

## **Action Plan Addressing Identified Challenges Associated with MYP Expansion into PMHS**

Through the following action plan, the administrative team seeks to respond specifically to the anticipated challenges first presented at the January 12, 2016 Board of Education update.

*1. There are differences between the middle and high school.*

To some extent, Pelham Middle School teachers are more familiar with working collaboratively and with teachers of other disciplines, planning from a student-centered (rather than curriculum-centered) perspective, and thinking in terms of the “whole child.” If we agree that these are desired traits for all teachers, this is all the more reason why it is important that PMHS teachers’ professional development provide opportunities to deal with these in a substantive manner. In addition, a number of “split” PMS/PMHS teachers (in World Languages, art, music, and health) have been experiencing the MYP implementation process this year and are both responding enthusiastically and meeting with great success. In some ways, high school implementation is an easier process, since - unlike at the middle school - no changes in course offerings or student schedules will be needed. In addition, high school implementation will require a significantly smaller group of teachers to be trained. While change is often challenging in education, we have already - at PMHS - committed to MYP aspects such as performance-based assessments (through PADI), differentiated instruction (through our work with Carol Ann Tomlinson), Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (in our teacher observation/ APPR process), Understanding by Design, Curriculum Mapping, and Growth Mindset. The difference here is that the MYP would now provide a systemic and ongoing means through which to accomplish the goals we have already set before ourselves.

*2. High school teachers would need to work collaboratively to look at curriculum, teaching, and assessment in a new way.*

Most worthwhile outcomes require some challenge. While some teachers find change inspiring and rejuvenating, others have the tendency - once they are secure in their daily practice - to stick with “tried and true” methods and materials. The problem with this latter tendency is that it fails to account for changes - social, political, economic, environmental, and technological - occurring in the world outside. One only need look as far as the daily news to get a sense of how quickly the world is changing, and we as educators must change with it. Since we can’t know what will exist at the end of this road, we need to prepare students who can be innovative, resilient in the face of change, and willing to grow, with initiative, critical thinking, and intellectual curiosity and enthusiasm. MYP implementation will require teachers to work hard, but this is rewarding work, as the middle school teachers can already attest to. Implementing the MYP will be an ambitious undertaking, but one that has immense value not only for the students, but for the teaching staff as well. As teachers begin the process of unit planning and start to focus their teaching on an inquiry-based model where they are exploring essential questions, making

interdisciplinary connections, examining a global context, and creating culminating authentic assessments, they will hopefully see the intrinsic and extrinsic value in these endeavors. Since many of the teachers already incorporate elements of this model into their lessons, it is unlikely they will see the IB as an overhaul of their craft. Key to a successful process will be pacing the professional development so that teachers have the time to master each element of the MYP and apply it in their classrooms in the midst of competing initiatives.

*3. There is less meeting time available for PMHS teachers.*

During the 2015-16 school year, Pelham Middle School teachers met about three times per month for professional development related to the MYP. This has been possible since most faculty, department, and curriculum meetings were given up to this purpose. We know this will not be possible at PMHS, due to other responsibilities and initiatives teachers will be pursuing. However, this need not be an impediment to our pursuing an authorization process. First, the process at PMS has resulted in teacher progress far beyond what most candidate schools accomplish in a similar timeframe, PMHS need not be as ambitious; applying for authorization requires much less work than we are currently undertaking at the middle school. Second, while we will most likely be ready to apply for middle school authorization in October of this year - within about a year of the beginning of candidacy - the candidacy process can, and usually does, take longer. Therefore, if we want to take two or three years to get ready to apply for authorization to offer MYP in grades nine and ten, there is no reason why we can't. What is important is for us to submit our application to be a candidate school, and therefore be able to receive the access to materials, consultation with the IB, support, and training we will need to begin the process. Initial estimates indicate that the IB Supervisor will be able to meet with teachers for one or two professional development sessions each month. In addition, as with any school improvement, a few staff members must also serve as "change agents" in this process, with an eye toward engaging and motivating the rest of our professional staff. Since the fall our Directors have been looking at ways of creating teachers' schedules that would facilitate the success of the MYP if the authorization process moves forward in the high school. The Directors and Principal have selected potential staff members who would be both willing to be trained in MYP: Category 1 and could teach predominantly ninth and tenth grade classes. These teachers could serve as turn-key facilitators, helping the ninth and tenth grade teachers develop their units and assessments.

*4. PMHS teachers teach a variety of courses.*

Currently, there are many teachers at PMHS who teach one or two ninth or tenth grade classes, while some do have ninth and tenth grade classes making up a majority of their schedule. It would be beneficial for teachers who will be involved with MYP to have a more "pure" schedule, with at least 60% of their schedule consisting of ninth or tenth grade classes. This is possible, especially now that - contractually - teachers can teach two AP classes without it

counting as an additional .2 FTE. More consistent schedules, when feasible, will have the added benefit of allowing teachers to teach fewer “preps” and be able to concentrate with more focus on a smaller number of different lessons per day. That being said, even if individual teachers do have one or two classes outside grades nine and ten, split teachers teaching at PMS have already demonstrated that a mixed MYP/ non-MYP program is possible, and that - in fact - MYP training can have a positive impact upon teachers’ approach to the rest of their courses. Directors have already started examining schedules to see if the variety of courses can be reduced and staff can be assigned to fewer grade levels. This would facilitate the “turn-key” process and allow for more collaboration among ninth and tenth grade teachers. It is also important, during this process, that we preserve our robust elective program at PMHS so that the ninth and tenth grade teachers can continue to teach the electives about which they are very passionate.

*5. Teachers will need to balance MYP expansion with other agendas.*

English, Social Studies, and Math teachers will all be dealing with curricular changes related to the Common Core, and science teachers will be dealing with new standards. This means that they will not be able to concentrate exclusively on the MYP in upcoming years. As was mentioned earlier, if PMHS needs a longer candidacy period in order to meet the IB’s requirements, this is not a problem. High school teachers will - by necessity - receive less IB training and work time than middle school teachers have within the same period of time. It should be possible at times, however, to combine initiatives. For example, if teachers need to create new units to respond to Common Core changes, they can still do so using the MYP Unit Planner once they have been trained in its use. High school teachers often feel especially passionate towards and protective of their course content, and it is important that they understand that, under the MYP, content will not be sacrificed. The more they see the MYP in action, the more confident they will feel in this regard. The Principal and Directors have already expressed a willingness to be flexible when it comes to Wednesday meetings, so that teachers can have time both for professional development and IB-related work. In addition, while teachers should still have the option to choose the topics they will address in their Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), many middle school teachers chose to focus on MYP initiatives during their PLC sessions, and some high school teachers might be interested in following suit.

*6. We will need to figure out how to supervise students’ Personal Projects in grade 10.*

For the capstone project MYP students complete during grade 10, each student will need to have a “supervisor” to support him or her, provide guidance, and assess the finished project. With over 200 students in grade 10, either a small group of teachers will be responsible for large numbers of students, or a large percentage (perhaps all) of the faculty will need to provide this service for students. This is similar to the situation we will eventually face regarding the Community Project in grade 8, but, in that case, students can work in groups of up to three with

one supervisor, mitigating the issue somewhat. While this is not an issue we would need to deal with at PMHS for a few years, it behooves us to begin to consider it now. Some possibilities that could provide room for this contact time:

- Teachers could meet with students during Academy Period. If necessary, one Academy Period a week could be freed for Personal Project consultation
- The Personal Project could be tied to a 10th grade course, with room allotted in the curriculum for support and supervision
- Teachers could be freed from part of a duty period (every other day, once a week) dependent upon the number of students he or she was supervising.
- The IB Coordinator could, as part of his responsibilities, act as supervisor for a number of students' Personal Projects

*7. We will need to expand our current grade reporting process.*

Schools offering the MYP are required to communicate student achievement in each subject group to parents at regular intervals, usually during, and at the end of each school year. Each subject group assesses students in four criteria, and students receive a score from 0-8 in each of the four. These scores are added together to make a score from 0-32, which is then converted into a grade from 1-7. These 1-7 grades need to be communicated to parents. Schools can either report grades in a parallel format (MYP grade and traditional grade out of 100%), or they can use a formula to convert the MYP grade to a percentage. At PMHS, it would make the most sense to report parallel grades. MYP schools report that the communication of MYP grades is not an arduous process; in fact, it actually makes the assessment process easier. We could either report MYP levels on our usual report cards (through the "comments" function, for example), or we could use another software solution. Many IB schools use the ManageBac system, which handles IB grading in addition to curriculum planning and mapping, community service, virtual classrooms, community and personal projects, and other functions. We could consider using this product in the future, although it might overlap with a number of other products (Rubicon, eChalk), which we already use. As a start, reporting IB grades once per year, at the end of the year, would be sufficient and would not need to be considered until two or three years down the line.