

Questions from 2/10/11 FWA Parent Information Meeting

Q: For kids currently at GMS, would bussing to FWA be from homes or from the school?

A. It would be from homes unless it currently involves the use of a pick-up point.

Q. For kids in the same family that have quite different characteristics, behaviors, and learning styles, how will they fit into FWA?

A. FWA has the flexibility and variation in staff focus to accommodate different students' needs. The staff can help identify student strengths and make them work for the student. They can also help kids identify how they learn best.

Q. How do kids in project-based school models do on standardized tests compared to peers in traditional classroom settings?

A. In general, these students do very well in comparison to their peers. Scores are typically equal to or better than those of students in conventional school models.

Q. Is there any kind of review of applicants' abilities prior to admission to FWA?

A. No. Any student is welcome to apply, regardless of academic ability or other aspects. The application process involves only the simple form and the attendance requirement of the parent information meeting. If less than 60 students apply prior to March 1, all are admitted. If more than 60 apply, then the lottery process is used. No individual applicant reviews are allowed prior to admission.

Q. How will the balance of student numbers be handled if there are fewer applicants in one grade level compared to the others?

A. This doesn't appear to be an issue so far. As of this date, the distribution of applicants is relatively even between the three grade levels.

Q. For students who come through a project-based learning model at the middle school level, how do they do when they transition to high school? Is there any research on this?

A. One of our goals is to help students identify and strengthen their individual learning styles, develop problem-solving skills, and utilize time management strategies that so that in any situation they will be able to adapt, grow, thrive, and be successful - whether it is in an education setting, future careers, or even in a student's personal life.

We are not aware of any research specific to middle school students' success transitioning to a traditional high school setting. Most of the research available regarding project-based learning environments and subsequent transitions to traditional learning settings focuses on the shift from high school to college situations. Research in this area suggests that students are meet or exceed peer performance in transition to a college setting.

Q. Where will Physical Education fit in the schedule?

A. It is one of the Exploratory blocks.

Q. For lunch, what HMS grade level will be eating at the same time as the FWA students?

A. The current plan is for all FWA students to be in the lunchroom during the HMS 8th grade lunch period.

Q. If a student attends FWA in a given year, could they miss out in the lottery process in the next year and therefore be excluded from returning to FWA?

A. No. Current FWA students are guaranteed an exemption for their remaining years at FWA. They would not be subject to the lottery process in subsequent years.

Q. Is FWA totally dependent on the three years of grant money to be operational? In other words, is there a risk of closure after the grant money is used up?

A. No. While the grant money is necessary to establish the school and to get it up and running, FWA is not solely dependent on that money for its survival. The contract that was approved by the HASD Board of Education is for 5 years. It will be reviewed and renewed at that time.

Q. If a family has multiple applicants, might some of the kids get into FWA while others do not?

A. No. There is a sibling clause in our contract that provides for all applicants of a given family to be enrolled if any one of the students is enrolled. In other words, during the lottery process, as soon as one of the family's children is selected for enrollment, all the children from that family are accepted.

Q. How will grades be broken out on report cards? Will things still be separated into subject areas like they currently are?

A. This is still under development. It is likely that the grade structure will be some type of hybrid system that involves conventional grades plus assessments from project work. Discussions are in progress with the HASD IT department to determine how this can be supported in Skyward.

Q. If a student is currently open enrolled at a different HASD school, must they open enroll again to attend FWA?

A. The open enrollment process allows students to be enrolled in the school district and does not restrict attendance to a specific school. As long as the student is attending a public school within the district to which he or she has open enrolled, there is no need to repeat the open enrollment process.

Q. When will families be notified of acceptance to FWA?

A. Letters of acceptance will be sent *during the second week of March*. This will occur at that time regardless of whether or not a lottery is needed.

Q. Will the FWA students have interaction with HMS students?

A. Yes, during Exploratories (such as band, Spanish, art, etc.). They would also interact during extracurricular events, if they are involved in any.

Q. Is there any risk of an "us/them" attitude between HMS and FWA students?

A. While any new venture like this always has the potential for that kind of issue, FWA staff firmly believe that it is very unlikely to happen. If such things do occur, there will be appropriate intervention by both FWA and HMS staff to deal with it.

Q. How are the HMS faculty members reacting to the establishment of FWA?

A. Nearly all of them are very supportive of FWA. They recognize this is an excellent educational option for students, and the three FWA teachers enjoy high levels of respect among their peers.

Q. Could project-based and conventional classroom models be more blended together in the future?

A. It is certainly possible. One of the benefits for the teaching staff at HMS will be the opportunity to learn from the successes of the FWA model and to incorporate those things that will fit within their current classroom structure. There are some limited applications of project work in the conventional classrooms now and that will likely grow in the future.

Q. Should a student be highly self-motivated to apply to FWA?

A. There are many traits that provide good indications of success in a project-based learning model. FWA staff members have the freedom and flexibility to find what works best for each individual learner and to help them build on those strengths.

Q. How will FWA students fit into the sports programs?

A. FWA students can choose to have either HMS or GMS as their “home school” for sports. Those who choose GMS may have to consider transportation options as bussing may not be available for after-school activities.

Q. Can the FWA learning model work for students with special needs?

A. Yes. If a student already has an ILP for special needs, they will continue to receive those services at FWA. If the ILP requires pull-out time with a learning specialist, that will still be available.

Q. Will the lottery process create a waiting list that is used to fill spots of students who decide not to enroll?

A. Yes. If students who are offered enrollment at FWA decline the offer, those spots will be filled from the random waiting list that is created as part of the lottery process.

Q. If a family has a student that completes FWA before a younger sibling is old enough to enroll, will the younger student have the opportunity to enroll without being in the lottery?

A. Yes. The sibling clause of our Charter allows for siblings of current and former FWA students to have an enrollment exemption, so they would not be subject to the lottery process.