

## **Changes to Teacher Advisory (TA) Structure 2017**

Since the beginning of our school's journey with the High School Flexibility Pilot Project back in 2008, Meaningful Relationships and Personalization have been 2 key pillars we at Wm. E Hay Composite High School and now Wm. E Hay Stettler Secondary Campus have continually strived to focus on. Our Teacher Advisory (TA) Program has always been one of the main programs that has helped us work towards these goals and it continues to do so. We have seen drastic positive changes in the sense of community amongst staff and students. Students have been given more autonomy over their learning and in how they prioritize their education.

TA has fostered relationships not only between staff and students but has also helped create friendships across multiple grades. Older students continue to mentor and be programming leaders to students in lower grades. As teachers focus on tracking their students through high school, they also find themselves more heavily involved with each student on a personal level. Often discovering and building a relationship that lasts beyond grade 12.

TA has also given the students the ability to make their learning far more personal and relevant. Students were given the ability to focus on certain subject areas, get extra help from specific teachers and invest in academic areas they felt needed improvement.

Unfortunately, as TA evolved and changed over the years, student's experiences with the program started to vary. From the beginning, TA time has been counted as instructional time. A time where students need to be focused on course work and school related activities. As time progressed, it became more challenging to keep students in our building during TA. It became harder to develop relationships and both teachers and students began to disengage. Poor habits and attitudes began to develop and both teachers and students began to utilize TA in a manner that was not intended - not necessarily negative but not as productive as it was initially.

In the spring of 2017, all the teaching staff at the school decided to revisit how TA was working and look back to what our goals and priorities were almost 10 years prior. From this a committee was struck and they began looking into structural changes that could help revitalize the culture and attitudes surrounding the TA program and class times. In May/June of 2017, the committee looked at concerns voiced by staff and students and met 3 times to work on potential solutions to some of the issues and concerns that arose.

The committee identified 2 main areas to work on, creating a consistent student experience and improving student attendance, while still giving students choice/autonomy with their educational program.

During this time Clearview was working on implementing a comprehensive school framework called the Collaborative Response Model (CRM) across all schools in the division. Our CRM was created based around interdisciplinary groups of teachers that work with approximately 100 students. These groups focus on 3 essential components: Assessments, Collaborative Team Meetings and a Pyramid of Interventions. As these teams came together, the TA committee saw the strength and sense to tie these two areas together. From this TA PODS were created.

The multi-disciplinary teams created from the CRM would bring all their TA students into 4 different designated areas within the secondary campus. Each POD would have a humanities specialist, a science specialist, a mathematics specialist, a fine arts specialist and a soft/hard CTS specialist. The POD's meet Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 1:30 pm to 2:00 pm, giving students 30 minutes to focus on meeting their individual academic needs. Whether that be working on homework individually, accessing a specialist teacher, or collaborating and working with peers within the POD.

This structure helps meet the main area of creating a consistent student experience by bringing TA's together. Teachers and students will have consistent experiences because they are now physically together. Teachers will be able to collaborate more effectively and efficiently as they are working side-by-side with other colleagues. They will not only have the opportunity to bounce ideas off one another but also be able to see and watch other TA's in action. Students will have access to specialty subject areas as well as peers within their class to stay current in their courses.

Laggard students can be dealt with on a one-on-one basis as teacher advisors can easily setup coverage when needed and appropriate. The CRM teams will also meet regularly during school hours or professional days to discuss students within their POD and work through a pyramid of interventions to help address any school based needs.

We know that models based around collaborative teacher teams experience greater success in areas of student tracking and in communication with parents. The junior high CRM is organized this way into grade academies where teachers meet and discuss student success on a regular weekly basis.

The junior high TA times are also structured weekly with a focus on literacy, life strategies, core support, and school culture. Each day of the week, the students focus on one of these areas, guided by teacher instruction. A benefit of having this consistency with a select number of teachers are the relationships that develop throughout the year. Teachers are in a better place to advocate for the students they have in their POD because of this daily, sometimes one-on-one interaction.

As we continue to adapt to this new change, our committee remains hopeful and open to growing our TA program more throughout the year. We also know that change is often difficult and uncomfortable. It takes time to adjust away from old routines and past practices. With this in mind, constructive feedback from teachers, students and parents will help us to transform TA into an educational program that continues to accomplish great things by setting high standards, responds to student needs, develops a positive school culture and engages parents and our community.

Thank you,

Wm. E. Hay TA Committee