

## Weston Middle School Teaming Model: A Paradigm Shift

**Goal:** The following proposal seeks to improve the educational delivery model for middle level learners by increasing the level of personalization through structural changes to the WMS staffing model. The areas that will be enhanced by these changes are the following:

1. Establishes a pure teaming model in which all teachers on the team share the same group of students.
2. Improves and expands our SRBI services by building in greater flexibility to meet the needs of students.
3. Expands the range of enrichment opportunities available to students during the school day.

**Background:** WMS switched to a new master schedule in the fall of 2018 that included the addition of a daily extension block period for each grade level. This change has resulted in several benefits for students allowing them to access fully all programmatic courses, while also being able to receive intervention services without missing out on their practical and fine arts classes. An additional benefit has included the successful piloting of some enrichment offerings and the increased use of the resources of the library learning commons.

However, we have only begun to realize the full potential of incorporating an extended learning block into the middle school model. There are several areas that can be enhanced by reimagining the staffing and delivery of programs at WMS. As outlined in a [comprehensive report](#) to the Board of Education Curriculum Committee on February 23, 2018, the new schedule has the potential to improve the **WMS teaming Model, intervention programs, and enrichment services**. In order to maximize the benefits of the new master schedule, a new staffing model consisting of eight sections for each grade level is being explored based on the anticipated enrollment projections. This opportunity comes at a time when cohort sizes coming up from WIS are becoming smaller.

**Middle School Projected Enrollment:** Any new staffing model should be informed by enrollment projections to determine if the model will be sustainable and able to accommodate fluctuations in enrollment over time. Slightly smaller cohorts will be moving into the middle school from WIS. Based on the [Annual Enrollment Report](#) by Malone and Macbroom presented to the Board of Education on November 19, 2018, the WMS projected enrollment is expected to see a decline in the short-term.

*“WMS is projected to see the steepest near term decline; projected to continue over the majority of the projection horizon to just below 530 in 2025 before rebounding to 550.”* -

*-Malone and Macbroom, p. 33.*

The enrollment projections for WMS are listed in Table 1 below. Beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, the cohort sizes are projected to be below 200 students, ranging from a low of 161 to a high of 196 students. This enrollment scenario presents an opportunity to establish eight sections in each grade level and improve the teaming, intervention and enrichment programs.

Table 1: WMS 10-Year Projections (Medium)										
Grade	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
6	187	176	187	191	168	161	189	179	178	179
7	192	191	179	191	195	171	164	193	182	181
8	202	193	192	180	192	196	172	165	194	183
Total	581	560	558	562	555	528	525	537	554	543

If we establish eight sections per grade level beginning in 2020-2021, then the average class size would range from 20.1 to 24.5. The median class size is projected to be 182 students, which represents an average class size of 22.8. The cohorts highlighted in green all fall within the Board of Education class size guidelines of 20-24 students. There are five cohorts out of 30 (highlighted in orange) that would be slightly above an average of 24 students, but no more than 24.5. The eighth grade cohort for 2019-20 is highlighted in red to indicate that it is over 200 students. The size of this cohort is too large to make this shift to eight sections in FY20. Initiating this model would require all grade levels to shift to this model at the same time. A phase-in approach would not be cost effective and would limit the range of intervention and enrichment services.

**Staffing Model:**

English, math, science, and social studies teachers would continue to teach five classes a day and 25 classes per week, as would all other middle school teachers, as per the Weston Teachers' Association contract. Core content area teachers would teach four subject area classes on their team, while their fifth class would consist of a content-based intervention (SRBI) class with a smaller group of students, or they would teach an enrichment course. For example, the math teacher on the team would teach four math classes as well as a Math Lab course and the ELA teachers would teach a Writing Lab course. Social studies and science teachers, (along with available practical and fine arts (PFA) teachers), would teach a variety of enrichment courses as their fifth class. Currently, several teachers have this type of schedule, as this has been a typical practice at WMS for teachers teaching on the smaller team.

The benefits of this staffing model are as follows:

1. **Enhanced Teaming Model:** This staffing approach will restore a full teaming model at WMS. In recent years, there has been an erosion of the common meeting time that is essential to the middle school model. Some teachers who are teaching courses across two grade levels have limited common planning time with their interdisciplinary team or with their curricular partners to work on their units of study. With the proposed model, all four to five teachers on the team would have a daily common prep period for parent conferences, team meetings, curriculum partner work, etc. This also allows for the CIL to meet periodically with the curriculum partners to work on curriculum.
2. **Improved Intervention Services:** Having classroom teachers deliver the interventions in math and literacy with their own students will improve the tier 2 SRBI model. Students receiving SRBI support will receive those services from their current classroom teachers who know their students well and have the content expertise to support their learning needs. This model will allow us to have a robust Writing Lab model in which the writing teacher meets with a small group of students on a regular basis to confer on their writing.
3. **Robust Enrichment Opportunities:** We will be able to significantly expand the enrichment opportunities during the extended learning block. We currently are piloting the Renzulli learning tools with several students, which has the potential for providing the foundation for a robust enrichment program. Further, study is required to examine how a school-wide enrichment model could be implemented. Mansfield Middle School in Mansfield, CT has a school-wide enrichment model that would be worth seeing in action.

### Staffing Comparison: Current v. Proposed

Line	Subject	Current Model (FY20)	Proposed Model (TBD)	Change	Reason for Change
1	English	7.2	8.0	0.8	ELA teachers teach Writing Lab (SRBI)
2	Math*	6.6	6.0	0.6	Math teachers teach Math Lab(SRBI)
3	Science	5.4	6.0	0.6	Science teachers teach Enrichment
4	Social Studies	5.4	6.0	0.6	SS teachers teach Enrichment
5	World Language	4.0	4.0	0.0	
6	Art	1.6	1.4	0.2	Sections reduced from 9 to 8 at each grade
7	Health & PE	3.5	3.2	0.3	Sections reduced from 9 to 8 at each grade
8	Music	3.48	3.48	0.0	
9	Innovation & Discovery	.47	0.0	.47	Eliminated as FTE reallocated to lines 1-4.
10	STEM Program	2.0	2.0	0.0	
11	Reading Specialist	1.0	1.0	0.0	
12	Academic Assistance	.63	0.0	.63	Eliminated as FTE reallocated to lines 1-4
13	Library Media Specialist	1.0	1.0	0.0	
14	Project Challenge*	.7	0.0	0.7	Eliminated if WMS moves to School-Wide Enrichment Model
15	Principal	1.0	1.0	0.0	
16	Asst. Principal	1.0	1.0	0.0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>Certified Staff Excluding SPED &amp; PPS</b>	<b>44.28</b>	<b>43.38</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>0.9 overall reduction in WMS staffing, while improving intervention services, enrichment options and teaming model</b>

\*The proposed staffing levels for math assume that section sizes for each of the levels break within class size guidelines.

**\*\*If a school-wide enrichment model is established, there may be an opportunity to rethink the delivery of the Project Challenge self-contained class.**

### **Important Considerations:**

1. **Long-term Sustainability:** This staffing model represents a paradigm shift at WMS and has the potential to serve the middle school for several years as smaller cohorts enter the middle grades. Most districts have not found good solutions to declining enrollment at the middle school level without reverting back, in part, to a junior high school model. What's proposed here is an innovative option made possible by the addition of the middle school extension block last fall.
2. **Class Size Constraints:** In terms of cohort size, the sweet spot for this proposal is between 160 and 192 students, representing class sizes of 20 to 24 at the lower and upper ends. Current projections indicate that there could be some cohorts slightly above 192, which means that there would be some classes in those years consisting of 25 students depending on how well classes can be balanced.
3. **Middle School vs. Junior High Model:** With our current WMS staffing model, one might ask the question, "Why not just reduce one or more grades to eight sections and reduce FTE in the core subjects and in the PFAs?" This is the approach we apply at the elementary level for staffing – take the total number of students and determine the number of teachers required, while staying within the class size guidelines. This seems logical to most people; however, when this formula is applied to the middle school, then the resulting effect is to revert back to a junior high school and does not take into account the needs of the whole child.
4. **Staff Professional Development and Retention:** Teaching young adolescents requires specialized knowledge and training for our staff. There are many developmental, cognitive and social emotional changes while students are in middle school. Our professional development considers taking the whole child into account as we strive to enhance instructional practices. This investment in teachers would be compromised if we reverted to a middle school model as highlighted above. An additional consideration is the potential loss of teachers if we create part-time positions. It would be difficult for us to retain and attract high-quality teachers in part-time positions.
5. **Sixth Grade English Language Arts:** This model will ensure that all sixth grade students will have the same teacher for their double block of English language arts. Currently, there are 2 sections a year that are shared between two teachers, which is not an ideal situation.
6. **Project Challenge:** The development of a school-wide enrichment model adds to the continuum of services for gifted students. This presents an opportunity for us to review the current structure of the Project Challenge program.