

The To&Through Middle Grades Network (MGN) is a group of CPS schools dedicated to creating more equitable and responsive educational environments where middle grades students thrive. The network aims to *increase the number of students with attendance at or above 90% and GPAs at or above 3.0 (i.e. condensed elementary on-track) through a meaningful increase in students' sense of belonging.*

Participating schools in each cohort work to redefine the middle grades experience by using qualitative and quantitative data to understand student experiences, develop a problem of practice, and test change ideas that positively impact the experiences and outcomes of middle grades students.

This profile shares the journey of one MGN school in hopes of inspiring others to reimagine systems and structures to ensure that middle grades students thrive.

SOUTH SHORE FINE ARTS ACADEMY LOCATED IN SOUTH SHORE



SY2022 - 2023 TEAM MEMBERS

- Principal
- Assistant Principal
- Middle Grades Diverse Learner Teacher
- 7th-8th ELA/SS Teacher
- 7th-8th Middle Grades Math Teacher
- 5th-6th ELA/SS Teacher
- 5th-6th Middle Grades Math Teacher

STUDENTS

School Grades: PreK-8

Number of Students: 235

Middle Grades Enrollment: 85

DEMOGRAPHICS

97% Black

35% Diverse Learners

70% Low Income

DEFINITION OF STUDENT SUCCESS

Students at SSFAA are successful when they:

- Demonstrate academic and personal growth, which happens best when teachers and students recognize the growth together.

South Shore Fine Arts Academy

Year One Improvement Story

YEAR ONE

CHANGE IDEA RATIONALE

In spring 2022, the South Shore Fine Arts Academy (SSFAA) team conducted student experience surveys, student shadows, and focus groups with their 6th-8th grade students. Survey results and focus groups revealed that students wanted classrooms to feel like more welcoming places. Students also expressed a desire for teachers to know more about them and their abilities. Surveys also showed that it was not always easy for students to talk to their teachers or to share their thoughts and opinions in class. During their first administration of the Elevate survey, 46% of students strongly agreed/agreed that they felt a sense of Classroom Community (peer-to-peer relationships) and 54% of students strongly agreed/agreed that they experience Teacher Caring (educator-to-student relationships).

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1. Being there and present is vital to building relationships; remember to see students for who they are and meet them where they are.
2. Acknowledging students, centering humanity and love, and showing interest in their lives outside of school are important.
3. Students are capable of strong discussion, are open-minded, and less judgemental about others' thoughts and opinions.

Data Sources

- Quarterly [Elevate survey](#) results related to the Teacher Caring and Classroom Community learning conditions.
- Direct feedback in the form of a [Student Questionnaire](#) to gather additional data around students' sense of comfort sharing their thoughts and opinions in class.

YEAR ONE

CHANGE IDEA

Question of the Day

- “Question of the Day” was created based on their Elevate data and other student surveys. Teachers took 10-20 minutes a day to ask questions that students were interested in, such as “*is love or loyalty more important in friendship?*”.
- Discussions took place either at the beginning or end of the day with each teacher designated to a specific grade level. Resource teachers completed the activity with their students as well.

YEAR ONE

IMPACT

The SSFAA team reported that students loved “Question of the Day” and that it allowed for deeper relationships between students and their teachers. As the year progressed, student engagement and buy-in continued to increase.

As a result of their change idea, the SSFAA team saw a 12% increase in the Teacher Caring learning condition, including a 16% increase in students feeling that “their teacher is glad they are in this class”. There was a 2% overall increase in Classroom Community as well.

Towards the end of the year, the team began to discuss an advisory structure that includes “Question of the Day” with two team members volunteering to pilot it. During the 2023-24 school year, the team is looking to incorporate advisory into their schedule and increase students' sense of classroom community. Lastly, the SSFAA team is working on how to bring the same engagement and confidence students experience while sharing out their responses during “Question of the Day” to other areas in school.