



Northgate School District

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August 16, 2019
For Immediate Release

Back to School News and Updates

This fall is an exciting time to be at the Northgate School District. From pre-K to 12th grade there is a mix of new initiatives along with the continuation of programs that have drawn national attention. Students at every level will have the opportunity to benefit from the expanding effort to provide computer science for all. As part of a national initiative, Dr. Caroline Johns will attend a conference of administrators funded by Code.org to advocate for the need to develop these digital skills in young people across the nation. This is just one example of the ways that the Northgate School District is becoming an active participant in statewide and nationally known programs.

Northgate High School will expand a program that has the potential to give all students an opportunity to earn credits toward a college degree. The College in High School (CIHS) program is a partnership with the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) which allows students to earn college credits while still in high school. These rigorous courses, which align to the outcomes of a matching CCAC course, prepare students for post-secondary schooling and give students a jump start on earning credits toward college graduation. This year, through a generous gift from the Grable Foundation, over 200 Northgate High School students will have the opportunity to earn college credits at no cost. This will make the goal of attending college feel like much more of a reality for students who might have thought this was not financially possible.

Offering courses that span the core academic departments, the CIHS program utilizes Northgate's teaching staff to serve as the college instructor. In this way, students need never leave the school building to earn valuable college credits. The assistance from the Grable Foundation also breaks down the financial barriers to enrolling in these courses and allows all Northgate students the opportunity to leave high school with credits that will transfer to the college of their choice. Raising expectations for every student to take courses aligned to the college level builds each of them toward success in our rapidly changing society. The College in High School program is just one of the ways that the Northgate school district is providing each student with the opportunity to acquire the knowledge and skills to maximize his or her potential.

This fall, members of the middle school will present at the Association for Middle Level Education's Annual Conference National Conference for their work to build a successful advisory program at the Northgate Middle School. This program is designed to help support middle school students in their academic, social, and personal growth. Students enter middle school with various needs. These needs require a certain amount of care as the student transitions from elementary to high school. Educators created middle school to bridge the gap between the interpersonal connections that are made in elementary school and the academic specialization of subjects in high school (Galassi, Gullede, & Cox, 1998). The goal when creating the advisory program was to support a positive transition period for students in grades 7 and 8.

The mission of the advisory program is to help every child foster a connection with at least one adult advocate during their middle school experience. Pride in students arises from feelings of safety, trust, empathy, and belonging along with the support of a positive self-image, respect, and connections. Through this program, Northgate Middle School intends to create a positive atmosphere where students are able to connect to their teachers, their peers, and their school community.

In an effort to help students and parents navigate the hurdles of middle school, the program explores the themes of Connections, Character, Compassion, and Community. Being a part of a “team” is an important theme of the middle school model and the TEAM motto is “Together Everyone Achieves More”. During a special team time that is set aside in the schedule, the middle school staff will work with the students and teach accountability, explore social-emotional learning, help students monitor their academic and social well-being, practice mindfulness, and have fun. Furthermore, 8th-grade students will investigate career paths, plan for their academic goals in high school, and expand their knowledge of financial systems. Additionally, the various teams will support each other and engage in friendly competition across the grade level. Finally, the team leaders will serve as academic advocates for their members.

Northgate’s elementary program has been selected as one of 15 schools across the commonwealth to take part in the Dyslexia Screening and Early Literacy Intervention Pilot Program under Act 37 of 2018. This program will focus on the teaching of reading for all students in grades K-2 at Bellevue Elementary and Avalon Elementary. Training in structured literacy and intervention systems will be provided with ongoing support from literacy consultants from various Pennsylvania educational organizations, and a stipend of \$40,000 will be provided to the district annually for two years to support these efforts.

Building on the improvements in literacy instruction that have occurred in the last two years at the primary level, this opportunity will provide resources and training to a critical area of education. When students get the very best reading instruction during these formative years, they are able to maximize their potential in all areas as they grow.

The programming at Northgate is expanding beyond the borders of the district and the schools are building partnerships that will open up new opportunities for the students, teachers, and the community. As these programs continue to be recognized, Northgate School District is sharing the work being done for the students here in this community with educators outside of Western Pennsylvania. It looks like the start of a great year for the members of the Northgate School District community.