

Response to APP Advisory Committee's Questions Concerning the Expansion of the
APP Middle School Program to Hamilton International Middle School
February 27, 2007

Program Vision

How does the split of the middle school cohort to a new site at Hamilton fit into the overall vision and configuration for the entire APP program (grades 1-12) for the next 5-10 years? Hamilton's international focus is very different from that of any of the other APP schools.

The vision for APP is based on four guiding principles that were jointly developed by staff and members of the APP Task Force. They are:

- Provide a rigorous and significantly accelerated curriculum in reading and mathematics.
- Support student social/emotional development as well as academic development.
- Move students through the program as a cohort.
- Provide instruction by teachers familiar with the needs of students who are academically highly gifted.

The formation of two middle school cohorts is aligned with these guiding principles, specifically, it

- Provides for the continuation of all program guiding principles while addressing capacity issues at Washington Middle School
- Provides for the continuation of a rigorous and significantly accelerated curriculum at the middle school level with the curricular targets identified for the program being implemented at both sites and collaboration among teachers at both sites
- Provides for the social/emotional development of students through maintenance of a cohort of students as well as teachers specifically prepared to teach them
- Provides for the continuation of a student cohort at the middle school level, forming a cohort at Hamilton and a cohort at Washington
- Provides for a teaching staff specifically prepared for working with this student population through targeted professional development experiences during the transition year

Criteria for Decision-Making

The District's solution to deal with overcrowding at Washington Middle School was to split the APP cohort (one of 5 programs at WMS) with some portion going to Hamilton (where APP will be one of 7 programs).

What criteria and process were used by the District in settling on this particular solution?

Specific information related to this will be available February 27th.

Were the APP community's priorities and values taken into consideration?

Yes. Information gathered over the years from APP Task Force and APP Advisory Committee, parent forums, and surveys were all considered in the decision making process. We thank everyone for his or her participation and recommendations.

Were the Hamilton community's priorities and values taken into consideration?

Yes. Meetings were held with Hamilton administration as well as the BLT.

Were 1 or 2 sites of APP grades 1-8 considered as a possible solution to building overcrowding at both Lowell and Washington?

Yes. At this time, no open facility is available for housing a 1-8 configuration without having to displace current students.

APP Student Assignment, Gr. 1-12

How will students be assigned to WMS or Hamilton--by choice or by where students and their families live? (This is probably the most critical question of all.)

This decision has not yet been made. The decision will be made in the context of the student assignment plan currently being developed and slated for a July 2007 recommendation to the Board.

What transportation will be provided?

Most likely yes, but again, this decision will be made in the context of the student assignment plan.

Will Hamilton APP students be assigned to Garfield for high school?

At this time, there is no proposal for changing the assignment of 8th graders in APP to Garfield as 9th graders.

Will the middle school split impact APP student assignment to Lowell Elementary School, which is also overcrowded?

No. An Education Director is forming a committee to address the capacity issues at Lowell.

Of great concern to the APP community, will a middle school split lead to splits in the elementary and high school APP cohorts as well?

The Program Placement Committee will continue to review the capacity issues at elementary and high school levels and will follow the standard process when making recommendations as to how best address these concerns.

APP Teacher Assignment & Curriculum Alignment

How will appropriately trained or experienced teachers be assigned at HIMS and WMS?

As part of the planning year, central and building staff, in collaboration with the teachers' union, will define a process for determining who will be teaching in the program at Washington and Hamilton. Once this is determined, professional development will be provided to the staff. If extended time is needed to determine this process, professional development in working with students who are

academically highly gifted will be provided to staff. Once staff assignments are finalized, professional development will be provided to any teacher who had not yet participated in the training. Additionally, on-going professional development will be provided to the teachers in both buildings through a collaborative and cross-building approach. Most likely, a summer institute will be provided for all APP teachers as we start that 2008 school year.

How will curriculum at the two sites be developed and aligned/coordinated to achieve equity, especially given WMS's strong music program and HIMS's international/foreign language focus?

- ❑ Curricular targets in reading and mathematics will be the same for both program sites, with professional development support provided to staff. Social Studies and science will also be identified as core courses for students.
- ❑ The schools are working to strengthen their world languages and music programs.
- ❑ Students at the two sites may have different elective and extracurricular opportunities, but the core courses (Language Arts, and Mathematics) will be equally calibrated across both sites.

Community/District Acceptance & Support

How will the District assure program quality and equity at both locations when many decisions are site-based and dependent on individual school Principals, the District does not conduct program reviews of APP, the Advanced Learning office does not conduct annual certification reviews of Advanced Learning Programs, and there is no established process for accountability?

- ❑ Sites offering APP are held to core requirements that supersede building-based decisions (e.g., curricular targets, cohort format).
- ❑ Program review of APP to date includes review of WASL performance, student grades in reading/language arts and mathematics, and discussions during transformation planning.
- ❑ Since last year, annual certification reviews occur through transformation planning. The review/approval of transformation plans has become more performance based, with an increased emphasis on addressing the needs of students served through APP. As a result, transformation plans approved for the 07-08 school year will have embedded strategies and activities for specifically serving this student population.

How will the District assure the communities of both schools--buildings that will serve many other programs in addition to APP--that the District, the building administrations, the building staff, and the building communities will provide APP staff and students with the necessary support and acceptance?

The Instructional Director in collaboration with Advanced Learning will ensure programs are appropriately supported at each of the buildings, and will work with site staff to positively include the program in the overall culture and vision of the school building. This support includes ensuring the following elements are in place: (a) appropriate staffing and equitable resource allocation to the program, (b)

identification of administrative leadership for APP at each building; (c) whole-staff professional development in working with students who are academically highly gifted, (d) professional development specifically designed for staff teaching program core academic courses, and (e) professional development and support for building leaders in implementing and monitoring the program.

How does the District plan to deal with potential inequities between the sites?

Building leadership will meet quarterly to discuss program challenges, initiatives, and student performance. Together, they will work across buildings, in collaborative ways that result in both sites meeting program guiding principles, while allowing for uniqueness across sites.