DATE: May 27, 2003

TO: BOARD OF EDUCATION

FROM: Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent

SUBJECT: Middle School Task Force Recommendations

ORIGINATOR: Christine M. Johns, Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction

RESOURCE PERSON(S): Gwendolyn R. Grant, Executive Director of Secondary Programs
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Paula Simon, Coordinator of Office of Secondary English and Reading

INFORMATION

The recommendations of the Middle School Task Force Report will provide a blueprint to improve the education and achievement of Baltimore County Public Schools’ middle grades students.

* * * * *
The Middle School Task Force Executive Summary

All students must have the knowledge and skills to be prepared for the demands of a dynamic and global marketplace. To meet these demands, schools must do more to prepare our young people for the realities of the 21st century. This is especially true of the middle grades students as the high school improvement program, and its rigorous assessments, require more of our middle schools than ever before. With this in mind, the purpose of The Middle School Task Force was to examine and assess the state of middle schools in Baltimore County Public Schools and suggest structural and programmatic changes to improve middle school achievement.

The middle years refer to students from ages 11 through 14 in grades six through eight. In Baltimore County Public Schools, approximately 26,000 of the 108,000 students are middle grades students. Students in the middle grades are in early adolescence, the second greatest stage of human development, and have complex physical, emotional, and intellectual needs unique to their developmental stage.

Research on improving student achievement for middle level students supports:

- Middle schools that are academically excellent emphasizing rigorous academic curricula aligned with state standards providing students with opportunities to apply knowledge to real-world problems.
- Middle schools that are developmentally responsible, understanding, and accommodating the needs unique to the developmental changes of middle grades students.
- Middle schools that are socially equitable implementing the characteristics of being both academically excellent and developmentally responsive.

The recommendations of this report provide a blueprint for improving education and achievement of Baltimore County’s middle grades students. The recommendations are:

**Recommendation I**

All Baltimore County Middle Schools will have consistent vision, mission, and belief statements focused on providing challenging and engaging work for every child and aligned with *The Blueprint for Progress, No Child Left Behind Act 2001*, and *Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Education Act* and *The Maryland Visionary Panel for Better Schools: Achievement Matters Most*.

**Recommendation II**

All Baltimore County Middle Schools will offer consistent and rigorous content strands/curricula aligned with the Maryland State Learning Outcomes, Learning Goals, and *The Essential Curriculum* inclusive of the Reading Screening, Special Education, and Guidance Program Proposals.
**Recommendation III**

Middle schools will have in place a schedule that allows students time to experience the minimum proposed content hours outlined in Recommendation II of this document. Four seven-period-day schedules are listed. The Task Force recommends that principals select from one of the four seven-period-day models or use them as models in creating new or modifying existing schedules. Schedule A and A2 allow students time to experience the recommended content hours.

Middle schools will schedule time (possibly in homeroom) twice per quarter to link all students with an in-school adult/teacher mentor/advisor to assist students and parents with monitoring student achievement and planning for future courses in middle school and into high school (CollegeEd).

Middle schools will schedule after-school and/or weekend extra help sessions, focused on improving students’ skills and providing students with enrichment opportunities that will move them to higher levels of understanding and student mastery, and prepare students to enter into more rigorous challenging courses. Accelerated curricula taught by highly qualified teachers will increase student achievement.

**Recommendation IV**

All students will be taught by highly qualified teachers with emphasis on increasing each year the number of certified math teachers at the middle level. Initiatives are outlined by the Office of Mathematics.

**Recommendation V**

Baltimore County Middle Schools will implement CollegeEd in seventh grade infusing the 12 lessons in the content strands of family studies and technology education with a guidance support component. This program provides students and their families with early college awareness and a five-year educational plan.
Middle School Task Force
2002-2003
RECOMMENDATIONS
Focused on Quality;
Committed to Excellence

Baltimore County Public Schools
Middle Grades Matter

Our schools aim to provide all students with the knowledge and skills that spell success in the global, dynamic marketplace of the 21st century. The task is monumental – our society, our world, is in constant flux. To meet this challenge, educators must continually re-examine and refine their standards, goals, and methods.
Middle Grades Matter

Maryland schools must do more, beginning in the early grades and continuing through the middle and higher grades, to prepare our young people for the realities of the new century. This is an especially critical time for middle schools, as the high school improvement program, and its accompanying rigorous assessments, will demand more of our middle schools than ever.
The Task Force will examine and assess the state of middle schools in Baltimore County Public Schools and suggest structural and programmatic changes to improve middle school achievement.
Task Force Members - 31

Middle School Principals

Curriculum Coordinators & Supervisors

Parents and Community Members

Teachers
Part A – Status of Baltimore County Public Middle Schools

- BCPS Middle School Data 1998-2002
  - CTBS
  - MFT and Writing
  - Attendance
- Parent and Teacher Surveys
- Middle School Programs
• Middle School Course of Study
• World Language & Reading Programs
• Southern Regional Education Board Research Brief (SREB) on Middle Grades to High
Middle School Data Indications

- Student performance discrepancies exist by Area, School, Ethnicity, Special Education, Poverty, and for English Language Learners in the areas of:
  - Math
  - Writing
  - Reading
Parent and Teacher Surveys
Indications

Continued focus on:

- Academic Assistance
- Academic Rigor
- Career Choices
- Conflict Resolution/Social Skills
- Quality Staff
Middle School Course of Study
Middle School Programs
World Language/Reading Programs
Indications

- Content and program discrepancies.
  - Some programs were infused into several content strands.
  - Some programs were not offered at all/not offered at all grade levels.
- Different middle school philosophies
Southern Regional Educational Board Research (SREB) on Middle Schools
Indications

“We continue to place large numbers of students in lower-level courses where they have little or no chance of gaining the skills and knowledge they need to succeed.”
SREB/Recommendations

- Students must be challenged to perform at high levels.
- Students must be prepared before they enter ninth grade to meet these challenges.
- Students must be given the extra help and extra time they need to succeed.
The Middle School Task Force
Recommendations (7)
Categories (5)

I. Vision, Mission, and Belief Statements
II. Content Strands/Curricula
III. School Schedules
IV. Highly Qualified Teachers/Math Teachers
V. CollegeEd
Recommendation I

Vision, Mission, Belief Statements

All Baltimore County Middle Schools will have consistent vision, mission, and belief statements focused on providing challenging and engaging work for every child and aligned with The Blueprint for Progress, No Child Left Behind Act 2001, and Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Education Act and The Maryland Visionary Panel for Better Schools: Achievement Matters Most.
Alignment to the Blueprint for Progress: BCPS

Vision

Baltimore County Public Schools’ graduates will have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to reach their potential as responsible, productive citizens in a global economy and multicultural society.
The Baltimore County Public Schools’ mission is to provide a quality education that develops the content knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will enable all students to reach their maximum potential as responsible, life-long learners and productive citizens.
Middle School Vision, Mission, and Belief Statements

Global Vision:
Baltimore County Public Middle Schools will provide a challenging and engaging academic program for every child. The middle schools will work in partnership with families and communities to prepare students to be good citizens and productive members of society.
Middle School Mission:

The mission of the middle school is to prepare each student with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for a successful learning experience in middle school and into high school.
Belief Statements:

• We believe all students will learn and achieve.

• We believe middle schools will challenge students to meet rigorous academic standards emphasizing real world connections and applications of content.
• We believe that teacher quality, preparedness, and continual professional development are critical to quality and engaging instruction.

• We believe middle schools will be academically excellent, responsive, and socially equitable, providing students with age appropriate supports.
We believe in meaningful school-family connections promoting parent involvement in his/her child’s education both at home and at school.
Alignment to the Blueprint for Progress:

Belief Statements
Recommendation II
Content Strands/Curricula
Rigor/Relevance

All Baltimore County Middle Schools will offer consistent rigorous content strands/curricula aligned with the Maryland State Learning Outcomes, Learning Goals, and The Essential Curriculum inclusive of the Reading Screening, Special Education, and Guidance Program Proposals.
Rigor and Relevance – Curriculum aligned with the Maryland Content Standards and Core Learning Goals, articulating a clear set of goals for student learning requiring application of knowledge to real-world situations. (COMAR).
Alignment to the Blueprint for Progress:

**Performance Goal 1**

By 2007, all students will reach high standards, as established by the Baltimore County Public Schools and State proficiency levels in reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
**Performance Goal 2**

By 2007, all English Language Learners will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards in reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

**Performance Goal 5**

All students will graduate from high school.
A rigorous and relevant core curriculum aligned with state standards.
English Language Arts Curriculum

**Strand**  Five 45-minute periods at grades 6-8

An Enrichment Language Arts course for grade 8 and then grade 7 will be developed to prepare students for movement into more rigorous courses.
Enrichment

Programs and courses intended to supplement and add value to the regular academic curriculum increasing depth or variety of subject matter.
World Languages Curriculum Strand
Five 45-minute periods at grades 7/8 upon existing grade 6/7 reading

Reading Screening Program
Grade 6/7 exit from reading to world language or continuation of reading

Social Studies Curriculum Strand
Five 45-minute periods at grades 6-8
Science Curriculum Strand
Life, physical, and earth sciences at grades 6-8 for 45 minutes per day

Mathematics Curriculum Strand
By grade 8 - prealgebra, algebra I, or algebra II with the availability of star math 6 and 7 for students in stanines 1 and 2 for 45 minutes per day
Special Education Program
Transition, support, and full participation programs

Physical Education Curriculum Strand
Four days of physical education at grades 6-8 for 35-45 minutes
**Health Curriculum Strand**
40-45 health lessons/hours in grades 6-8 for 45 minutes each

**Visual and Performing Arts**
*(Dance, Theater, Visual Arts, Music)*
Sequential year-long program of study in grades 6-8
Technology Education Curriculum Strand
35 periods at grades 6-8/CollegeEd

Information & Computer Technology Curriculum Strand
Incorporated into technology education at grades 6-8
(NCLB Requirement)
Family Studies Curriculum Strand
35 periods at grades 6-8/CollegeEd

Guidance and Counseling Program
Student experiences will include:
Grade 6
Orientation to grade six expectations and behaviors that lead to school success
Grade 7
Career exploration, CollegeEd, and development of a five-year plan of study

Grade 8
Transition to high school skills

Grades 6, 7 & 8
Registration and Special Programs based on student needs
“Students taking a core curriculum outperformed non-core takers on average.” (ACT Math and Science Research Brief).
Recommendation III
School Schedules

- Middle Schools will have in place a schedule that allows students time to experience the minimum proposed content hours outlined in recommendation II of this document. Four seven-period day schedules are listed. The Task Force recommends that principals select from one of the four seven period-day models or use them as models in creating new or modifying existing schedules. Schedules A and A2 are most desirable.

- How to fit 13 content strands into 7 periods?
Middle Schools will schedule time (possibly in homeroom and in small groups) twice per quarter to link all students with an in-school adult/teacher mentor/advisor to assist students and parents with monitoring student achievement and planning for future courses in middle school and into high school (CollegeEd).
Middle Schools will schedule after-school and/or weekend extra help sessions focused on improving students’ skills and providing students with enrichment opportunities that will move them to higher levels of understanding and student mastery and prepare students to enter into more rigorous challenging courses. Accelerated curriculum taught by highly qualified teachers will increase student achievement.
Alignment to the Blueprint for Progress:

**Performance Goal 1**

By 2007, all students will reach high standards as established by the Baltimore County Public Schools and State proficiency levels in reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.
Performance Goal 3
By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.

Performance Goal 4
All students will be educated in school environments that are safe and conducive to learning.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schedule A</th>
<th>7-period day</th>
<th>AB Weeks</th>
<th>Semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester 1 - A week</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
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<td>English</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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<td>Math</td>
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<tr>
<td>PE</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>Music</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>TE</td>
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<td>SS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• Schedule A is a seven-period day, alternating A and B weeks, with five of the periods allotted to year-long courses (English reading/world language, social studies, science, and math) which meet every day.

• PE is a year-long course which meets four times a week. Health is a 40-hour course, which in this schedule, meets once a week for the year.
• The remaining period is shared by art, music, technology education, and family studies. Art and music are year-long courses which meet on alternate days and offer approximately 60 hours of instruction.

• Technology education and family studies are semester courses which meet twice a week and offer approximately 40 hours of instruction. In grade 7, CollegeEd (12 lessons) will be delivered through technology education and family studies.

• Schedule A2 - 75 hours for music and art
  25-30 hours for tech. Ed./FS
## 7 period day Schedule B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK 1</th>
<th>Year-Long Schedule</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Friday</strong></td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PE</strong></td>
<td><strong>PE</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td><strong>Art</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
<td><strong>Science</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SS</strong></td>
<td><strong>SS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2, 3, and 4 SAME</td>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Schedule B is a seven-period day with six of the periods allotted to year-long courses (English, reading/world language, social studies, science, math, and physical education).

The remaining period is shared by art, music, health, technology education, and family studies. Each class will meet approximately 36 times in a year. In a month, each class will meet 4 times.

The open PE period could be utilized to supplement/enhance the minimum suggested hours in these content strands.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 6</th>
<th>7 period day</th>
<th>Schedule C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Quarter 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>English</td>
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<td>Math</td>
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<tr>
<td>PE</td>
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<td>TE</td>
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<td>Science</td>
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<td>SS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CollegeEd in Family Studies & Technology Education in grade 7
Schedule C is a quarterly rotation of the special areas of art, health family studies, and technology education. Music is a year-long course for one day a week.

Music and art are recommended to be year-long courses in the middle school.

Special Areas meet for approximately 40 times per year.
Recommendation IV
Highly Qualified Teachers

All students will be taught by highly qualified teachers with emphasis on increasing each year the number of certified math teachers at the middle level.
Standards-based training will be offered for non-certified math teachers in grades 3-7

Training       June 23-July 2, 2003
Practicum      July 7-July 25, 2003
Follow-Up      2003-2004 school year
Alignment with the Blueprint for Progress:

**Performance Goal 3**

By 2005-2006, all students will be taught by highly qualified teachers.
Baltimore County Middle Schools will implement CollegeEd in seventh grade infusing the 12 lessons in the content strands of family studies and technology education with a guidance support component. This program provides students and their families with early college awareness and a five-year educational plan.
Alignment with the Blueprint for Progress:

Performance Goal 5

All students will graduate from High School.
Alignment with the Blueprint for Progress:

Performance Goal 6

Engage parents/guardians, business, and community members in the educational process.
Alignment with the Blueprint for Progress:

Performance Goal 7

Involve principals, teachers, staff, stakeholders, and parents/guardians in the decision-making process.
Middle Level SREB
Recommended ActionsAligned
to Task Force
Recommendations (TFR)
Middle grades schools can:

A. Change the mathematics curriculum so that all students complete either pre-algebra or algebra I successfully by the end of eighth grade;

B. Expect all students to read 25 books or the equivalent across the curriculum;

Alignment to TFR

Recommendation II - Content Strand/Math

Recommendation II - All Content Strands/More Rigor
Middle grades schools can:

C. Identify students by grade seven who may have difficulty completing a challenging curriculum in grade nine, and take steps to increase their instructional time in reading English, and mathematics;

D. Place struggling students in accelerated curriculum with the best teachers;

Alignment to TFR

Recommendation II - Content Strand/Reading Screening Process/Math

Recommendation III - School Schedules
Middle grades schools can:

E. Take steps to provide all middle grades students in grades seven and eight with teachers who have at least a minor (preferably a major) in the content area(s); and

F. Work with students and families to educate them about which courses lead to greater achievement and success, and help students and their families develop a five-year educational plan.

Alignment to TFR

Recommendation IV - Highly Qualified Teachers With Emphasis On Math

Recommendation V – CollegeEd

Recommendation III – School Schedules/Mentors
Middle Level SREB Key Findings Aligned to Task Force Recommendations (TFR)
Key Findings

A. Many students who expect to go to college are not taking the necessary courses in high school.

B. Some schools enroll many more students in college-preparatory courses than others. The difference is not explained by differences in students or demographics.

Alignment to TFR

Recommendation V - CollegeEd
Key Findings

C. Enrollment in more demanding courses does not result in more failures. In fact, the evidence suggests that challenging content results in lower failure rates. It appears that many students in all kinds of schools can handle more challenging intellectual assignments than schools are willing to give them.

Alignment to TFR

Recommendation I - Vision, Mission, Belief Statement
Recommendation II - Content Strands
Recommendation III - School Schedules
Key Findings

D. Taking algebra or pre-algebra in the middle grades leads to enrollment in higher-level mathematics courses in high school and does not increase failure rates.

Alignment to TFR

Recommendation II - Content Strands
Recommendation V - CollegeEd
Key Findings

E. Middle grades schools that successfully prepare students for college-preparatory courses in ninth grade provide extra help and link students with an adult mentor. Successful schools come in many sizes, and their students vary by ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Alignment to TFR

Recommendation III - School Schedules/Adult Mentors
Key Findings

F. Teachers matter enormously; middle grades students who have teachers as advisers are more likely to have educational goals and plans for high school.

G. There are simple steps that middle grades and high schools can take to make sure almost all students will be successful in college-preparatory courses.

Alignment to TFR

Recommendation III - School Schedules/Adult Mentors

Recommendation V - CollegeEd

Recommendations I, II, III, IV, and V
## Middle School Task Force
### Planning and Implementation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories &amp; Recommendation</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Budget/Staffing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>I. Vision, Mission, Belief Statements</strong></td>
<td>2003-04 Alignment with existing school documents</td>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II. Content Strands</strong></td>
<td>2003-04 Informational and planning meetings with curriculum, special education, and guidance staffs and principals.</td>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>Possible reallocation of reading/world languages teachers. Budget request for reading acceleration programs TBD during 2003-04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Screening Special Ed. Guidance Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Categories &amp; Recommendation</td>
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<td>Implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>III. School Schedules</td>
<td>2003-04 Selection/modification of school schedules to include the minimum proposed content hours.</td>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>Possible reallocation of teachers in FS, TE, Music, Art, PE, and Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentorship/Advisory</td>
<td>2003-04 Refocus/change advisory to include mentorships for the purpose of monitoring and advising parents and students on student achievement</td>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>None – use existing staff to mentor students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories &amp; Recommendation</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Budget/Staffing</td>
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<tr>
<td>After School And/Or Saturday Enrichment And Accelerated Programs</td>
<td>2003-04 Refocus existing afterschool/ Saturday programs to enrichment not remediation centers. Curriculum coordinators will assist schools with selecting implementing, and writing programs/ curricula.</td>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>None – use existing staff, school operating budget, and grant funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories &amp; Recommendation</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Budget/Staffing</td>
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<tr>
<td>IV. Highly Qualified Teachers/.Math</td>
<td>2003-04 Training throughout the year provided by the offices of Elementary and Secondary Math.</td>
<td>2003-04 2004-05</td>
<td>Grants, operating budget, and collaborative efforts with colleges and universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories &amp; Recommendation</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Budget/Staffing</td>
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The Middle School Recommendations are aligned with the current research (SREB), *The Blueprint for Progress*, parent, community, and teacher insights and curricular mandates and experiences that will prepare students for the world they will live in as adults. Every child will:

- Have rigorous, relevant academic programs.
- Be challenged to perform at high levels.
- Be prepared before they enter ninth grade with a five-year plan.
- Be given the extra help and extra time they need to succeed.

All Students can achieve!