

Pompton Lakes School District
A Curriculum Report to the Board of Education



Lakeside Middle School
Highlights of the Academic Program
2018-2019

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I. OVERVIEW OF WHAT IS NEW AT LAKESIDE

The Lakeside School academic program provides a wide variety of learning experiences to students. The teaching and administrative staff is proud to offer a well-rounded curriculum in the core academic areas, practical arts and physical education and health. This year to enhance the existing curriculum a number of new and exciting initiatives have been implemented.

During the 2018-2019 school year, Lakeside School received a grant through Title I to hire a certified counselor to support students who are having difficulties with their academics. Additionally, through daily meeting sessions, the counselor supports the social and emotional needs of students. The counselor also works closely with parents and the grade level teams to provide students with individualized plans to accelerate academic and social growth.

This year, Lakeside School also added a new dance curriculum to the practical arts rotation. Lesson activities focus on dance appreciation, history, fundamentals, beginner techniques, and basic movements. Dance is an elective course that meets twice a week and currently has over 45 students in participating in the program. Students in all three grade levels have the option to take the dance course.

The use of independent learning projects continue to expand at Lakeside School. Last year, 7th grade students utilized a 15 day period to research and explore topics of their choice. This year, students in all grade levels will have the opportunity to participate in independent learning activity. This project provides students with an opportunity to take ownership of the learning process in a self-regulated environment.

To support the 1:1 Chromebook initiative, social studies classes are now utilizing a Pearson online e-textbook. Multiple features in the program allow for student participation in engaging and interactive 21st Century learning activities. The addition of the e-textbook has

changed how students experience social studies content through high impact videos, interactive maps and visual simulations.

II. NEW COUNSELING PROGRAM

The addition of a counselor who is focused on working with students deemed academically at-risk has had a profound impact on the support and intervention system that is available to students. The main goal of the new counselor is to help economically disadvantaged and at-risk students with overall academic performance. The counselor places an emphasis on supporting students within the mathematics and English/Language Arts curriculum. Also, daily counseling sessions are aimed at supporting social and emotional needs.

To identify students who are at-risk, the counselor, Mrs. Susan Russo, monitors student data by tracking assessment performance. Mrs. Russo meets with the grade level teams on a daily basis to discuss student progress in the classroom. With the compiled data, a running list of students who are having difficulties and are in need of intervention is kept. Each month, Mrs. Russo holds meetings with the grade level teams to create individualized plans to help the students. Examples of interventions at this level include: student placement in an after school learning lab, regular meetings with the at-risk counselor/principal, meeting with parents, lunch support, and basic skills intervention.

Mrs. Russo also chairs the Intervention and Referral Service (I&RS) team. In this role, she provides leadership and student advocacy in the development of I&RS action plans. The goal of the individualized I&RS action plans are to provide intense interventions that focus on the identified areas of weakness. Mrs. Russo establishes the I&RS meeting schedule and facilitates the meeting agendas and maintains all written I&RS action plans. She ensures that students, teachers and parents are active participants in the I&RS process. Further, she assists in

the regular review of student data and ensures that a reflective process is aimed at enhancing every students' opportunity for academic, emotional and social success.

Another responsibility is to coordinate the after school learning lab program. Multiple data sources such as grades, benchmark assessments, PARCC scores and teacher recommendations are utilized to compile a roster of students who might benefit from the program. After finalizing the roster with the grade level teaching teams, Mrs. Russo prepares invitation letters and closely monitors daily attendance rates. Her frequent communication with parents reinforces the importance of regular attendance. Learning labs meet after school from 3:00 -3:45 two days per week. Labs are offered in both English/Language Arts and mathematics. The instructional time is used to provide extension lessons connected to the curriculum that is covered in daily lessons. Together with the teaching staff, Mrs. Russo works to ensure that learning lab time is used effectively.

To further support students Mrs. Russo has established a peer tutoring program. Peer tutors are select 8th grade students who have a proven track record of academic success and a genuine willingness to help. During a study period, peer tutors work closely with the assigned student to further enhance understanding of difficult curricular concepts. Some of the benefits of the Lakeside peer tutoring program are: Students receive increased time for individualized learning, students have direct interaction with peers to promote active learning, peer teachers reinforce their own learning by instructing others and students feel more comfortable and open when interacting with a peer. Mrs. Russo continuously monitors the success rate of peer sessions and makes adjustments as needed to ensure the pairings are appropriate.

The addition of the academically at-risk counselor has provided a tiered intervention support system to help promote academic growth for students who are having difficulties. Close

monitoring of academic progress and daily meetings with students and staff have helped further the belief that all students can achieve success no matter the challenges they face.

III. DANCE CURRICULLUM

The state of New Jersey requires that middle school students be given the option to participate in a visual and performing arts dance class. Last year, Mrs. Dania Brantner, a certified dance teacher at Lakeside, wrote a curriculum that has been implemented during the 2018-2019 school year. The new Lakeside School dance course has been well received by students. The class allows students the option to be pulled out of physical education two days per week to work on various dance concepts. To date, over 45 students from each grade level have chosen to participate in this class.

Participating in the Lakeside dance class helps students make physical gains that can be used in various sporting activities. Spatial awareness, rhythm and timing, cardio-respiratory endurance and flexibility are skills sets that are learned in dance and help participants stay fit. Dance education aids in the development of kinesthetic intelligence and allows students to express themselves through creative movement. Dance also provides a beneficial social component as class members work together in a noncompetitive co-educational environment. The dance class offered at Lakeside School is engaging and permits students the freedom to move, jump, spin, and leap. Through dance, students awaken new perceptions which help them learn and think in different ways. The Lakeside dance curriculum has a strong focus on history and dance appreciation. The implemented lessons help students gain a critical understanding of dance as a form of human cultural expression. By learning about the history of dance, students develop a deep respect and knowledge about cultures throughout the world. Moreover, students

gain an understanding about the historical factors that have influenced the development of various dance concepts.

In addition to studying the history of dance, class participants learn the fundamentals and basic movements of many traditional dances. Some examples include, contemporary, ballet, tap, jazz and lyrical. Additionally, students are given the opportunity to express their creativity while producing their own personal dance style. Lakeside School is excited to showcase the accomplishments of the dance students to the community and parents. For the first time during this year's spring concert, the dance students will perform two numbers in addition to the band and chorus performance.

IV. THE EXPANSION OF INDEPENDENT LEARNING PROJECTS

The practice of using independent learning projects to enhance the Lakeside curriculum continues to expand since its initial inception. This year, independent learning projects will be a part of every child's educational experience in grades six through eight.

Sixth grade students will participate in an independent learning day in coordination with their teachers. Students will choose a topic to research and will present what they learned to their teachers and peers at the end of the day. During the independent learning day, the 6th grade students will not report to any of their regular classes and instead will utilize all of the resources that are available within the building to complete their individualized research. The topics will center on content areas that are covered in the core academic subjects. Students may choose to expand upon their knowledge of a specific topic in language arts, math, science or social studies, and in doing so will hone in on a particular area of interest that they were exposed to during the school year.

Seventh graders will also participate in an independent learning project. Each student will propose their own project idea within the areas of art, music, dance, technology, computer science, sewing, and cooking. Everyone will have five days to research their topic and complete a project. Projects will be presented on the fifth and final day.

The 8th grade will participate in a 15 day independent learning project. Their projects will focus on the areas of art, technology, computer science, sewing, and cooking. The 8th grade independent learning projects have already begun. Some of the topics this year have been coding computer games, researching and demonstrating binary code, making dance dresses, cooking a traditional dish from a specific culture, completing a Renaissance oil painting and making a baseball display cabinet.

Independent learning experiences empower students to take ownership of the learning process. There have been a number of benefits with this and the staff will continue to utilize this practice to increase motivation and confidence while improving the overall enjoyment of learning across the curriculum.

V. SOCIAL STUDIES ONLINE TEXTBOOK

To benefit the implementation of the 1:1 Chromebook initiative, Lakeside School has purchased e-textbook licenses for every student in the social studies content area. Students today are increasingly utilizing digital text to receive and interpret information. A large portion of students struggle to connect with printed textbook materials. Due to constant exposure to technology, 21st Century learners find it easier to relate to and navigate digital text. The Pearson online textbook series has provided numerous resources to increase engagement and motivation while continuing to infuse social studies content.

There are several interactive tools available in the e-textbook that benefit the learning process. Similar to conducting a Google search, students have the ability to instantly search key terms or topics being taught. The e-text allows students to highlight and annotate text to save for future use. Each chapter includes motivating videos to provide a stimulating glimpse into the content being discussed. Interactive charts and maps allow students the ability to manipulate and move items. There is a text to speech feature that helps struggling readers and an ELL feature that converts texts to Spanish.

Teachers have also benefited from using the Pearson online textbook. Each chapter in the series comes with lesson plans and assessment materials. There is a large quiz and test bank to assist teachers in the development of formative assessments that include a wide variety of questions. Also, many of the questions are designed to help familiarize students with the annual NJSLA assessments.

For instructional purposes, teachers and students have exposure to rare and “hard to find” primary source documents. This is especially helpful for the 8th grade ancient world history course. Additionally, the e-textbook provides teachers with access to variety of writing prompts which can be used to help teach students how to construct a research simulation task (RST). The Pearson e-textbook also provides a data management system to track student assignment completion and assessment data.

VI. CONCLUSION

The academic program at Lakeside school continues to provide students with a wide variety of learning experiences. The well-rounded curriculum prepares students for the next phase of their educational career. This year, the students of Lakeside have benefited from new curriculum initiatives and new academic and social supports. The administration and teaching staff are always

striving to provide students with a meaningful and enjoyable middle school experience. We look forward to continuous improvement and future ways to enhance student learning.