

# PRINCIPAL'S LETTER TO PARENTS

August 3, 2018

Dear Parents and Guardians of TMS Students,

I trust that you have been enjoying all of the great things that a New England summer brings! The purpose of this letter is to update you on the progress of our new schedule and some of the changes that it will bring. Over the past few weeks, 15 TMS teachers (representing various grades and disciplines), building administrators, and district administrators have met and engaged in some lively, collegial discussions around what is best for our students. With guidance from the Great Schools Partnership and the District Management Group, a schedule has been created that will open up opportunities for ALL students as we work towards a true middle school model. While the schedule is still in development, and will need to be presented to the School Committee on August 14, here are some highlights that are unfolding based on our work:

- Six-day cycle rotation ( This will align with the Rogers High School schedule.)
- Students in grades 5-8 will have each core subject daily, plus:
- New Specials/Exploratory opportunities and rotation
- Power Hour 3 times per cycle (Enrichment choices will change each quarter.)
- Advisory 1 time per cycle (Teachers will work with students on career and academic pathways and follow an advisory curriculum...more to come on that.)
- Opportunities for both acceleration and intervention during designated Support periods with both core teachers and specialists
- Accelerated math class in each cluster as approved by the Newport School Committee
- Science, Social Studies, and ELA classes that will offer challenging and advanced opportunities for students through differentiation to reach their highest levels. All children at all grade levels will be grouped heterogeneously - as the teachers felt was a best practice - and the classes will be flexible for the cluster teachers to move children to meet their academic strengths and needs. Teachers will challenge all students. (We heard from several parents they want a top content area for each grade. This format will allow more challenging work and allow other students to have the opportunity as well. RIDE has advised NPS to keep this open for all.)

- Student compacts on behaviors and school expectations that will clearly define the academic excellence and good citizenship we expect of all our students.

This new schedule, combined with the 330 additional Chromebooks that we will be receiving, will begin to pave the way for exciting things at TMS. Your support, coupled with the energy, creativity, and experience of our staff, will be vital as we work to transform our school and address our district's strategic planning goals. Our teachers will be utilizing differentiated instruction, interdisciplinary planning, and flexible grouping to ensure that all students are being challenged and allowing for the opportunity for advanced work in their classes. It is critical that we meet the needs of all children and assure that those who are very bright have the opportunity to soar. Our new support periods will allow additional time for both intervention and acceleration in the content areas to meet the needs of each individual student. One of our overarching district-wide professional development goals this year will be to revisit curriculum. As such, it is a perfect opportunity for our teachers to consider how they are marrying great teaching with new technology to push ALL students to the next level.

Also, this year, we are adding both an Advisory period as well as a block that we are calling Power Hour. These will provide our students with an opportunity to dive deeper into areas of their interest, whether it is academics, hands-on learning, sports, or simply time to refocus themselves on the world around them. During Advisory, students will meet in small groups with an adult to begin to build what we hope will be lasting relationships within the building and, ultimately, work on their individual learning plans (ILP) to map out their academic and career pathways. Every student will have at least one adult who they know well and can go to if they need help or guidance. Power Hour is a time for our staff to continue forging those relationships by sharing their talents and interests with them. From mindfulness techniques to Zentangle to book clubs, the more experiences we are able to give our students, the wider their opportunities become. Students will be given the chance to sign up for what interests them and they will rotate to new choices every quarter. Perhaps you are involved with a community group, such as 4H or Junior Achievement, and would like to partner with a staff member. We welcome your involvement!

Our school wants every child to be his or her best and be allowed access to all opportunities. We want to be a school that challenges and raises our students to new levels. As with anything, some parts will work just as planned, while others will need more

refining in the future. We welcome your input and want to work with and for you to support your child the best we are able. As Walt Disney once said, "If nothing changed, there'd be no butterflies."

I look forward to meeting all of you in the very near future and to an exciting new year at TMS!

Laurie G. Sullivan  
Principal