

Bringing “Extra”-curricular Activities Into the School Day

By Sweta Patel

I’m a teacher and also serve as a “Seniors Transitions Advisor” at a local alternative high school. This involves meeting with seniors one-on-one and talking about their plans for after high school and how to best support them. Often, I help our seniors with college and scholarship applications. There is one question that always makes them pause:

What extracurricular activities have you participated in?

Now, when I see that question, I think about my 9 year old and 5 year old. Regularly, I find myself in the position of a taxi driver, stopping in front of art and dance studios, soccer fields, tennis courts, piano lessons... and the list goes on.

But for our seniors? They usually name classes or activities they participated in at some point during their time at our school.

I volunteered with the Foods class at Channel One and helped stock and organize food items.

I took the music class with Mrs. B. Does that count?

I played in the staff versus student basketball game.

Remember that Service Day we did last year? I volunteered at the Senior Care Center.

I took the Youth Build class and we went to ReStore to volunteer.

I believe there is a population within all of our schools that doesn’t have access to these types of ‘extracurricular activities’ due to any number of factors, including financial constraints, transportation barriers, or needing to work after school.

And yet time spent in these activities often leads to feeling a sense of community and teamwork, learning a skill that may become a lifelong hobby, or even developing a sense of what career path we'd like to pursue.

At our school, as a staff, we agreed that this list of benefits is equally as important as our academic standards. They are not "extra" to us... They warrant *being a part of* our school curriculum and culture. We want our students to be exposed to a variety of new experiences so that they can identify new strengths and interests and carry them beyond graduation.

To that end, we completely overhauled how Wednesdays look at our school. On these days, we go by a different bell schedule and master schedule. Each teacher teaches 5 sections - advisory, academic help, and 3 seminars (single or a double block).

During advisory time, students spend an hour deepening their relationship with each other and their advisor. Advisors also use a part of this time to have one-on-one conversations with each advisee, following a set of weekly questions created by our social workers. Past topics include: goal-setting, healthy relationships, coping with stress, and self-talk.

During academic help time, we give students a built-in pause during the school week and use this time to re-teach concepts and help students one-on-one with assignments. This helps to prevent the end-of-the-quarter mad rush that often happens to catch up on the past 8 weeks' worth of learning.

And during seminar time, teachers choose engaging experiences to offer students, such as "Batik Pillows and Paper Making," "Cooking Competitions," "Social Justice Leadership Team," "Archery," "Rock Climbing," "Introduction to 3D Printing," "Guitar Lessons," "Chess," and "The Art of Henna."

The Logistics:

At our school, we are on a 9-week quarterly system. We broke each quarter up into two rotations, consisting of 4 Wednesdays each. We call these our "Student-Centered Wednesdays" because the students get to self-select what their schedule looks like for each rotation. Some rotations, students might be

heavy on academic help hours; and during others where they're feeling academically strong, they might have one advisory period with 4 seminar experiences. Their schedules are centered around their learning needs.

Prior to each rotation:

1. Teachers decide what seminars they'll offer during the upcoming rotation (for the duration of four Wednesdays).


Teacher/ Staff	Topic	Description as you would like it in the course guide to help entice students to sign up for your seminar/experience (should be student-friendly, easy to understand)	Which period(s) BASED on the Master Schedule	Location (check with other teachers to see that there's no overlap)
	The Art of Henna	Come learn about the history of henna, tips for doing henna, and meet a professional henna artist. This class will be a blend of learning and application. During each class, you'll have a chance to paint henna on your hand or a classmate's.	5th	
	Learn a New Language	Is learning a new language on your bucket list? Wait no longer. <i>Mango</i> is here! <i>Mango</i> is an online language-learning program that offers 72 different languages to choose from. Each language lesson breaks down vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and culture into small, manageable pieces. ***Bring your Rochester Public Library card with you, or we can register you for a FREE new card!	4th	
	Cooking with a Celebrity Guest Chef	Have you ever thought about becoming a chef? This class will feature a guest celebrity chef from a local restaurant each week, who will share their expertise with us by leading us in a hands-on cooking lab. **Due to Covid concerns, we may have <u>week</u> where we have trouble getting a guest chef to come in. <u>On those weeks</u> , Sloan will be your guest celebrity chef. :-)	3rd/4th block	
	Yoga	Yoga is a mind and body practice. In this class we will offer different styles of yoga combining physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation. It will involve movement, meditation, and breathing techniques to promote mental and physical well-being.	2nd	
	Kickboxing	Kickboxing is a group of stand-up combat sports based on kicking and punching, historically developed from karate mixed with boxing. During this class we will practice different punches and kicks to help improve our overall fitness levels as well as stress management.	6th	

2. We update the course guide (Google Slides).

Period 2	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Period 6
Help - Buzzard	Help - Rud	Help - Patel	Help - Rojas	Help - Quetone
Help - Barnidge	Help - Hultgren	Help - Petersilie	Help - Pencille	Help - Hasz
Help - Lynch	Mission 507	Help - Zinnel	Help - Wheatman	Typing Skills Practice
Movie History		Basketball	Creating Instagram/Tiktok	Creating Instagram/Tiktok
Games on the Switch		Cribbage	Journaling	Sports Legends
Creative Bug		Map Making	Drawing 2	Free Drawing
Yoga	Card Games	Geology/Rock Exploration	Breakout Edu	MN Vikings Fan Club
3D Printing Challenge	Cooking With a Celebrity Guest Chef		Diversity Council	Journaling
Making Fishing Lures	Guitar Lessons	Music Recording/Music Lab	Board Games	Kickboxing
Resource Room Assistants	Social Justice Leadership Group		Gym Games	Lego Masters
(Help by invite - Doschadis)	Stuff out of Climbing Rope	Learn a New Language	Packers Fan Club	Drum Lessons
	Chess	Craft Corner	Henna	Food Security

The links take students to individual slides with a longer description of the seminar.

Yoga (hour 2, Ms. Petersilie)
Yoga is a mind and body practice. In this class we will offer different styles of yoga combining physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation. It will involve movement, meditation, and breathing techniques to promote mental and physical well-being.



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Float Your Boat-3D Printing Design Challenge (hour 2, Ms. Zinnel)
Tinkercad is an easy to learn 3D design software program. In the Float Your Boat challenge you will use Tinkercad to design a boat that will stay afloat and hold the most weight. After you're happy with your design, we'll use the 3D printer to print your design and see whose boat holds the most weight. No experience with Tinkercad or 3D printing is necessary.




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Making Fishing Lures (hour 2, Mr. Rud)
Making Fishing lures We will be tying flies and jigs and making spinners. Students will be able to create their own designs.



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Resource Room Student Assistants (hour 2, Nicole and UMR Student)
Help upscale the resource room by using your merchandising skills to organize, sort donations, and dress the cafeteria mannequin weekly. **Limited to three student** assistants due to space in the resource room.



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3. During advisory, students use the course guide to complete a paper schedule. (Our students meet in advisory for 15 minutes each day and for 1 hour on Wednesdays.)

My Schedule for Wednesdays, 11/10, 11/17, 12/1, 12/8

First Choice Course Title	Second Choice Course Title		My Actual Schedule	Teacher	Location
ADVISORY + BREAKFAST	ADVISORY + BREAKFAST	Period 1 (8:30-9:35)	ADVISORY + BREAKFAST		
		Period 2 (9:35-10:35)			
		Period 3 (10:35-11:35)			
		Period 4 (11:35-12:35) or (12:05-1:05)			
A Lunch: 11:35-12:05 / B Lunch: 12:35-1:05 (Look at your 4th hour teacher.)			I have _____ (A or B) lunch.		
		Period 5 (1:05-2:05)			
		Period 6 (2:05-3:05)			

- Advisors officially register students on the registration document (Google Sheet) by class year (this rotates - sometimes seniors are first, then juniors, and so on).

	Yoga	Making Fishing Lures	Float Your Boat-3D Printing Design Challenge	Academic Help	Academic Help
	Yoga is a mind and body practice. In this class we will offer different styles of yoga combining physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation. It will involve movement, meditation, and breathing techniques to promote mental and physical well-being.	We will be tying flies and jigs and making spinners. Students will be able to create their own designs.	Tinkercad is an easy to learn 3D design software program. In the Float Your Boat challenge you will use Tinkercad to design a boat that will stay afloat and hold the most weight. After you're happy with your design, we'll use the 3D printer to print your design and see whose boat holds the most weight. No experience with Tinkercad or 3D printing is necessary.	This is an opportunity to get caught up or get extra help in your classes.	This is an opportunity to get caught up or get extra help in your classes.
1		1	1	1	1 Case managers will invite
2		2	2	2	2 students to this academic
3		3	3	3	3 help time. Please recommend
4		4	4	4	4 students who have this case
5		5	5	5	5 manager to them.
6		6	6	6	
7		7	7	7	
8		8	8	8	
9		9	9	9	
10		10	10	10	
11		11	11	11	

- Students follow their Wednesday schedule for the next four Wednesdays. And the process repeats.

While it's definitely more work to be on this type of rotation system, we feel it's necessary for the following reasons: Students can try out many different types of experiences throughout the year. Also, if they don't end up liking an experience,

they only have to make it through three more Wednesdays (same goes for the teachers!). But most importantly, it allows teachers to more easily partner with community organizations.

For example, for our Chess Seminar, we're partnering with the Rochester Chess Club. One of their chess instructors comes out to teach our students, and they only have to commit to four Wednesdays at a time.

As we continue to reflect and revise what these Wednesdays look like, our hope is that we'll eventually be able to take students to off-site trips (for example, hiking at Quarry Hill or volunteering at a care center). Right now, our experiences are all on-site.

Some may argue that these types of experiences don't belong within the school day, but at our school, we argue back: We all agree that extracurricular activities have value, but it's a matter of access to these opportunities. Because our students can't participate in after school activities, we're trying to integrate these activities into their school day.

If you're interested in doing something similar at school but can't on this larger scale, one idea is to replicate it for the last week of each quarter or even a few days each quarter. You'll be surprised by how many students as seniors will remember these experiences when it's time to complete that "extracurricular activities" box on an application.

But there's even a greater reason for more schools to jump in:

When I was younger, I took piano lessons, and this led me to introducing music into my daughter's life. My husband played cricket and badminton, and he continues to play now as an adult as part of his fitness routine. My 9-year old daughter takes art and dance lessons, and through these, has developed dreams of selling her art one day and making it on the high school dance team. So many of us have these stories.

We're hoping that through our Student-Centered Wednesdays, our students will generate similar stories of their own. A particular seminar just might change the trajectory of their life.