arts. Course studies will encourage self-expression, risk taking, and persistence while building confidence and developing a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

CURRENT STRUCTURE AND COURSE OFFERINGS

At Highcrest Middle School, students are enrolled in five out of six related arts courses. Although fifth grade students attend by homeroom, sixth grade students are randomly assigned from multiple homerooms. This year, students are not able to participate in all courses offered since the duration of the related arts rotations are 7 weeks. Choir is an optional choice held outside of the school day. At Wilmette Junior High School, 7th and 8th grade students rank courses by preference then are placed accordingly as best as possible. While 8th grade students are given options among a few offered in each discipline, 7th grade students only have options in one discipline, Art. Appendix A provides more detailed information regarding the current structure and related arts course offerings in grades 5-8.

RECOMMENDED STRUCTURE AND COURSE OFFERINGS

The recommendations address gaps in structure and develop strands of study that progress through the grades 5-8 with only a .5 increase of staffing. At Highcrest Middle School, students would engage in **all** courses offered in their respective grade level since the duration of the related arts rotations have been adjusted to 6 weeks. Choir will continue to be an optional choice held outside of the school day. At

Wilmette Junior High School, 7th grade students are provided more choices in each discipline. Wilmette Junior High School students will rank specific courses and/or broader categories (i.e. music, art, media/digital...etc.) then placed in four nine-week courses honoring their preferences as best as possible. Appendix B provides more detailed information regarding the recommended structure and related arts course offerings in grades 5-8.

These structural recommendations continue to honor best practice of exploration for middle school/junior high settings while allowing new learning experiences such as computational thinking, block-based programming, Python, and Swift. The recommendations also embed student choice in grades 7 and 8 while ensuring that all 5th and 6th grade students receive instruction in all six-week courses offered in their respective grade level, with a .5 increase in staffing.

NEXT STEPS

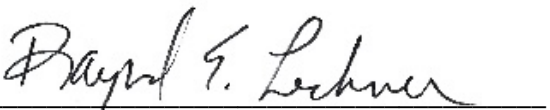
The committee members are revising and/or creating curriculum maps for the recommended course offerings. Once the first drafts are complete, the philosophy statement and course curriculum maps will be reviewed for alignment. Also, progress reports and report card descriptors will be updated to reflect changes to course goals, national and state learning standards and student learning objectives.

CONCLUSION

District 39's recommended courses support the fundamental, research-based concepts of middle/junior high schools: exploration and choice. These courses are designed to encourage exploration and introduce students to new subjects and interests. The related arts program provides the district opportunities to evolve with the advances in society. For example, topics that were once only considered for college or high school levels are beginning to shift to middle school students like computational thinking and programming/coding languages.

In addition, as students become 7th and 8th graders, there is a shift toward specialization - broad topics/experiences to subtopics. As students begin to specialize, the duration of the courses incrementally increases from six-week explorations to nine-weeks. For example, fifth graders continue to learn general music concepts and develop more sophisticated skills so that by 8th grade, students can focus on a particular instrument like guitar, drumming, and voice -- by choice. They are given an opportunity to reflect on interests and offer preferences regarding their own path of learning much like how high school electives are offered.

Recommended for presentation to the Board of Education,



Raymond E. Lechner, Ph.D., Superintendent

APPENDIX A

CURRENT COURSE OFFERINGS AND STRUCTURE

Music	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	General Music	General Music	General Music	Guitar
				African Drumming
				Musical Theater
Duration	7 weeks	7 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks

Choir	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	Choir	Choir	Choir	Choir
				Show Choir
Duration	two semesters	two semesters	one <i>or</i> two semesters	one <i>or</i> two semesters (Choir) 9 weeks (Show Choir)

Art	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	General Art	General Art	2D	Painting
			3D	Drawing/Printmaking
			Digital Photography	Sculpture/Ceramics
				Combo Photography
Duration	7 weeks	7 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks

Drama	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	Drama	Actors Workshop	Drama	Technical Theater
				Improv
				Stage Acting
Duration	7 weeks	7 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks

Tech Related Areas	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	Creative Communications	Intro to Computational Thinking	None	Technology Applications
				Intro to Python
Duration	7 weeks	7 weeks		9 weeks

Problem-Based Learning	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	Integrated Global Studies	Integrated Global Studies	None	None
Focus Area	Sustainability Issues	Broad Global Issues		
Duration	7 weeks	7 weeks		

Other	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	None	None	Math of Economics	None
Duration			7 weeks	

APPENDIX B

RECOMMENDED COURSE OFFERINGS AND STRUCTURE

Music	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	General Music	General Music	General Music	Guitar
				African Drumming
				Musical Theater
Duration	6 weeks	6 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks

Choir	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	Choir	Choir	Choir	Choir
				Show Choir
Duration	two semesters <i>before school day</i>	two semesters <i>before school day</i>	one <i>or</i> two semesters	one <i>or</i> two semesters (Choir) 9 weeks (Show Choir)

Art	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	General Art	General Art	2D	Painting
			3D	Drawing/Printmaking
			Digital Photography	Sculpture/Ceramics
				Combo Photography
Duration	6 weeks	6 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks

Drama	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	Drama	Drama	Behind the Scenes	Technical Theater
		Actors Workshop	Improv	Stage Acting
Duration	6 weeks	6 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks

Computational Thinking & Programming	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	Computational Thinking	Block-based Programming	Intro to Python	Intro to Python
			Intro to Swift	Python 2
				Intro to Swift
Duration	6 weeks	6 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks

Media & Digital Arts	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Courses	Explorations in Digital Media	Integrated Global Studies	Digital Art & Photography	Photo & Design
	Creative Communications			
Duration	6 weeks	6 weeks	7 weeks	9 weeks