

Patrick Thomas Waugh
July 29, 2010
Design a School Paper

Dear Students and Families,

Welcome to a new year at Orange Pickles Middle School. We are looking forward to working with you on growing and learning. As a learning community, our goal is to help each of our students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for success in school and throughout life

Sincerely,

Patrick Waugh, Principal

The staff at OPMS consists of:

Principal
Assistant Principal for each grade level
Counselor for each grade level
(2) Math, Science, LA, Social Studies for each grade level
ELD for each grade level
Special Ed for each grade level
(2) Curriculum Coordinators
PE, Band, Choir, Health, Technology, and Art teachers
School Nurse
School Police Officer
Secretaries, Custodians, Lunch Helpers, and a Librarian
Teachers Aids and specialists

OPMS Goal Statement

Orange Pickles Middle School is committed to providing and sustaining a collaborative learning environment so that our students may become successful life long learners who have a lot to offer their communities.

It is our goal to:

- Provide a safe, responsible, and respectful environment that encourages enthusiasm for learning.
- Foster responsible citizenship and provide opportunities for students to acquire and demonstrate leadership and service both in school and in the community.
- Provide a rich curriculum that fosters learning, cooperation, and problem solving.

Our goals center around Dewey and his idea that we want teaching to be about problem solving in real world situations or for actual real world problems. We want the learning at OPMS to be as close to real world learning as possible, we want to create situations that breed learning and knowledge , not force learning and knowledge.

“The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.” ~Sydney J. Harris

OPMS CORE PBS VALUES

Orange Pickles Middle School has adopted *respect, responsibility, safety* and *integrity* as our core values. Core values are supported school-wide through faculty support, the Positive Behavior Support team, school banners, classroom posters, assemblies, and student recognition activities. These values are promoted throughout the school year as a tool to help students develop character and social skills that they will continue to build on in the future.

OPMS will make every effort to recognize students consistently demonstrating a personal commitment to excellence and the willingness to follow the school-wide expectations.

Recognition is often informal, but the following is a list of formal rewards for our students:

- Dill and Sweet Pickles
 - A coupon award for positive behaviors, redeemable for popcorn or may be used to enter prize drawing.
- Student of the Month
 - Awarded by each classroom teacher for a combination of academic and/or behavioral performance.
- No Missing Assignment Parties
 - Activities for students every 6 weeks who have completed all assignments in at least 5 of their 6 classes.
- 12-Week Reward Activities
 - Activities for students who meet specific academic and/or behavioral criteria at the end of twelve-week grading period. (Criteria will change)
- Honor Roll
 - Recognition for academic performance based on grade point average. Honor Roll: 3.5 - 4.0 GPA.
- End-of-Year Reward Activity:
 - 6th - Field day
 - 7th - Movie trip
 - 8th - Field trip
- 8th Grade Promotion Activities:
 - Promotion Ceremony
 - 8th Grade Promotion Party/Bar-B-Q

Reward activities are positive reinforcement for students citizenship and behavior. Honor Roll is the only assessment related reward. We are trying to foster a situation in which students want to achieve learning, and are reinforced to behave as a contributing member of their community.

Year long school:

OPMS is on a year long school schedule. Rather than the typical 12 week long summer break we will have extended holiday and spring break, with a smaller summer break. The goal is to lessen the drastic impact a 12 week long summer can have to a student.

Year long school has been a long interest of mine because I feel that long break in the summer is a hindrance for education. If we are learning something and take 10 - 12 weeks off we are going to have to re-teach a significant portion of the learning. This will also allow for a variety of options on the internship Fridays as they will be able to work indoors during the winter months and outside during the sunny months.

Friday for students are internship/community service days

OPMS also believes in a four day school week with one day a week for occupational learning. OPMS has pre-arrangements with a variety of local businesses and will help a student with placement. If students have some place in mind for themselves they are more than welcome to pursue it, as long as they get prior approval from their internship advisor. Students will be expected to keep a running journal about their interactions, their thoughts and their responses to other questions provided by their advisor. We would expect students to change their internship each trimester.

This program allows for students to get real world experience in something that they are interested in, and it will also allow the students to grow a bond with and give back to their community.

This idea came from an actual process that John Taylor Gatto (Gatto, 1991) went through. I found the idea to be fascinating and found that it actually follows along with Dewey's thoughts on occupational learning as well.

“Dewey organized his students' work around the occupations that have maintained communities throughout history. While these activities reflected vocational tasks, Dewey's goal was not to prepare children for participation within the existing economy, but rather to show them how social progress depends upon the cooperative division of labour.” (Tomlinson, 1997)

I believe in these processes and I love the idea of teaching students how to work in a community or work to solve a problem. Schooling as it stands today is very much unlike anything we encounter out in the real world.

Internship Advisor (Homeroom Teacher)

Each student will have an internship advisor that will teach their homeroom class. It is our goal that every individual student have an adult who knows them well and can be an understanding advocate. Our advisory program provides daily opportunities for interaction with a small group of peers and a caring adult.

Friday for teachers are Learning Community days

On Fridays teachers have the opportunity to plan together, create projects and spend more time with their peers. Staff meetings start Friday mornings, then rotating each Friday, teachers have:

- Prep and reflection time
- Collaborative time
- Trainings
- Time for the administration and the teachers to go check on the Friday internships.

Monday/Wednesday Dill days & Tuesday/Thursday Sweet days

A rotating schedule gives each classroom more time for in class activities and lessons and students more time for out of school homework and collaboration.

They would also have a flexible schedule that has the possibility to change every 6 weeks. The flexible scheduling would allow for teachers to switch students to placements they deem more successful as well as open up the opportunity to team teach.

Example student schedule:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Period 1 8-9	Homeroom (Internship Check In)	Homeroom (All school lessons, etc)	Homeroom (All school lessons, etc)	Homeroom (Internship Prep)	Internship
Period 2 9-11	Math	Language Arts	Math	Language Arts	Internship
Period 3 11-12:30	Elective A	Elective B	Elective A	Elective B	Internship
Lunch 12:30-1	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Internship
Period 4 1-3	History	Science	History	Science	Internship

Administration:

The administration at OPMS supports and believe in teachers. The administration is here to help guide the students to achieve the best possible outcomes and has an open communication line with all parents and guardians. Each administrator (Principal and the Assistant Principal for each grade) has a group of teachers they supervise. They make regular classroom visits in order to give teachers feedback and a different perspective on their teaching. Administrators are also available to cover a teachers classroom if the teacher wants to work with or observe another teacher. (Specifically new teachers would get the opportunity to observe veteran teachers within their district.) Administrators are on top of the newest trends and ideas within schooling to help give a fresh look and new ideas into the classroom. Administration have regular communication with staff and are able to freely answer any questions the staff may have.

Teaching Loads/Styles:

OPMS has a focus on project based learning. There is a main goal in each class. (These goals can be a daily, weekly, or monthly goal depending on the subject area.) Students will achieve this goal through listening to lectures, participating in activities, doing research and homework and ultimately creating a project or presentation to provide proof of understanding.

I strongly agree with Dewey’s mind-frame of teaching; his idea is that we have to have a reason to learn. Dewey was “for what we would call today the development of thinking skills and against the attainment of decontextualized, inert forms of knowledge.” (Berliner, 1993)

Project based learning with activities and skill and drill as supplements allows for students to learn by the intelligence they are strongest in while still exploring other ideas. OPMS believes that if we create a rich teaching and learning environment that allows for creativity then no matter where a students strengths lie they should be able to find a way to learn the subject provided.

“The project method was advocated by the progressive educators who tried to put Dewey's ideas into practice.” (Berliner, 1993)

This also allows for differentiated instruction without a multitude of lesson plans. Teachers can create an open ended project with some guidelines and teach along with their learning. It is very powerful to give students choices within their education.

Each student is assigned to a small team of teachers. The purpose of these small teams is to develop close, trusting relationships between students and adults and to increase engagement with learning and feelings of positive self-esteem and belonging. Teachers deliver integrated instruction in the areas of math, science, social studies, language arts and reading. Because teachers share the same students, they are able to respond more quickly to the needs of individual students through collaboration, meeting jointly with parents, and designing thematic units that increase relevance and foster the transfer of ideas among disciplines.

Team teaching within subjects becomes available with the flexible scheduling. Teachers could propose options to change their preps and classes around so that they would have the opportunity to team teach with another subject. Lets say Science and Math would like to team teach in the morning what they could do is combine back to back periods that would allow for one longer period with two classes and two classroom teachers. The extended time allows for flexibility and creative teaching and lesson planning.

We also encourage some schema theory within our teaching and within the students learning. Within our teaching, we implore the use of existing schema as a way to tie different ideas together. Combining two or more core subject areas as a key piece to the assimilation of student's schema as well. Students will also be able to use their internships as a way to use schema theory in their learning as they will be encouraged to take what they learn in the internship and apply it to school as well as the other way around.

Class Sizes:

At OPMS we are grateful that we are able to keep core class sizes under 25, home room classes under 15, and elective classes under 30. Students will enter classes based on ability level. It is designed to reflect a college system where students take the class as needed after completing pre-requisites. This could result in a 6/7/8 split classes with students at similar levels. Students will be placed based on presentations, portfolio projects and teacher recommendation.

Teaching and Assessment Practices

- Citizenship grade - turning assignments in on time, putting the effort in, behavior
- Assessment grade - emphasis on tests and projects

Teachers will use a five point scale (0-4) for all grades.

- 0 = No progress or effort
- 1 = Limited progress or low effort
- 2 = Average progress or average effort
- 3 = Good progress or good effort
- 4 = Outstanding progress or great effort

Teachers will give each student a point in regards to both the citizenship and assessment grade in their classes. Comments will be included to give more meaning on the actual point from each teacher.

With this design, a student could show mastery of a subject area, but it can still be noted that they don't turn in projects on time, shows up late to class, is rude, etc. I believe in the use of the word progress here is because I believe that students are in a constant learning state and progress is made, but there is never an end of the learning. Dewey stated that "knowledge was a tool, not an end in itself" (Berlinger, 1993)

If you look at the real world there is more to it than just mastery of a subject. If you are great at being a landscaper and know everything about lawns but then you show up to work sporadically and your communication with the clients are bad, you will not get work.

Each student will earn a citizenship and assessment grade for every class. While citizenship grades will not hold the students back in classes there would be rewards for good citizenship grades and the citizenship remarks and grades would appear on their permanent report cards.

This would allow grade comments for a class to look like this:

Math

Assessment Grade: 3, still struggles with quadratic equations

Citizenship Grade: 1, does not turn homework in on time and is constantly late to class

After School Support

A structured after-school program is available to provide academic support, tutoring, and enrichment activities for interested students.

Mentor Program

OPMS is working with our local colleges and universities to operate a student mentor program during the school year. A limited number of students who are identified by staff will be paired with a college mentor. The goal of the Mentor Program is to provide OPMS students with the individual support they need to be successful in school.

The after school program and the mentor program are examples of the use of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) . Vygotsky believed that the ZPD "is an important concept that relates to the difference between what a child can achieve independently and what a child can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner" (McLeod 2007) We hope that students will be able to take guidance from adults in order to solidify learning in all subject areas.

Discipline Policies

At OPMS we follow the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) model of discipline. PBS looks to encourage positive behavior from all of its faculty and the students.

"Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) is an empirically validated, function-based approach to eliminate challenging behaviors and replace them with prosocial skills. Use of PBS decreases the need for more intrusive or aversive interventions (i.e., punishment or suspension) and can lead to both systemic as well as individualized change.

PBS can target an individual student or an entire school, as it does not focus exclusively on the student, but also includes changing environmental variables such as the physical setting, task demands, curriculum, instructional pace and individualized reinforcement. Thus it is successful

with a wide range of students, in a wide range of contexts, with a wide range of behaviors.”
(Cohn 2001)

Our aim is to provide everyone who walks through the OPMS doors with a safe, responsible, respectful environment full of integrity. Students are expected to be active participants in their education. Good attendance and appropriate behavior, consideration for the rights and feelings of others, and a realization that each individual has to take responsibility for his or her own actions are keys to success. Behavior rules exist to ensure a safe, pleasant environment for all students. Actions that are inconsiderate, dangerous, or detract from the quality of the learning environment have no place at OPMS. Consequences for such actions are intended to encourage students to learn appropriate behaviors and to exhibit them in the future.

PBS follows skinner's advice that “A person who has been punished, is not less inclined to behave in a given way; at best, he learns how to avoid punishment.” (Skinner, 1971) Instead of catching every bad behavior and punishing it we are trying to reward and compliment good behaviors in such a way that students will want to behave in a positive manner.

PBS still will enforce and deal with negative behaviors but with a negative reinforcement background. When a student is causing problems that can not be ignored we will add something negative to their workload (Such as sweeping or cleaning) or take something away that will have a negative reinforcement.

All PBS rewards and behavior incentives are exactly that a focus on behavior and citizenship. Learning in the core subject areas and electives follows the ideas of Dewey, not Thorndike and Skinner.

If there were continued problems or major behavioral issues we would have an alternative education school that could help get these students on their feet.

Retention of specific classes, not of entire grade level. More like college.

I get very frustrated in my classes where I feel a student could be absent 3 days a week, never turn in homework, get a 7% in the class and still move on to the next class. I am basically having to put my stamp of approval on them even though I do not believe learning occurred. Maybe they did succeed in other classes, and so either summer school or repeating that math class the following year would be the answer.

If students are short of what they need to move on to high school they would either be retained or expected to take and pass in summer school. If that did not happen they would repeat the eighth grade until they finished what they needed for high school.

I am taking college/high school aspects and applying them to middle school.

If there were continued problems or major behavioral issues we would have an alternative education school that could help get these students on their feet.

After School Activities:

A varied after school program includes enrichment activities such as art, drama, debate, technical

education, sewing, cooking, foreign languages, chess, and intramural activities. A full inter-scholastic athletic program including cross-country, soccer, field hockey, basketball, wrestling, softball, baseball, and track and field are also offered.

Student Government

The Student Senate exists to act as a representative form of government for all middle school students. It is intended to unite the student body, to coordinate and approve student activities, and to give students a voice in the operation of the school. Members are responsible for communicating all senate business to their school, and to represent the needs and concerns of students from their grade levels.

After school activities and student government are one of the ways I want to keep the social aspect of school very strong. While I believe in the social aspect of learning within the classroom as well I believe that the stronger your bonds are between school and student, the better the learning.

Curriculum

Throughout the middle school, students also participate in many teams and cross discipline activities. The school's focus on character development, social equity, and academic excellence continues past the classroom into after school enrichment and extra curricular activities. The end result is an integrated curriculum that prepares students for high school and beyond. Pre-made curriculum is used as supplemental material to teacher designed courses. Teachers have the main goal of aligning to state standards but how they get there is in their own accord. Administration and peers are to be supports so one curriculum book is not the answer, but rather only a helper. Teachers with help from the curriculum coordinators would use Fridays to plan out their curriculum to create a more cohesive and integrated learning environment.

The three key areas of importance when it comes to our curriculum are schema theories, ZPD and occupational learning. However we are also interested in providing a rich learning environment so that our students can learn through whatever intelligence is their strong suit.

“Rich experiences enable students to learn along several dimensions at once-socially, spatially, kinesthetically, self-reflectively, and so on. Often, these experiences cross subject-area lines.” (Moran, 2006)

The entire school is based around these four ideas. Trying to keep students interested and engaged in learning and providing opportunities for the students to learn their way. This school is filled with opportunity and imagination. Teachers and Administration are here for the students and the students are here for each other. We cannot do it alone, everyone involved has to work together to keep making the world a better place.

The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think - rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with thoughts of other men. ~Bill Beattie

References

Berliner, D.C. (1993). The 100-year journey of Educational Psychology: From interest, to disdain, to respect for practice. In T.K. Fagan and G.R. Vandenbos (Eds.) Exploring Applied

Psychology Origins and Critical Analysis: Master Lectures in Psychology. Washington, D.C:

Cohn, A. (2001). Positive Behavioral Supports: Information for Educators. National Association of School Psychologists. Retrieved July 25, 2010 from: http://www.nasponline.org/resources/factsheets/pbs_fs.aspx

Gatto, JT. (Photographer). (1991). *Classrooms of the heart*. [Web]. Retrieved July 24, 2010 from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=26DvPQ7EIQ4>

Heffner, C.L. (2001). Psychology 101. AllPsych Online. Retrieved July 25, 2010 from: <http://allpsych.com/psychology101/index.html>

McLeod, S.A. (2007). Simply Psychology. Retrieved July 20, 2010 from: <http://www.simplypsychology.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/>

Moran, S., Kornhaber, M., & Gardner, H. (2006). Orchestrating multiple intelligences. *Educational Leadership*, 64 (1), 22-27.

Tomlinson, S. (1997). Edward Lee Thorndike and John Dewey on the science of education. *Oxford Review of Education*, 23 (3), 365-383.

Skinner's utopia: Panacea, or path to hell? (1971, September 20). *Time*, 47-53.
- accessible at: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,909994,00.html>