

Advanced Learning Opportunity School Plan

Madison Middle School 2008-2009

Madison's Challenge Program

Through a lengthy process during the 1998-2000 school years, and a follow-up review during the 2004-2005 school year the community of Madison Middle School including parents and staff members decided on a program for advanced learners called the Madison Challenge Program. Based on research around best middle school practices from the Turning Points Principles for effective middle schools, Madison offers rigorous academic opportunities to all students in core subject areas (Math, Science, Language Arts, Social Studies).

Rationale for Challenge

- Challenge engages students according to their interests, thus addressing and acknowledging multiple intelligences.
- Challenge allows students to experience the benefits of an inclusive school, which is supported by “Best Practices” research, and which furthers appreciation and respect for diversity.
- Challenge ensures that the twin values of equity and excellence for all students are incorporated school-wide.
- Challenge provides the best possible education for all students.
- Challenge prepares students for real world success as recommended in the “Seven Skills Employers Want” created by leaders in industry:
 - ❖ Organizational Effectiveness/Leadership
 - ❖ Interpersonal Skills/Ability To Work In A Team
 - ❖ Self-Esteem/Motivation, Ability To Set A Goal
 - ❖ Creative Thinking and Problem Solving
 - ❖ Ability To Communicate Effectively
 - ❖ Reading, Writing, and Math Skills
 - ❖ Knowing How To Learn
- Challenge builds self-esteem and gives students practical experience with choosing difficult work, setting goals, and following through.
- Challenge ensures that students of all abilities will be presented with opportunities to stretch and grow academically.
- Challenge builds character by fostering intrinsic motivation.
- Challenge raises the bar for all students.

Definition of Challenge

Challenge involves academic work that is rigorous and requires application of higher-level “thinking skills” above and beyond standard content acquisition.

Rigor

This challenging work is available in every core class as part of a multi-level curriculum intended to keep every learner engaged and excited about education. Students who opt to do

challenge projects engage with the curriculum and concepts using a higher degree of academic rigor. Academic rigor is defined as helping students develop the capacity to understand content that is complex, ambiguous, provocative, and personally and emotionally challenging.

Rigor is at a PACE:

- **Provocative:** Students engage with concepts that are dilemmas where the student engages in problem solving, inquiry, and taking positions (e.g. human cloning, abortion, death penalty).
- **Ambiguous:** Students examine poetry, primary documents and statistics that are packed with multiple meanings that must be examined and sorted into patterns of significance.
- **Complex:** Students grapple with content that has overlapping and interacting ideas such as cellular respiration, the structure of ecosystems or the causes of depressions or recessions.
- **Emotionally or Personally Challenging:** Students look at content that challenges how they think the world works.

Thinking Maps

Thinking maps are eight visual-verbal learning tools, each based on a fundamental thinking process, and used together as a set of tools for showing relationships. Each thinking map has a basic visual starting point or graphic primitive. Thinking maps give all students and teachers a common language for meaningful learning. The consistency and flexibility of each of the thinking maps promote student centered and cooperative learning, concept development, reflective thinking, creativity, clarity of communication, and continuous cognitive development. Thinking maps are most effective when used together as tools in response to the purpose of the learning objective, outcome, or performance task. This supports learners as they interactively and efficiently construct knowledge, much like carpenters working together using a common set of tools to build a new structure.

<u>Tool</u>	<u>Thinking Process</u>	<u>Tool</u>	<u>Thinking Process</u>
Circle Map	Defining in Context	Brace Map	Part – Whole
Bubble Map	Describing Qualities	Flow Map	Sequencing
Double Bubble Map	Comparing and Contrasting	Multi-flow Map	Cause and Effect
Tree Map	Classifying	Bridge Map	Seeing Analogies

ALO Model and Strategies:

Challenge Models

The following three models have grown out of studying all the good examples generated by the many teachers piloting Challenge in their various curricula. These models meet all Challenge curriculum guidelines, and are flexible enough to allow teachers to fit any or all of them in their curriculum as they plan for ways to challenge all of our students. Along with the three models, three rubrics have been developed that best match each model.

The Project Model

This is an extensive, stand-alone project that students may choose to do during the quarter in addition to the regular work. However, this project should include concepts, thinking skills, and some content that parallels the regular curriculum. Usually, the scope of the project allows for just one per quarter, but a teacher might plan more than one if desired.

Suggested Rubric: Separate Challenge Rubric. This rubric can be useful with any of the challenge models, but is especially useful for the Separate Project. Like any rubric, it describes all the criteria for the successful completion of the Challenge project and how it is linked to standards.

The Unit Component Model

This is a challenge component added to an existing unit of work. It is designed to challenge students to go deeper into a unit of study and/or demonstrate a higher level of skill or understanding than the standard work requires. Ideally, this deeper work replaces some of the existing work so that the students don't feel they are being "punished" by doing more work. (For instance, in the Poetry Unit example, the two Challenge poems replace two of the required poems for the unit.)

Suggested Rubric: Row Challenge Rubric. Simply put, this is adding one row to the rubric used for the standard work of the unit. This additional row is a checkbox that reminds the student of the challenge option, and allows the teacher to mark whether or not the student did the challenge. (A teacher may choose to use the Separate Challenge Rubric instead or in addition to the Row Rubric.)

The Extension Model

Much like the Unit Component, this model challenges students to go deeper and show higher levels of skill and understanding. The difference is that the students show these deeper levels within the project, paper, assignment, etc. required of all students. For instance, as shown in the short story assignment included, students meet challenge by showing deeper uses of themes, character, setting, etc. In this model, the rubric suggested below is an essential piece for both teacher and students.

Suggested Rubric: Column Challenge Rubric. Here, a fifth column is added to the left side of the standard four-column rubric. In this fifth column, the requirements for meeting Challenge for each criteria of the assignment is clearly laid out so that the students can see what they must do to go beyond just meeting or exceeding standards.

Integrating curriculum with the models:

Any of the above models could be used, individually or in combination, as teams of teachers create integrated units. For example, teams may create an integrated, Separate Challenge Project, combining skills and content from many classes. Or, a team may plan a standard integrated unit, with Challenge components or extensions.

Enrichment Opportunities:

Daily or Weekly Challenges

On a daily or weekly basis many teachers encourage challenge students to attempt warm-up problems and problems of the week that are different than the problems given to general education students. Also, teachers use questioning strategies that help students engage more deeply with the subject by using higher order thinking strategies such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Special Projects

Throughout the year there are opportunities for public recognition if students choose to participate in the Geography Bee, Spelling Bee, Math Olympiad or the Science Fair. Each year the offerings for special projects are subject to change.

Challenge Grading

1. An “H” (or Honors) designation is available to students who are receiving an ‘A’ in the regular course work.
 - To receive an “H” the student must have successfully completed the *majority* of the Challenge activities for that class: 2 out of 3, or 3 out of 4, etc. This means that if the class has one Challenge activity per quarter, a student would have to complete both to receive an “H” for the semester.
 - A minimum of one challenge project per quarter is to be offered in each class.
2. Any student earning a ‘B’, ‘C’, ‘D’, or an ‘E’ in the regular coursework, *may* receive a higher grade, up to one grade (i.e. a ‘D’ may become a ‘C’, but not a ‘B’), if that student has successfully completed the majority of the challenge work for the class.
 - The same rules for meeting the majority of Challenge assignments apply.
 - Changing a grade is at the teacher’s discretion.
 - Students and teachers understand that Challenge is *not* extra credit. We want to reward students who try harder or who, through successful Challenge work, can show us mastery of a topic, skill, or concept. Trying Challenge can’t hurt, and often should help a student

Parent Access to Challenge Opportunities

Department Chairs in the four core subject areas keep binders of Challenge project options and examples. Parents can schedule an appointment with Department Chairs to review projects and examples.