

At the heart of our teaching philosophy at Avonworth is the ability to connect with and do best by kids. We had a nice advisory program, but we wanted to revamp it to ensure we were intentionally meeting the needs of our students. During the summer of 2019, we launched a summer institute with our staff and transformed our advisory program into Connections. We transitioned from a teacher-led advisory class that met with an alternate schedule at the end of the second semester, to a weekly student-led Connections class that gave students choice and voice to connect with staff outside of academic classes.

Our middle school teachers created an “About Me Slideshow” to allow students to get to know them a little better on a personal level to see if they would enjoy having that teacher be their “go to adult” in the school. After teachers presented their slideshows to the students, students completed a Google form to choose their top 3 teachers. Our principal put students in groups of about 13 students with one of their preferred teachers.

Our Connections class meets on Friday for forty minutes. On Monday through Thursday, this time is devoted to MTSS, band, chorus, or focus period. During Connections, our teachers plan activities that connect with students. We like to keep it fun with Kahoots, playing outside, or board games. We have a bank of ideas linked here: [Connections Bank of Ideas](#).

Furthermore, we have a committee devoted to planning and communicating with the rest of the staff. Our Connections Committee meets about twice a month during our morning meetings to discuss future plans and talk about previous issues that arise during this time. Our committee emails the rest of the Connections teachers weekly with ideas and discussion questions for Connections. An example of the template sent out weekly is here: [Connections Committee Template](#)

The feedback we have received from students and families has been very positive.

For more information on our Connections time at Avonworth Middle School, please contact Mike Hall (Principal- mhall@avonworth.k12.pa.us) or Katie Straley (Special Education Teacher- kstraley@avonworth.k12.pa.us).