



LAKES MIDDLE SCHOOL

20-21 Semester 1 Overview

Directions: Please tell your story of the first semester of our 2020-21 school year at your school. Design/format your story in a way that is meaningful to your team and ensure to incorporate the following components:

Author(s): Jeff Bengtson and Trayce Hemenway

Planning, development and implementation:

Our main focus to start school in September was around how to provide engaging instruction via the blended learning model while continuing to focus on building community so that we can provide rigorous instruction for student learning and success. We began by exploring different models of teaching blended learning: [Model 1](#), [Model 2](#), and [Model 3](#). Since blended learning was new to most of us, we needed to sort through several models to best support our students and staff.

Our entire staff engaged in Catlin Tucker PD. We had small groups complete the virtual PD sessions together. We allotted 3 hour segments of time for staff to watch, discuss, and create. Simultaneously, we had teacher leaders facilitate Schoology “help sessions.” We facilitated a running dialogue of “what if” questions as we worked through this new model of teaching.

We identified staff members as our Schoology leaders to help build capacity with all of our staff. Several PD sessions were dedicated to specific topics including screencastify, zoom, flipgrid, etc. which allowed our staff to become more comfortable with the new technologies.

As we became more familiar with using Schoology, we created these [guidelines](#) that became the expectation at LMS. While these expectations are minimal, they have created more consistency and ease of access for our students and families.

Continuing the work we started last year, we partner with Keith Orchard and Andi West to have a strong social emotional learning (SEL) plan at lakes. We coordinate monthly collaboration sessions with our leadership team and Keith always keeping in mind our main goal. “We build community at Lakes so that we can provide rigorous instruction for student learning and success.” While working on SEL we developed a working document of [Lakes agreements](#). This document has helped us really focus on what’s important in the truly interesting year.

Instruction:

While we truly understand the importance of relationships at Lakes Middle School, we want to take advantage of these strong relationships to strengthen our instructional focus. With that in mind, we have sought out teacher leaders who have been part of multiple PD programs over the last few years to move forward with the [PEBC Teaching Focus](#). In a year where nothing is certain, our staff was focused on increasing their capacity for teaching and learning and helping to ensure all of our students received rigorous instruction to help them become successful. This work is supported through the monthly meetings within our Critical Friends Groups.

Relationship:

Relationships always have and always will be a focus at Lakes Middle School. Relationships and community are the foundation to learning. One thing Scott Murphy has really emphasized is that the point is not to just create a positive community. The point is to create a positive community so that we can provide rigorous instruction for student learning and success. It is essential that our staff understands the value in creating a strong community to provide students what they truly need.

Even though much is different this year, we have continued to support relationships, community and SEL learning through our Monday and Friday advisory time. Keith Orchard along with our advisory committee plans weekly SEL lessons to promote community in an attempt to keep our students connected to school. In the original plan, it was designed as a check in/check out system. As we only see our students 2 days a week currently, we have modified the original plan, but we hope to return to normal sometime soon.

To be honest, it has been very tough to build relationships with our families during Covid. Most of our correspondence is done via email, Schoology, and Skyward. We did prepare videos for 6th grade families. Every staff member recorded an Open House video for parents so they could see who their child's teachers are. Just recently our teachers at Lakes worked to create a [Remote Learning Weekly Plan](#) to help our students and parents stay on top of their work.

We have a cohesive staff who has overcome obstacles together over the years. In some ways, these hard times have made us closer. Since the first day together (in the band room with social distancing) we have discussed the importance of taking care of ourselves and each other. We have continued to meet in person with social distancing because we feel that connection is SO important. In August, during Keith's SEL PD, we talked about the importance of taking care of ourselves and each other. It is important to laugh and to surround yourself with positive people. The Lakes leadership team, advisory team and Sunshine committee have continued to focus on positive emotional well being by creating many opportunities to feel connected at Lakes.

Partnership:

- We are always in communication with the Kroc Center and Boys and Girls Club to provide families with out-of-school activities and supervision.
- We work with Bikers Against Teen Addiction and Abuse (BATAA), Real Life Ministries as well as Christ the King to provide school supplies, clothing, food and gifts for our students and staff.

Reflection:

- Pandemic learning has forced many changes. It has forced staff to embrace technology and to learn new technologies. It has caused us to reflect on things that we have done in the past and now wonder if we should keep doing them moving forward. We are planning several collaborations in the second semester to take a look at what's really important and what we need to embrace and also let go of as we move forward. Here are some positives of pandemic learning that we will consider keeping in place moving forward:
- Wednesday Collaboration rather than Monday
- Prioritizing standards
- Do we really need lockers
- Dividing our hallways into traffic lanes to better improve the flow.
- Four days per week (Wednesday work day)- would need to find a way to make up these lost instructional days
- Posting lessons online
- Allowing students to eat at multiple locations at lunch
- Student check-ins
- Streaming athletics or any activity
- Flexibility and resiliency to learn new programs and schedules
- Small class sizes- probably not sustainable
- Opportunity for connection on an emotional and personal level

Artifacts (Student and Teacher Interviews):

Student: Kaitlyn T- 8th grade. Why did I choose this student?

Kaitlyn has been a student at Lakes for the last 3 years. She started as a quiet, shy student who always has done well in school, but it has been great to see her engage in many new activities and clubs at Lakes. She is a wonderful student who can speak openly about the last 3 years.

1) Before this year, do you feel your teachers try to form positive relationships with their students?

Before this year, I feel that my teachers have always tried to form positive relationships with their students. I never had a negative interaction with a teacher and most of the

teachers at the beginning of the school year would ask questions to try and get to know us better.

2) Before this year, have you found your school work at Lakes to be interesting?

Before this year, I have found most of my school work interesting. My teachers have created projects and interactive labs to go along with what we are learning in class. I really enjoyed when we did the blood typing in Mrs. Brennan's Science class.

3) Before this year, do you think your school work was easy, just right, or too challenging?

Before this year, I think my school work overall was just right in most classes. Being in ALP I understand that we get more work in language arts and math. However, in 7th grade language arts I felt that the amount of work was overwhelming.

4) Before this year, do you feel like you have had too little, just the right amount or too much homework?

Before this year, I feel like I had just the right amount of homework if we finished what we were supposed to complete in class. Last year in language arts, I would hardly finish my work in class due to the amount given and that ended up with me having to do some of it at home. If you were able to complete the work in class, then what the teachers asked us to do for homework was just the right amount. Most nights I worked for about thirty minutes on math and language arts homework.

5) This year, do you feel your teachers try to form positive relationships with their students?

This year it was similar to previous years in that I feel that they tried to form positive relationships at the beginning of the school year. I feel that my teachers know me better this year because we started in such small class sizes due to blended learning.

6) This year, have you found your school work at Lakes to be interesting?

So far this year, I have found my school work to be interesting. I am earning a high school credit in math and enjoy what I am learning. In history, we are working with digital notebooks which have field trip links, and in language arts we have divided into tribes for our novel unit.

7) How do you think your teachers are doing with Schoology?

I think my teachers are doing well with Schoology considering I can always find my assigned work and the teachers get back to me quickly if I send them a message. I have found some issues with links that the teachers have put into the lessons and at the beginning of the year, some of the teachers didn't know how to answer questions.

8) This year, do you think your school work is easy, just right, or too challenging?

So far this year in person, I feel that my school work is just right. Some of the online work has been a bit easy, but it still goes along with the information we are learning in class.

9) This year, do you feel like you have had too little, just the right amount or too much

This year I feel like I have had just the right amount of work to complete at home during blended learning. My teachers are really good with assigning work for each day that we are at home and it is never too hard to complete in one day.

10) What do you like about blended learning?

What I like about blended learning:

- I like Schoology better than Google Classroom from last year
- I like that there are less students in the class
- I like that we are able to push ourselves to find the answers to our questions online
- I like that my teachers have had the opportunity to get to know me better
- I like to work at my own pace

11) What do you not like about blended learning?

What I don't like about blended learning:

- I don't like how if we have bad wi-fi, we can't work
- At times I feel unmotivated to do my work because no one is watching me
- It feels optional
- I miss seeing my friends that I used to go to school with in previous years because they are in the different alphabet split

12) What is your preference- 5 days, 4 day, or blended? Why?

I prefer blended learning compared to the other options because I feel it is less likely for students and teachers to get COVID due to the smaller number of people in the building. I also

enjoy working at my own pace in order to get my assignments complete. I think I am getting just as good of an education being there two days a week, as I would be getting either four or five days a week. When we were on four days a week at the beginning of the year, it felt very tiring because of everything that was going on in the world with the pandemic.

Teacher: Mr. Ross. We chose Marcus because he is a second year teacher, a hard worker, and strongly believes in having high expectations for his students and through his work with his fellow math teachers and his high expectations he is part of a strong team of teachers changing the culture of how kids view math at Lakes Middle School.

What is life like right now for you as a teacher in blended learning?

As a second year teacher, I can say that I am so thankful for this blended learning experience to happen right now. Every teacher, administrator, and support staff are all in the same boat. I would say that one positive that has come from this year is that we, as colleagues, are all supporting each other and lifting each other up more now than ever before. We collaborate, exchange ideas, find new ways to educate our students, and strive to engage our students while they are at home. We are professionals at quick decision making and multitasking as we try to teach our students in person as well as online.

Yes, class sizes are small and it is fantastic to really get one-on-one time with students to better support individuals who are struggling. Teachers are able to really build strong relationships with their students in the short amount of time we have them. Less voices to be heard requires more quiet students to get involved and you can see their confidence increase, their voice heard, and they feel more connected with their fellow classmates. I am grateful that our school has not gone full time online and that we are able to be hybrid in the safest way possible-- while maintaining social distancing protocols to protect staff and students. I worry that my relationship with my students would be close to nonexistent if this was not the case. Having face-to-face interaction (yes, even with masks on) allows students to feel the emotion of the teacher which is difficult to do online.

With this, we have definitely seen a decrease in students' performance and motivation during this very difficult time. Students are struggling to get work turned in and having five days off makes it tough for them to stay focused when they finally are in class. Some students who have a tendency to do very well in school before this year, are

finding it difficult to stay motivated and are falling behind. We cannot control what happens at home and it is a struggle and balance to try to challenge students, but also support them knowing each of their home lives are vastly different. Some do not have support from parents or guardians, or they may have to look after their siblings. It is also challenging when students are in quarantine because they were exposed or a family member may have tested positive. The quality of work from students has also decreased. You can put out resource after resource to support students but students refuse to take advantage of these videos, notes, and presentations and quickly get their work complete instead of truly understanding the material. That is of course if they even complete their work in the first place.

I have done a study within my own classroom to see the correlation between online work compared to paperwork and it seems that students are more likely to turn in paperwork than to complete activities online. When I hand a student an assignment on paper, they will watch my videos as well as complete the paper assignment to the point of about a 50% completion rate. However, if I give a student videos and online work, the percentage of completion by students drops to about 20%. When I asked my students why this was, they stated that putting pen to paper and writing out their thoughts helps them learn, they actually understand the material, and the lack of distraction from the internet helps them focus.

Now, the workload that I have had to take on this year has doubled, if not tripled. I spend hours upon hours past contract time grading papers, creating material for online and in person instruction, creating videos and tutorials to support students, finding new ways to engage my students while also still trying to build strong relationships. Working weekends, Saturday and Sunday, has become the norm in order to stay ahead of my workload. I am so thankful for Wednesdays or I am sure I would have no sleep.

I am hopeful that we will learn and grow together through this experience, but as of right now, I am tired, exhausted, overworked and I still feel I am not doing enough. Grace, patience, and kindness are the main characteristics that I have plugged into my classroom and school atmosphere. We are a community, we are educators, we are Lakes.

Assessment of Student Learning

Essential Standards:

During blended learning, our teachers have been tasked with identifying the “essential” standards for their content. Yes, we are providing five days of instruction between synchronous and asynchronous, but we don’t have a high participation rate with asynchronous work. Since this is the case, we have to cut out lessons/activities/standards that we feel are not essential. Not essential does not mean not important. All staff have been encouraged to be reflective and collaborative with

their departments to modify what they have done in the past to fit our current learning model. The number of in person instruction will impact other standards that are of less importance.

❑ Assessment

1. Teacher created formative assessments
2. Teacher created summative assessments to include but not limited to quizzes, tests, projects, essays, and performance tasks
3. Illuminate Fastbridge for ELA and Math 1: Fall and Winter
4. IReady for Math: Fall and Winter
5. Potentially ISATS (SBAC)

❑ Reporting

1. Feedback is given to students on in-person days and also remotely through Schoology.
2. All grades are reported in Skyward. Some staff also use the Schoology gradebook, but all are required to keep current grades in Skyward.
3. Staff is in frequent communication with families on current grades. Of course families can check Skyward whenever they want, but we also email progress reports every three weeks.
4. Parent-Teacher Conferences- We are still hosting requested parent-teacher conferences at any time. We hold them in a classroom with proper social distancing. We also contacted families of failing students on the Oct. 21 Conference Night. For the Nov. 18 Conference Night, we sent out a sign up sheet for ANY family to sign up to talk to a teacher either on the phone or a virtual meeting.
5. Parents receive regular progress report updates approximately every three weeks.
6. Our counselors and Keith Orchard have been holding individual meetings with every student who is failing 2 or more classes in an attempt to get them caught up by the end of the 1st semester.
7. For those students who fail 2 or more classes during the 1st semester, the administrators and counselors will be meeting individually with each student and family and they will be placed on an [academic contract](#) for the second semester.

Remediation/Interventions/Programs:

❑ IEPS- we offer a tiered Special Education Program.

1. Resource with Gen Ed Course(s)
2. Boost Resource with Gen Ed Courses
3. General Ed Boost with Gen Ed Courses
4. Team taught ELA and math classes for gen. Ed. and Special Ed. students

❑ Boost- as listed above, we offer “Boost” courses in ELA and Math. These are an extra class period of Math and/or ELA for students needing extra support with the grade level course. During Boost, teachers work on grade level standards and also provide interventions to fill learning gaps. Our Boost classes are tiered based on intervention needs.

❑ 504- Accommodation Plans

- ❑ **Classroom Lunch Help**- Most of our staff members allow students to come work in their classroom during lunch time
- ❑ **Before/After School**- Students can make arrangements with staff to get extra help before and after school.
- ❑ **Grading Policies**- Lakes has 6 [grading policies and practices](#) in which all staff are required to follow. These were created to provide our students with the opportunity to be successful without using punitive measures.