

# Middle Schools for Tomorrow

Feedback from stakeholders and  
updated recommendations

Learning to Live • Loving to Learn



Alexandria City Public Schools

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# Feedback from our Stakeholders

A series of feedback sessions were held at each campus with PTAs, staff and the TAGAC Committee.

| Feedback Themes                      | GW Parents | GW Staff | FCH Parents | TAGAC | FCH Staff |
|--------------------------------------|------------|----------|-------------|-------|-----------|
| One School Structure                 |            | x        | x           |       | x         |
| Multi-School Structure               | x          |          |             |       |           |
| Personalization                      | x          | x        |             |       |           |
| Consistent Discipline                | x          | x        | x           |       | x         |
| Increasing rigor in advanced courses | x          |          |             | x     |           |
| Additional Resources                 |            | x        | x           |       | x         |
| Scheduling Flexibility               |            | x        |             | x     | x         |

# Essential Questions

- How can we organize ACPS middle schools to maximize the learning, achievement, and engagement of all students?
- How can we ensure that the organizational structure of all ACPS middle schools promotes the success of every learner?
- How can we organize and personalize ACPS middle schools to address the needs of diverse student populations?

# Updated School Structure Staff Recommendation

## School Structure

- Combine each campus into one middle school with one lead principal overseeing all operations and supported by three academic principals.

# Impetus for Change

## Challenges of the Current Structure

### **Students**

- Flexible scheduling
- Behavioral expectations
- Staff turnover
- Communication
- Implementation of ACPS curriculum
- Student academic achievement
- School climate

# Impetus for Change

## Challenges of the Current Structure

### **Leadership**

- Implementation of ACPS curriculum
- Leadership across the campus
- Vision
- School climate
- Communication to staff and parents
- Accountability for facility management
- Student academic achievement

# Academic Benefits of New Structure

## Instructional

- **Principal** who sets the vision, implements accountability systems and a plan to effectively implement the ACPS curriculum
- **Three Academic Principals** who observe classrooms to ensure the delivery of instruction is aligned with curriculum, differentiation, and targeted support for students; follow a cohort of students
- **Dean of Students** who manages discipline for the school, implements PBIS in partnership with the counseling program and implement other discipline priorities set by the Principal

# Academic Benefits of New Structure

## Instructional

- **Resource Teacher for Talented and Gifted (TAG)**
  - Collaborates with teachers on how to modify content
  - Supports differentiation within the honors curriculum scope and sequence for English
  - Arranges for special seminars, field trips, external learning opportunities
  - Provides resources to support the needs of TAG identified students
  - Consults with teachers and counseling team on the academic, social and emotional needs of the gifted learner



# Academic Benefits of New Structure

## Student Services

- **Director of School Counseling** who manages a nationally recognized ASCA model counseling program addressing social, emotional and mental health and well-being of students
- **Two Counselors per Grade-Level**
  - Follow a cohort of students for the entire three-year middle school experience
  - Dedicate 80% of the workday to direct services to students in the form of classroom guidance lessons, individual counseling, student academic planning and small group counseling.

*Note: This structure decreases caseloads to a range of 150-200, which will increase the level of personalization as currently middle school counselors have caseloads of 220-250.*

# Academic Benefits of New Structure

## Instructional

- Expand AVID to include sixth grade students on both campuses to help address the achievement gap impacting minority students

# Benefits of New Structure

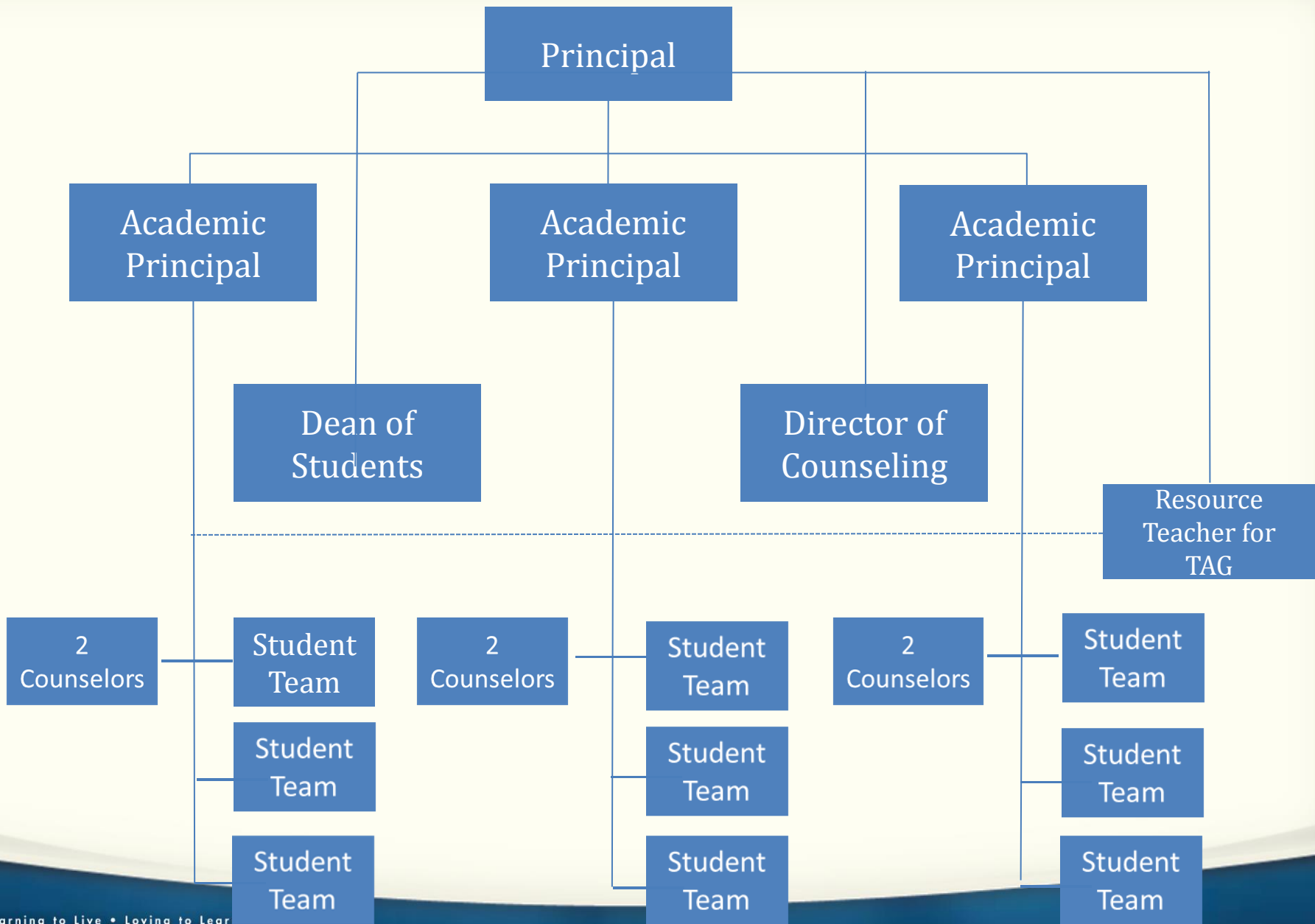
## Students

- Direct access to Counselors
- Teaming will allow for continued personalization of the middle school experience
- Clear lines of authority and accountability
- Academic Principals and counselors move with students
- Consistent expectations for all students
- Increased flexibility for students schedules
- Better delivery of ELL and Special Education services

# Benefits of the New Structure

## Leadership

- Four Administrators focused on instruction
- A single vision
- Clear lines of authority and accountability
- Consistent expectations for all staff members and students



# Recommendations from Staff

## Discipline

- Implement tiered approaches to discipline including an in-school suspension option for students. These tiered approaches to discipline, as well as the student behavior that predicated them, will be monitored formatively by schools and central office throughout the course of the school year.

# Discipline

## Timeline:

- January 31, 2014: Deadline for schools to update discipline data in PowerSchool
- February – June 2014: Discipline Data will be monitored and examined for trends with targeted interventions implemented based on identified needs

# Recommendations from Staff

## ELL & Special Education

- Hold focus groups with staff to identify the root causes as to why a large percent of staff felt that students in Special Education or ELL programs would not meet grade level standards during the school year. Staff must be asked what additional resources and/or structures they feel are needed to most effectively advance student outcomes within these subgroups.



# ELL and Special Education

## Timeline:

- February 2014: Develop questions to determine root causes with the Accountability Office
- March 2014: Conduct focus groups at each campus
- April 2014: Report back to the school board on the focus group findings

# Recommendations from Staff

## Advanced Coursework

- Several processes and programs have been put in place at the middle school level in recent years to increase access and retention in advanced coursework for all students. A next step for staff must include meetings between middle school and elementary school staff focused on increasing the articulation between elementary and middle school.

# Advanced Coursework

## Timeline:

- February 2014: Director of Middle Schools will visit every elementary school to meet with Principals and to visit TAG classrooms
- March 2014: Hold meeting with elementary and middle school Principals to develop a plan for an articulation process
- April 2014: Report back to school board on the new articulation process

# Updated Recommendations from Staff

## School Climate

- The immediate step required to investigate the finding of why a large proportion of staff would not be encouraged to send their children to the middle school in which they work is to hold targeted meetings with staff around this issue specifically to identify the key concerns they hold. This particular data point should continue to be tracked via the forthcoming TELL survey.

# School Climate

## **Timeline:**

- February 18 – March 17, 2014: Administer the TELL Survey
- May 2014- Report back to school board on findings from the TELL survey

# Recommendations from Staff

## Student Services

- Strengthen the ability of staff to respond to the increasingly divergent needs of students and families by reviewing the allocation and utilization of school psychologists and social workers at the middle school level.
- Increase awareness of Student Support Team services through multiple focused outreach efforts to students, staff, parents, and the community.

# Questions and Discussion