

Ottoson Middle School

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Brian Meringer, Principal
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**School Improvement Plan
2021 - 2022**

School Values

Engage/Empower/Excel

Engage - Be an active learner

When I am actively engaged in school, I am investing in my intellectual, emotional and social growth. I bring a positive mindset to my work.
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Empower - Be a part of positive change

I am discovering my unique personal strengths and learning to advocate for myself and others. I am here now and have the power to shape my day and my future.

Excel - Be the best you

I am becoming the best version of myself through reflection and action. I take responsibility for my decisions and my impact on those around me.
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School Vision Statement

The Ottoson School Community is an environment where students and adults strive to create a personalized learning environment that promotes academic excellence and empowers students to achieve their maximum potential. Through a model designed to target social-emotional needs, learners are welcomed into a school environment where student needs are centered around their academic growth focused on the motto Excel, Empower, and Engage.

School Mission Statement

❖ All learners are provided with a rigorous, interdisciplinary academic program.
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- ❖ All learners are exposed to a variety of disciplines that complement and enrich academic curriculum.
- ❖ All students develop a sense of community within a supportive school culture.
- ❖ All teachers are skilled at educating young adolescents, including developing cultural proficiency in their practice.
- ❖ All adult members of the school community recognize the varied academic, social, and emotional developmental needs of young adolescents.
- ❖ All teachers and administrators work collaboratively across disciplines and grade levels.
- ❖ Social-emotional learning along with health and wellness are promoted as integral components of the learning experience.

Data for Objective 1:

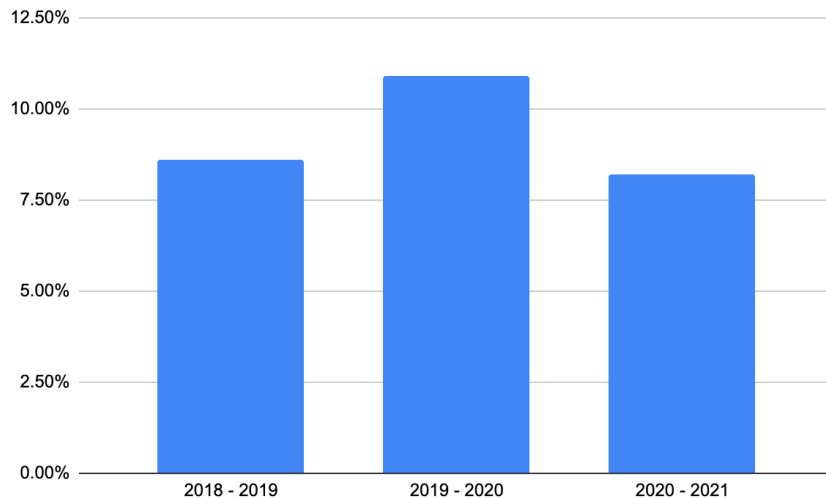
To help students transition back from a period of extended absences to a full academic load, this year we will be launching a Bridge Program at the Ottoson Middle School. **Our goal is to reduce the percentage of students who are chronically absent to under eight percent** (chronically absent is defined by the state as being absent for more than 18 days).

During that 2018-2019 school year, 8.6 percent of our students were considered chronically absent. The counseling department identified 29 students who could have benefited from a transitional program. This included seven students who were hospitalized for social-emotional needs, seven students who missed more than two weeks for health concerns, and 15 students who struggled with school refusal and social emotional needs. As a result of this data, creating a Bridge Program was one of our school improvement goals for the 2019-2020 school year. During the 2019-2020 school year, a group of educators including the principal, assistant principals, school counselors and a school social worker partnered with Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT) to plan and create the Bridge program at OMS. This included hiring a teacher to run the program, designing a space for the program, and planning an entrance and exit criteria. While the program was being created during the 2019-2020 school year, the percentage of chronically absent students rose to 10.9. Unfortunately, we did not launch our Bridge program in the 2020-2021 school year due to our focus on hybrid and remote learning in the pandemic. The percentage of students who were considered chronically absent continued to be over 8 percent last year.

The Ottoson Middle School, like many schools in the area, is seeing an increasing number of students suffering from anxiety and depression. According to national studies, depression and anxiety were on the rise pre-pandemic and the pandemic has made the situation worse. For example, the Pew Research Center found that depression, especially among girls, had worsened over the last decade. The report was published in 2019, the year before Covid. This year, a survey by C.S. Mott's Children Hospital in Ann Arbor

Michigan reported that one in three teenage girls and one in five teenage boys have experienced new or worsening anxiety during Covid.

Chronically absent students:



Data for Objective 2:

Presently, we do not have a social emotional curriculum at the Ottoson Middle School, nor do we have a dedicated time and place in our schedule for social emotional learning. Given this, **our goal is to improve the social emotional wellbeing of our students through the adoption of a vetted SEL curriculum and through the creation of a dedicated time and place in our schedule for this curriculum.** After several staff, including the three administrators, participated in the RULER training, we have decided to pilot RULER as a social emotional curriculum with the staff to see if it is a fit for OMS. To that end, we will introduce RULER to the staff throughout this school year. According to the RULER website, "RULER is a systemic approach to SEL developed at the Center for

Emotional Intelligence. RULER aims to infuse the principles of emotional intelligence into the immune system of preK to 12 schools, informing how leaders lead, teachers teach, students learn, and families support students.” We believe that by strategically introducing RULER to our staff, we will be able to gauge its viability at OMS as our standard SEL curriculum, and later introduce it to students and integrate it into our everyday practice.

We currently do not have a dedicated time to teach social emotional learning at the Ottoson. Both Arlington High School and the Gibbs have advisory programs. As a result, we are looking to create an advisory program to teach social emotional learning as well as providing us a time to discuss school wide issues and develop supportive relationships. Our goal is to dedicate seven of our faculty meetings to teaching RULER.

Currently, our students are struggling with their social emotional well being. According to the youth behavioral survey conducted last spring

- **51% of students felt like their mental health was sometimes or always feeling poor (includes stress, anxiety, and depression)**
- **23% of students do not have a healthy activity or behavior (coping strategy) that helps them relieve stress**

During the pandemic

- **Approximately 27% of students experienced poor mental health frequently or always**
- **23% of students are not close to someone at school**
- **58% of students had feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration during the pandemic.**
- **The majority of students (60%) experienced negative physical reactions during the pandemic (Lack of concentration, sleep, headaches, body aches, mental health, etc.)**

Data for Objective #3

The vast majority of our 7th graders take either Math 7 or Math 7A. Students are recommended for their math class by their 6th grade teachers. Families have the option to override any math recommendation. The breakdown of our 7th grade population across these math classes is as follows:

	Math 7 - All Students	Math 7 - Black or African American Students	Math 7A - All Students	Math 7A - Black or African American Students
2020 - 2021	172 // 40%	26 // 81%	253 // 60%	6 // 19%
2021 - 2022	155 // 33%	19 // 70%	304 // 66%	8 // 30%

Students who identify as Black or African American score lower than their peers on the MCAS math assessment. Our goal is to look at homogeneous grouping in math in 7th grade and spend this year investigating pathways for increasing equity in math for students who identify as Black or African American. When students develop their confidence as mathematicians by succeeding in high level math courses, they will feel empowered to enroll in advanced level courses in high school. By erasing the label and creating homogenous groupings, our Black and African American will develop math skills and create a mindset of confidence.

Through investigating pathways to heterogeneous math groupings this year, we hope to identify specific shifts in our math curriculum and how we group students that will ultimately result in more equitable access to high level math courses.

Strategic Objectives and Initiatives

Instructional Objective I	
Ottoson Middle School will improve student engagement and attendance by the implementation of a Bridge Program	
Strategic Initiative 1: To help students transition back from a period of extended absences to a full academic load, this year we will be launching a Bridge program at the Ottoson Middle School.	
Action Steps:	Responsible Teams and People:

<p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spring 2021: Hire a social worker that will work with the Bridge Program. 2. Summer 2021: The academic coordinator, social worker and members of BRYT will meet to plan for the beginning of the year. 3. September 2021: The academic coordinator will share an electronic Bridge Program Referral Form with the staff. 4. September of 2021: A member of BRYT will present the Bridge Program to the staff at a faculty meeting. 5. September 2021: The academic coordinator will create a brochure to share with parents/guardians. 6. 2021-2022 school year: The academic coordinator will track student attendance. 7. 2021-2022 school year: The academic coordinator, social worker and administration will meet monthly to monitor the progress of the program. 	<p>Brian Meringer, Rochelle Rubino, Julia MacEwan, Maureen Murphy, Suzanne Hawkins, and Sara Burd</p>
<p>Outcomes and Benchmarks</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The academic coordinator for the Bridge Program will monitor absences monthly and facilitate monthly meetings with building administrators. 2. The academic coordinator will be in contact with Cindy Sheridan-Curran about students who are on pace to be chronically absent. 3. The academic coordinator will maintain data on students going to and through the Bridge Program. 	<p>Target: Reduce chronic absenteeism to under 8 percent.</p>
<p>Professional Development to Support Objective 1</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consulting with representative from Bridge for Resilient Youth in Transition (BRYT) 2. Massachusetts Partnership for Youth - professional development programs/webinars 	
<p>District Resources to Ensure Success</p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Money for a partnership/consulting with BRYT 	

Instructional Objective 2

The Ottoson Middle School will adopt RULER SEL and will create an Advisory Program

Strategic Initiative 1:

Action Steps: Action Steps:

1. Summer 2021 - All three administrators will complete the RULER course.
2. October 2021 - A RULER team consisting of the three administrators, a counselor, and teacher will begin to meet monthly. The team will reach out to a representative from RULER for support and assistance.
3. October 2021 - An advisory committee will be created in order to discuss how to implement an advisory program.
4. October 2021 - Teachers will be introduced about how to create a RULER Charter during a faculty meeting.
5. December 2021 - Teachers will be introduced to the Mood Meter.
6. January 2022 - Teachers will be introduced to Meta Moment.
7. March 2022 - The advisory committee will present their ideas to the staff
8. March 2022 - Teachers will be introduced to the RULER blueprint.
9. April 2022 - Decision on advisory and whether to introduce RULER to the students for the 2022-2023 school year.

Responsible Teams and People:
Brian Meringer, Rochelle Rubino,
Julia MacEwan, Nanci Siegel, and
Rebecca Walsh Bradley

Outcomes and Benchmarks

1. Adopt RULER as our schoolwide SEL program.
2. Teachers will be prepared to implement RULER curriculum with students by September 2022

Target: Train OMS staff in the
RULER approach to SEL

Professional Development to Support Objective 2

1. RULER training

District Resources to Ensure Success	
1. Access to RULER dashboard and money to support RULER dashboard	
Equity and School Culture Objective	
Strategic Initiative 1: Ottoson Middle School will collaborate with the mathematics department to investigate equitable pathways through mathematics coursework beginning in grade 7.	
Action Steps:	Responsible Teams and People:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Plan collaboratively with Matt Coleman 2. Look at revising curriculum mapping for 6th, 7th and 8th grades 3. Create time for professional development for 7th grade teachers on differentiated instruction 4. Set up community forums to engage the larger community in discussion about the 7th grade math curriculum 5. Conduct learning walks in math classrooms 6. Look at repurposing Math Support 7. Assess whether we would be able to pilot heterogenous math classes with two learning communities in the 2022-2023 school year 	Brian Meringer, Matthew Coleman, Rochelle Rubino, Julia MacEwan, OMS math teachers
Outcomes and Benchmarks	
Reduce the significant disproportionality of Black or African American students in lower level math classes	Target: Heterogeneous math classes in 7th grade.
Professional Development to Support Objective 1	
Providing math faculty time and space within the schedule to process and plan for the upcoming year.	
District Resources to Ensure Success	

