

Middle School Collaboration in the Troy School District Adam Burns In the fall of 2024, the Troy School District formed an attendance review committee to look at district demographics. This is standard business in the district, occurring every two years to optimize building numbers and facility usage. In this particular round, it became evident that while some of our middle schools are at capacity, others are far below. Before this information could be shared with the community with an action plan, it was leaked with the message that redistricting is on its way. Fortunately, that is not the case. There are no plans to redistrict nor has the committee even presented redistricting as an option. Unfortunately, the redistricting message, though incorrect, was already out. Board meetings received more (passionate) public comment. Social media rumors flew. While never ideal, it was all very frustrating in this case because none of it was true. While the district continued to share updates about what was actually happening as a result of the committees work, our team decided to be proactive and try to refocus attention on what makes our middle schools great. We met with middle school staff and took inventory on what practices they felt were going really well. The one that kept coming up was collaboration and a willingness amongst each of our four middle schools to work together. This became the focus of the first of a series of short documentaries about middle school in the Troy School District. Collaborationone of the 6Cs focused on in our district mission, Portrait of a Learnerproved to have many authentic instances of success in our middle schools, and there was a lot of enthusiasm from the teachers to get the chance to share their experience. What could have easily steered into propagandareally insisting that all of our middle schools were great to appease those upset by the (false) prospect of redistrictingnever felt like. The teachers were asked what they love about teaching in TSD and what they think middle schools do well. It was gratifying to see these open ended questions unify around collaboration. The video was shared across our social media channels and the numbers performed well compared to other videos. Though we were a bit nervous about what the comments could look like, they were universally supportive. Middle schools also use this video at their 6th grade welcome nights. What will come from our attendance review remains to be seen, but this video helped steer the conversation away from rumors and to what our TSD middle schools are doing well.