



Middle School House System

**Creating Belonging,
Building Community,
Encouraging Teamwork,
Increasing Student Leadership**

Presenters:

- Stephanie Dwyer, World Language Department Chair and Faculty Advisor to House Captains
- Jennifer Ragsdale, Head of the Middle School

What is a house system?

- BIG Picture-Divides the community into smaller communities/houses
- History-Traditionally seen in British boarding schools, where a “house” is a boarding house at the school
- Of course, Harry Potter made the house system popular
- Throughout the school year, kids earn points for their houses through competitions and for positive behavior. Each house includes students from each grade, which fosters a sense of community across the division.



A group of six students, three boys and three girls, are standing outdoors on a paved area. They are all wearing colorful tie-dye t-shirts. The student on the far right is holding a large trophy. In the background, there is a brick building and some trees. The text "The benefits of a house system in schools" is overlaid in the center of the image.

The benefits of a house system in schools



Fosters belonging and identity



Builds team spirit, cooperation, community

Promotes
positive
student
behavior






Enhances school spirit and pride



Provides leadership opportunities and training



The why and how at Randolph

The why-straight from 2009

House Intro Why do we Have a House system?— What is the purpose?

1. Build community

- 5th grade students get to know 8th, etc. Great way to start years in middle school
- Students and teachers are acquainted before they actually have one another in class.

2. FUN

- We work hard together in class, on sports field or gym, AND we need to play together—a balanced life should include both!
- Friendly competitions to add force to Raider Spirit!!

3. **Aspire to something bigger than ourselves**

- Opportunity to find meaning in helping others, through serving others, even if it is just being kind to someone you don't know very well who is in your house.
- Provides leadership roles—a great community needs strong leaders, perfect safe place to train leaders is school, captains on teams in athletics, section leaders in arts, or here in houses.
- Find ways to live out our mission—each house has its own mini-mission and our wonderful energetic House Captains are here to tell us more about that!

The history of the house system at Randolph

- 2009-50th anniversary of the school, opening of an upper school campus, re-structuring of divisions
- House system created to connect the grades within the new middle school, provide leadership opportunities for the “seniors” on Drake
 - Shift from Blue-Gray teams



How it started

- In 2009, House Captains were challenged to name the houses based off of language defined by our mission statement
- Students created the title, “mascot”, designed shirts

Names of Houses—Based around Randolph’s mission, the House names will reflect the posture we hope our students will carry into the world. Traits such as:

friendship

truth

altruism

honor

community

courage

discovery

effort (hard work)

Homework is to find a word in language from a foreign country that translates in this way.



Randolph Middle School Houses

- Chie- “Wisdom”- Japanese
- Diskobre- “Fun”- Filipino
- Ote Watu- “All People”- Swahili
- Valor- “Bravery”- Spanish
- Vanskape- “Friendship”- Swedish

Two main events of the year

- House sorting ceremony/induction
- House cup ceremony/leadership change





House induction/sorting ceremony

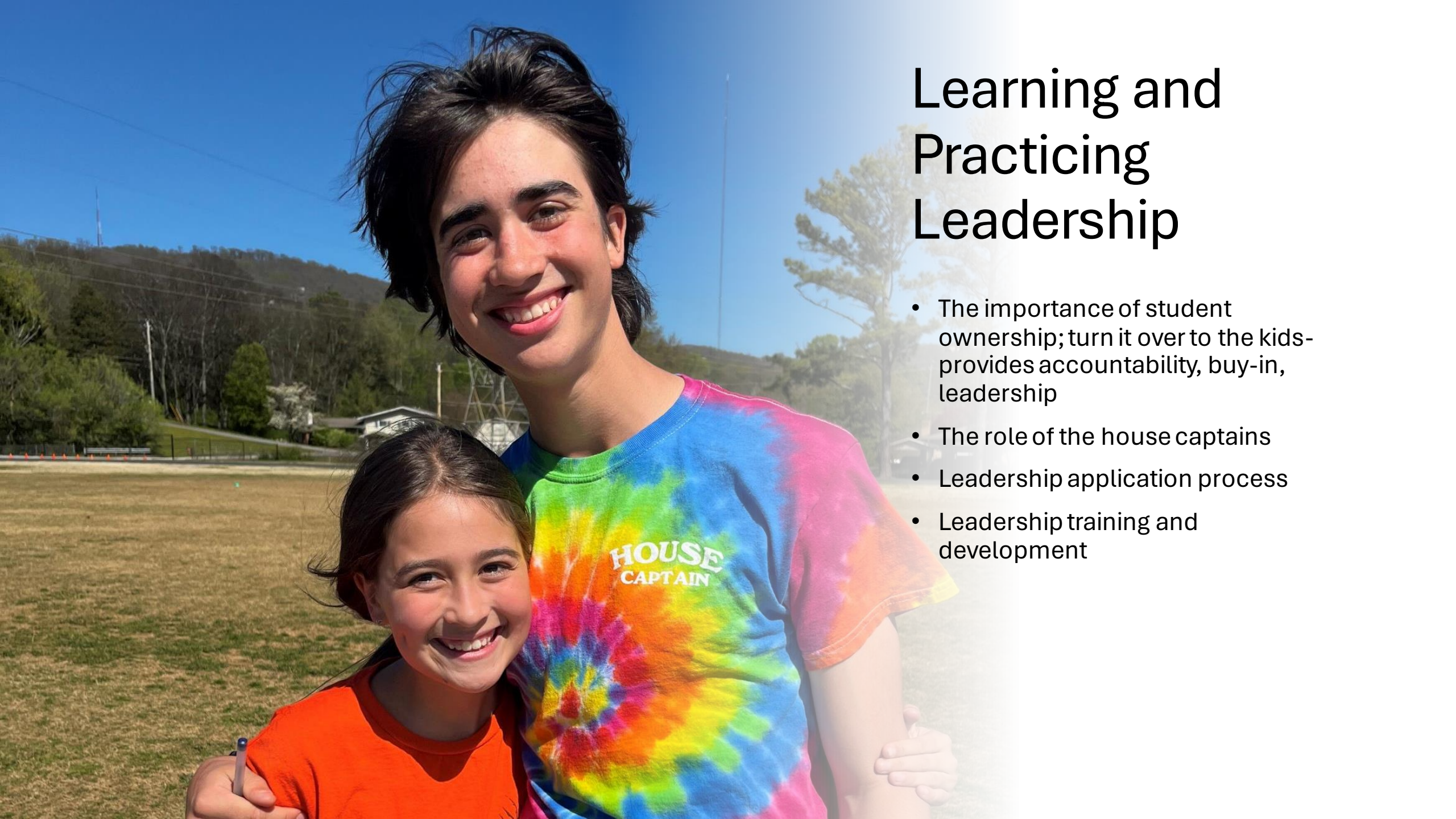


House Cup Ceremony/Leadership Transition



House events

- Goal is for one house event per month, plus more informal events (lunch trivia)
- House meetings vs house games
- Field Day, Pep Rallies
- Involve faculty whenever possible
- House spirit days
- The secret about house points



Learning and Practicing Leadership

- The importance of student ownership; turn it over to the kids- provides accountability, buy-in, leadership
- The role of the house captains
- Leadership application process
- Leadership training and development

Student leadership-challenges and considerations



- Challenges for 8th grade leaders
- Faculty involvement-how can faculty be plugged in without overstepping?



Creating and maintaining a house system

Create a focus group or planning committee



Recommend one planning year



Involve key stakeholders-administration,
faculty, students



Establish goals



Meet regularly to ensure progress



Create a mission statement for a house system-
what's your why?

Decide on and create a framework

Decide on the number of houses based on the student population

Choose house names, mascots, colors, with input from the school community

Assign students and faculty to houses, ensuring balance-random or assigned?



Establish house leadership

- Determine house leaders, such as house captains
 - Application or appointed?
- Define the roles and responsibilities of house captains
- Provide leadership training and support
- Determine what faculty leadership looks like
 - Early on, had multiple “House Keepers”-one for each house
 - Current-One faculty advisor, plus administration support

Develop house activities/competitions

- Plan a variety of activities to meet the varied interests of students- academic, athletic, artistic, social events, community service
- Create a point system for competitions and achievements
 - We decided early on that points could only be added, not taken away!
- Organize regular house meetings and games/competitions
 - Keep the momentum, especially early on!





Promote the house system

- Launch a school-wide campaign to introduce the new house system
 - How can communications office help?
- Use assemblies, posters, social media to promote house activities
- Celebrate house successes and milestones publicly

Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the house system

1

Set clear goals and metrics to monitor the success of the new program

2

Collect feedback from students, faculty/staff, parents

3

Make adjustments based off of feedback

Provide resources and support to ensure sustainability



ALLOCATE RESOURCES, SUCH
AS TIME, BUDGET, MATERIALS
FOR HOUSE ACTIVITIES



OFFER PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT FOR
FACULTY/STAFF INVOLVED IN
THE HOUSE SYSTEM



CREATE A SUPPORT NETWORK
FOR HOUSE LEADERS AND
PARTICIPANTS



QUESTIONS?