

SPAN Meeting – January 16, 2018

Welcome to SPAN.

MITY: Brochure of Saturday programs for students 1 – 4th grade available now; will have summer program brochure available sometime in the next month (those programs go into high school).

Next Meetings:

- Thursday, Feb. 8: 2E movie (viewing and discussion)
- Thursday, March 8: Ted Talk with Carol Dweck (viewing and discussion)

Coffee Chats (Lund's Caribou in Prior Lake):

Thursday, Jan, 18 from 6:30 – 8 PM

Friday, Jan. 19 from 1 – 2:30 PM.

Parent Panel:

Apryl (son 12th grade; DOT 9th)

Grade 12: Glendale/SAGE, TOMS, PLHS – Instrumental music(band), NHS

Grade 9: Harriet Bishop/SAGE, TOMS, PLHS - Choir, Theatre, Speech

Julie (DOTS College grad, 3rd year college, grade 11)

First third grade class of SAGE (11th grader) - NHS

Rachel (Sons grade 10 and 8, DOT grade 5)

Sophomore (Bloomington Jefferson Dimensions Academy, Olsen Middle DA) - choir

Grade 8: Edgewood/Aspen, SAGE, TOMS, Bloomington DA - lacrosse, piano, drums, cross country

Grade 5: WW/SAGE, Bloomington DA – dance, music

Heather (Son grade 8, DOT grade 4)

Grade 8: Edgewood, RR, SAGE, TOMS – band (jazz and honor band)

Grade 4: Edgewood, WW, SAGE – piano and art

Michelle (DOTS grades 12 and 9)

Grade 12: WW/SAGE, TOMS, PLHS (PSEO at U of MN)

Grade 9: Five Hawks, SAGE, TOMS, PLHS – band

Andrea (DOTS year 1 college and 10th grade)

College: WW/SAGE, TOMS, PLHS, U of M – knowledge bowl/quiz bowl

Grade 10: WW/SAGE, TOMS, PLHS – band, theatre, choir, art

Questions:

1. Difference of Dimensions Academy (DA) vs. PLHS, SAGE/Synergy program?

True advanced programming through high school vs. ending at 5th grade. Dimensions is a school within a school – like SAGE. It just extends beyond 5th grade. Language arts, social studies and sciences are strictly Dimensions students. They test in 2nd, 4th, 6th grades and again going into high school. There are two tracks: a math/science and humanities based program in Bloomington.

2. How does the transition to Middle school from SAGE go?

There is a disconnect sometimes; it is not consistent in the level of rigor. Advanced classes in Middle School are the option coming out of SAGE. Math is typically grade skipped or double skipped. When coming out of SAGE, take all the advanced classes offered to you unless your teacher specifically recommends something different.

3. Do any of the parents have students in MN CAPS?

No panel members have students in MN CAPS so could not address specific questions on the rigor of that program.

4. Is there a plan to better integrate advanced programming into the middle schools?

The district is looking into it and doing a review of the gifted program throughout the district, including where SAGE students are (classes taken, etc.) at the high school level. They are trying to understand if there are any gaps in programming, student experience and see what the data tells us. Anecdotally, based on parent input, middle school has been a gap.

The district is starting the process of evaluating this program. We have what we have right now. Melissa Knettel, Student Support Services Coordinator, is evaluating the program and it starts with gathering data.

The district is also focused on the overall experience of students and the need to make sure all students experience a year's worth of growth each school year.

If your child is not getting what they need, start asking about options. There may be opportunities to flex, especially in math and science.

5. What does flexing mean in our district?

Typically, it means skipping a grade or two in a specific subject(s), especially in math and science. If you flex in middle school, you move on to high school level courses before entering high school. The transportation between PLHS and middle school is parent's responsibility except with math. Single-year-accelerated students can take geometry at the middle schools, and double-accelerated students currently can take zero-hour honors algebra 2 at the high school with district-provided transportation back to the middle schools; it is still the parent's responsibility to get the student to the zero-hour class. If you believe subject acceleration is right for your student going into middle school next year,

consider starting to advocate for this in 5th grade with your teachers. You may have to test out of certain courses to pursue this option.

6. Anyone have students who didn't go through SAGE and how was that experience?

Only one panel member had children who went through elementary before SAGE was offered. It impacted study skills because they breezed through the younger grades until they hit PSEO/AP classes, at which point they had to learn these skills. Some talked about the pre-SAGE years of school and their children shutting down from boredom.

Some students coming out of SAGE didn't want others in middle school to know they came out of SAGE. It just depends. At Dimensions, students may be called out for being Dimension kids. But, they'd rather be known as Dimension kids than spend their time in school being bored.

7. How are you supposed to know/take action for middle school? What questions should we be asking as parents?

There was concern from attendees that the District isn't addressing the gap in advanced coursework in middle school. SAGE parents know this, talk about it and are concerned about this. They don't know what to do about it/how to address it. It is recommended that they talk to their 5th grade SAGE/Synergy teachers with their questions, as a starting point. Those teachers are very knowledgeable. Also, ask other parents with older students who have been down a similar path to gain insight.

8. What are the differences between Honors, AP, PSEO (post-secondary enrollment option) classes?

- Some classes aren't offered in Honors and AP; depends on the subject.
- AP is a nationally recognized program with set standards. They teach to the test. If you pass the test, you often receive college credits.
- PSEO is a state-run program. Students apply to a college (often U of MN for full-time PSEO and Normandale for part-time PSEO for Prior Lake students) and, if they get accepted, they can take classes and earn college credits. Credits transfer to colleges in the state of MN, typically. These may not be counted for credit if you go to college out-of-state.
- AP is considered more rigorous than Honors classes (English - 10th grade - has pre-AP and Honors offerings; pre-AP is a lot of work but you learn a lot).
- As you go through high school, many people will drop down from the maximum number of Advanced classes allowed, especially if you have extracurricular activities.
- PLHS does not weigh PSEO classes as honors-level when figuring GPA (can only get 4.0). High school honors and AP classes are weighted differently (higher). GPA and class rank may go down with PSEO. Some state colleges use a formula that includes GPA, class rank (especially for scholarships) and test scores. Others look at other factors as well.

- Many colleges are looking at top 50% of senior class to be eligible for PSEO. (Top 1/3 of junior class are eligible for PSEO classes.) In this year's senior class, you would need a 3.2 GPA to be in the top 50%. We have one of the top high schools in the state; very competitive.
- For PSEO, some colleges won't accept these classes for college credit if a student gets college and high school credits for the classes.
- There are nuances to all of this and until you know the college you are attending, it is difficult to be sure how credits earned in high school will be counted in college.
- Something to consider, that if you have a lot of college credits going into college, you could graduate from college at 20. If you take a lot of general education college credits in high school, you don't have the first two years of college to determine your major, check out different types of classes, etc. (typical freshman experiences).
- AP Human Geography (year-long course) is offered in 9th grade at PLHS. Don't let them scare you; Consider taking it. Multiple parents on the panel recommend it. There is a requirement for semester of social studies, quarter of PE and health in 9th grade so if you take AP Human Geography, you have to find a way to fit in the PE and health. If you are taking band/choir and a language, there is not space in the regular school day for the PE and health. Some student then take these 2 classes during zero hour. You could also do a quarter or semester each of PE and Health online between the summer of 8th and 9th grade to make your schedule work (a second quarter of PE and second quarter of health are needed sometime during high school); you would need to pay for these courses.
- Some students do a hybrid between classes at PLHS and online. Minnesota Virtual Academy and MN Virtual High School are options that some have used, including panel members' students. Some take language classes online. Some have needed to take a course online to make their schedules at the HS work.

9. What is National Honor Society and how do you become involved?

You need to apply and be accepted. It has four pillars - leadership, character, service and academics. You also need two letters of recommendation. You can start to collect volunteer hours as early as 9th grade; you can't apply for NHS until Jr. year. You need signatures from places that the student volunteers. Also keep a list of honors, awards to which you can reference back when it comes to applying for college. This includes dates. Very helpful for the college application process.

Develop relationships with teachers/counselors. They are often asked to provide letters of recommendation for college. Have your child advocate for themselves with these individuals, especially during Freshman and Sophomore years.

10. How do you keep friends together moving into middle school?

Friend relationships will shift in middle school. Close friends will stay together. It all works out. They figure it out and know who they want to stay connected with in middle school. Many with older students saw some relationships change and others stay very close.

Since students at HOMS and TOMS move between buildings, they may see each other even if assigned to different buildings. There are extracurricular activities also. Middle schoolers also stay connected via technology.

11. How is the music program in the district? Do we have a strings program?

The District has a great music program but does not have strings. Harriet Bishop has a strings program within their music program. Harriet Bishop was mentioned as an alternative to what the District offers for advanced curriculum a few times tonight. Harriet Bishop, in the Burnsville school district, is an elementary school in Savage that is considered a gifted magnet school where gifted students are clustered into classrooms starting in kindergarten.

12. How do Spanish Immersion and SAGE work together? What is the district plan for this?

Panel did not know but recommends the parents in the Spanish immersion program start asking the questions. Whether it be to accelerate in one subject or something more. There was also concern of the SAGE programs being too over-crowded now with 29 – 40 students in some classes. Seemed to be interest among attendees to have this topic addressed at a future meeting.

If your questions did not get answered, join us for a Coffee Chat at the Lund's Caribou in Prior Lake on Thursday, Jan, 18 from 6:30 – 8 PM or Friday, Jan. 19 from 1 – 2:30 PM.