

LEADING FORWARD:

Ideas from

The Listening and Learning Tour



By Gregg Wiczorek



LEADING FORWARD: Ideas from **The Listening and Learning Tour**



I've had an amazing career in education. I was the principal of Arrowhead Union High School in Hartland, Wisconsin for more than 29 years and the president of NASSP from 2020 to 2022. I've seen a lot and learned a lot over the years, but one of the best experiences of my professional career was visiting schools in all 50 states over the past year as part of NASSP's **LEADING FORWARD: The Listening and Learning Tour.**

As president of NASSP, I got to choose what I wanted to do in my role. I got the idea for the tour during lunch at my first NASSP board meeting. One of the board members was talking about his practice of bringing in 6th graders two at a time each day to meet with him for a couple of minutes. He felt it was a great way to meet the students and for them to get to know him. I brought that idea back to my school, and an associate principal and I developed a similar activity that allowed us to meet in small groups with all 540 of our freshmen during the first semester.

That got me thinking about the endless ideas and innovations that are happening in schools around the country, and how much our members could benefit from hearing about them. Thus, the idea for the Listening and Learning Tour was born.

I was fortunate to visit schools in every state and to see so many great ideas in person. Many of the innovations I saw don't cost a lot of money—many are less than \$1,000 or even free. It's more a matter of innovation and commitment to making your school better. I like to tell people about my own favorite innovation, which others have since copied: I bought a portable desk that I could move out in front of the school so I could continue to work but also greet students as they arrived in the morning. It helped me connect with many more students than if I stayed in my office.

My aim with this report is to show school leaders that they don't have to reinvent the wheel. Every school administrator I visited was open to sharing their ideas. I have included email addresses for all the school leaders I met, and I encourage you to reach out to them if you have questions about how they implemented their ideas. The whole purpose of the tour was to help our members be better connected.

I want to thank NASSP for giving me the opportunity to undertake this tour and share what I learned. And I owe a big thanks to all the school leaders, staff, and students who welcomed me into their buildings and proudly shared their innovations with me. I retired at the end of the last school year, and this was an awesome and fulfilling way to end my career.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Table of Contents



Advisory Time	4
Student Recognition	7
Scheduling	10
Connecting with the Community	13
Curriculum and Instruction (<i>Student-Focused</i>)	18
Curriculum and Instruction (<i>Teacher Focused</i>)	27
Making Connections (<i>Student Perspective</i>)	31
Making Connections (<i>Teacher Perspective</i>)	36
Social-Emotional/Mental Health	40
Teacher Preparation	43

Advisory Time



GAP Enrichment Program Good Hope Middle School, West Monroe, LA

tcalhoun@opsb.net

Twainna Calhoun, Principal

GAP is an additional 25-minute enrichment period in the school's morning schedule. Students report to a teacher/adviser and work on assignments from their regular classroom teachers. These assignments complement instruction and help prepare students for success in the regular classrooms. GAP has a weekly schedule: Mondays are divided among electives, physical education, and general housekeeping; science on Tuesday; math on Wednesday; social studies on Thursday; and English language arts on Friday. Classroom teachers hold their GAP four days a week; on the fifth day, the elective teachers take the GAP period while the classroom teachers have department-wide collaborative time.



PIE Advisory York High School, York, ME

Karl Francis, Principal

kfrancis@yorkschoos.org

PIE stands for Pride Intervention and Enrichment. During this time students report to their regular advisory period, but they sign up for extra help in areas they are struggling with and then report to those teachers. Students who are doing well in class can go to teachers for enrichment beyond the regular curriculum. PIE takes place three times a week.



Pride Advisory York High School, York, ME

Karl Francis, Principal

kfrancis@yorkschoos.org

The PRIDE Advisory occurs at the same time as PIE and students report to their regular advisory room. However, staff use this time to work with students on a variety of activities related to social-emotional issues. Students are in the same PRIDE with the same students all four years, which makes it impossible for a student to go through all four years of high school and not develop a close relationship with at least one adult. Students have said that it helps them connect more strongly to the school.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



No Missing Assignments Buchanan High School, Buchanan, MI

Stacie DeMaio, Principal
sdemaio@buchananschools.com

The principal created a database letting her know every Thursday which students were absent that week. Those students receive an email informing them they have until the end of the day on Monday to complete all missing work. Students who don't complete all their homework by the deadline report to a learning center during their lunch period, where they must finish their work. In addition to helping them complete their work, staff in the room teach strategies to complete their work on time.



Graduation Coaches John Adams High School, South Bend, IN

James Seitz, Principal
jseitz@sbcsc.k12.in.us

In early November, the counselors determine which seniors are at risk of not graduating. Those students fill out a form where they indicate three staff members who they feel connected to. It can be a teacher, coach, aide, secretary, or administrator (but not their counselor). They are then assigned to one of those staff members for weekly meetings. The staff monitor their attendance and progress in their classes, which has helped prevent these students from not graduating.



Character Education Advisory Elkhorn Grandview Middle School, Omaha, NE

Mike Tomjack, Principal
mtomjack@epsne.org

Like most middle schools, Elkhorn Grandview Middle School has an advisory time for students. What makes the school's advisory different is they have built in two days of the week to focus on character education.



Learning Style Advisory Luton High School, Sergeant Bluff, IA

Jason Klingensmith, Principal
klingjas@sblschools.com

During their advisory time, students take four assessments that help them understand their strengths and weaknesses as learners and inform them of their personality traits. The students learn what type of learners they are, which can help them as they study the material.



Highs and Lows LaCrosse Polytechnic School, LaCrosse, WI

Garrett Zimmerman, Principal
gzimmerm@lacrossesd.org

Students start every day with a 45-minute advisory. On Mondays and Fridays, part of the advisory is used for students to discuss their personal highlights or lowlights of the weekend or week. Students learn to communicate about their feelings as well as listen to their classmates.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Black Student Achievement Atholton High School, Columbia, MD

Robert Motley, Principal

robert_motley@hcpss.org

Atholton High School has a liaison whose sole purpose is to work with Black students to help them bridge opportunity gaps. The students work one-on-one with the liaison to ensure they are working to their potential and taking advantage of all the school offers.



Freshman Seminar/Senior Mentoring Cumberland Regional High School, Bridgeton, NJ

Ralph Aiello, Principal

aiello@crhsd.org

This program serves about one-quarter of the freshmen who need a little help to enhance their chances of academic and social success. Seniors apply to serve as freshmen mentors. The 9th graders are assigned to a specific freshman seminar class, along with a few 12th-grade mentors. After a few weeks, each mentor is assigned two or three freshmen to work with throughout the year. They assist with educational needs as well as helping the freshmen understand the school climate and what it means to be a Cumberland Regional High School Colt.



Graduation Coach Big Sky High School, Missoula, MT

Cameron Johnson, Assistant Principal

crjohnson@mcpsmt.org

Big Sky High School pairs graduation coaches for all four years of high school with students who struggle to graduate. The social workers who serve as coaches work with about 50 students per grade to ensure they stay on top of their work and don't fall behind.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Student Recognition



30+ Club **Northwest Rankin High School, Flowood, MS**

Ben Stein, Principal
bstein@rcsd.ms

While many schools display banners of senior athletes in their sports venues, Northwest Rankin High School takes a different approach by putting up banners in the school's hallways of the names of students who scored a 30 or better on the ACT. These banners, which are donated by the school's photography vendor, are taken down for graduation and placed in the venue for the ceremony.



Signing the Principal's Graduation Gown **Murray County High School, Chatsworth, GA**

Gina Linder, Principal
gina.linder@murray.k12.ga.us

When the principal took over 11 years ago, the graduation rate was 58%, and the focus was primarily on students going off to postsecondary school. The principal wanted to change the narrative by stressing the broader importance of graduating. An idea that made a big impact was allowing graduating seniors to sign the graduation gown the principal wore during commencement. Each of those 11 gowns now hangs from the cafeteria rafters. After graduation, many of the students get their picture taken with the principal while pointing to their name on her gown. Last year's graduation rate was 96%.



Student Artwork **Mallard Creek High School, Charlotte, NC**

Jennifer Dean, Principal
jennifer.dean@cms.k12.nc.us

Mallard Creek High School has artwork displayed in the halls and lobbies throughout the school. Even the principal has a wall in her office displaying artwork that was chosen by the students and is periodically changed. The students' respect for the artwork is evident as much of it is displayed openly and the school has no issues with the art being defaced.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Students of the Quarter **Elkhorn Grandview Middle School, Omaha, NE**

Mike Tomjack, Principal
mtomjack@epsne.org

Any teacher can nominate someone as student of the quarter, for whatever reason a teacher deems appropriate. From the nominations, teachers from each grade level pick one boy and one girl, who are recognized during a schoolwide assembly. The teacher who nominated the student reads what they had written about the student. The students' parents are told of the honor in advance so they and other family members can also attend the event. In addition, once a month each class holds an assembly where teachers recognize students in front of the whole grade. Teachers can use whatever criteria they choose to identify the student for recognition.



Kindness Coins **Elkhorn Grandview Middle School, Omaha, NE**

Mike Tomjack, Principal
mtomjack@epsne.org

During the student of the quarter assembly, five students from each grade are also recognized for their kindness. These 15 students receive kindness challenge coins, which they are asked to pass on to other students who they see demonstrating kind acts.



On a Roll **Davies High School, Fargo, ND**

Troy Cody, Principal
codyt@fargo.k12.nd.us

The principal has created a form that allows teachers to easily provide him with positive performance, behavioral, and attitudinal information about their students. If a teacher chooses to fill out the form, one of the building administrators calls the student's parents to share the positive information. This allows the principal to stress the idea that the school is in a partnership with the parents to educate their students and enables him to talk positively about the nominating teacher. At the end of the conversation, he asks the parents to tell their child how proud they are of them—and how proud the school is—of this recognition.



PBIS Chips **Lander Valley High School, Lander, WY**

Brad Neuendorf, Principal
bneuendorf@landerschools.org

Teachers are given PBIS (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) poker chips to give to students who demonstrate positive behaviors. The school has a large population of students eligible for free and reduced lunch; those students are targeted to get PBIS chips. Students can exchange their chips for snacks in the school store or save them for bigger rewards. Many of the school's students hang out and get snacks after school in the school store, so the PBIS chips help students who couldn't otherwise afford them.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Student of the Month Piper Middle School, Kansas City, KS

Steve Mercer, Principal
smercerc@piperschools.us

Piper Middle School has an extensive student of the month program. Every staff member nominates a student, who is recognized and has their picture displayed in the student of the month trophy case. The students' pictures and profiles are also scrolled on television monitors throughout the building.



School Rewards Hurricane High School, Hurricane, UT

Darin Thomas, Principal
darin.thomas@washk12.org

Students receive ID cards to wear on lanyards, backpacks, or keep on their phone or in their wallet. When the staff see students engage in positive behaviors, such as kindness, appreciation, and responsibility, students get their ID scanned and receive reward points. The points can be redeemed for a variety of prizes.



Cougar of the Month Coronado High School, Henderson, NV

Michael Piccininni, Principal
piccimn@nv.ccsd.net

The school recognizes students and staff through their Cougar of the Month program. That includes students enrolled in AP, CTE, ELL, English, health, math, PE, performing arts, science, social studies, visual arts, student services, and world languages. In addition, two teachers are honored each month. All of those who are recognized are featured on the front page of the school's website.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Scheduling



Team Teaching **Northwest Rankin High School, Flowood, MS**

Ben Stein, Principal
bstein@rcsd.ms

When Northwest Rankin High School was being built, teachers and staff had the opportunity to give input on the design. One focus at the school was team teaching, so the new school includes moveable walls that make team teaching easier.



Creative Scheduling **Northwest Rankin High School, Flowood, MS**

Ben Stein, Principal
bstein@rcsd.ms

All new teachers are scheduled for a first-period prep. They use that period to observe a seasoned teacher doing a lesson they will be teaching to their own class later in the day.



Response to Intervention/Professional Learning Communities **Rock Hill High School, Rock Hill, SC**

Ozzie Ahl, Principal
OAhl@rhmail.org

All students and staff at the school have an hour for lunch, which is split into two 30-minute periods. One period is for lunch and the other is for club meetings, Response to Intervention, extra help for students and office hours, Professional Learning Communities, and supervision for teachers. Students pick which teacher they want to sign up to see during office hours. Clubs meet once or twice a month during this time; students attend these meetings unless they need to meet with a teacher who has office hours at the same time. Students also pick which lunch they will attend depending on when their teachers are available.




Covid Room Assignments **Chariho Middle School, Wood River Junction, RI**

Greg Zenion, Principal
gregory.zenion@chariho.k12.ri.us

In order to reduce close contact and the possibility of COVID-19 transmission, students are assigned to a room for the whole day, for all classes and lunch. Teachers rotate to different rooms. Students sit in clusters of four, separated by at least six feet from other clusters. That way, if a student tests positive for the virus, they have only come in close contact with the other three classmates.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

 **Looping All Core Teachers**
Brattleboro Middle School, Brattleboro, VT
Keith Lyman, Principal
klyman@wsesdvt.org

The school is divided into a 7th-grade wing and 8th-grade wing, and all core teachers are assigned to one of the wings. The following year, the teachers switch to the other grade, which allows students to make better connections with their teachers over their two-year middle school experience. It also requires teachers to have strong knowledge and understanding of the school's whole curriculum.

 **Advantageous Schedule**
Brattleboro Middle School, Brattleboro, VT
Keith Lyman, Principal
klyman@wsesdvt.org

Because the 8th-grade core classes take place in the afternoon, and 7th-grade core classes are in the morning, all the core teachers in each grade have a common prep time. This enables the teachers to meet weekly to collaborate and discuss what is happening in their classes as well as making sure they are offering consistent instruction across the school.

 **Collaborative Time**
Lander Valley High School, Lander, WY
Brad Neuendorf, Principal
bneuendorf@landerschools.org

The principal realized the school needed more collaborative time built into the schedule, so when a new schedule was developed, it included an hour-long lunch period, with 25 minutes per day for teachers to collaborate in "Block Time." The school also has early release on Wednesdays, which allows for another 60 minutes for teachers to work together.

 **Collaborative Time**
La Crosse Polytechnic School, La Crosse, WI
Garrett Zimmerman, Principal
gzimmerm@lacrossesd.org

Teachers report to school by 7:30 each morning, while the students arrive at 9 a.m. Teachers use that time to work together to develop lessons and activities. Because everything is team-taught and project-based, faculty need the time to develop activities together. The 7 1/2 hours of collaboration per week allows the staff to get to know each other and share ideas.

 **House System**
Har-Ber High School, Springdale, AR
Margaret Robinson, Associate Principal
margaret.robinson@sdale.org

At the end of 8th grade, students select which house they want to join for the next year. The houses, which are aligned with a career cluster, are Public, Human, and Educational Services; Arts, Communication, and Design Community; Medical Education Services; Har-Ber Agriculture, Business, and Informational Technology; and Architecture, Construction, Manufacturing, and Engineering. Students take a number of classes that focus on careers highlighted in their house. They can change houses at the end of each year.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Assignments for Associate Principals and Counselors Cleveland High School, Rio Rancho, NM

Scott Affentranger, Principal
Scott.Affentranger@rrps.net

The school has four associate principals and eight guidance counselors. One associate principal and two counselors are assigned to each class, and they stay with that class for all four years of high school. The classes each have a floor at the school, and there are offices on each floor, so the administrators and counselors move along with the students, which helps them stay connected with their students.



Creative Schedule Rio Rancho Cyber Academy, Rio Rancho, NM

Julie Arnold, Principal
julie.arnold@rrps.net

Rio Rancho Cyber Academy is a 6–12 school that houses 350 students and is designed for self-directed students. High school students are in the building on Mondays and Thursdays, and middle school students are there on Tuesdays and Fridays. On the days they are not in the building, students are required to do 5–7 hours of virtual learning on their own. Wednesdays are virtual days for all students.



Daily Collaboration Time Begich Middle School, Anchorage, AK

Brendan Wilson, Principal
wilson_brendan@asdk12.org

Begich Middle School has incorporated 45 minutes of collaborative time into every school day. The different days of the week focus on different topics, including communicating with families, collaborative professional learning time, business and logistic issues, and progress monitoring for students.



Smaller Class Sizes for Freshmen West High School, Anchorage, AK

Sven Gustafson, Principal
gustafson_sven@asdk12.org

Freshman core classes are smaller to allow teachers more time to interact with their students. This requires larger classes for the other grades, but the school has found that providing a more connected experience in 9th grade helps students be better prepared for their upperclassmen years.



Individual Scheduling North Middle School, Colorado Springs, CO

Christopher Kilroy, Principal
Christopher.Kilroy@d11.org

The staff create an academic and social-emotional profile for all 540 students. An associate principal and counselor then schedule students' classes based on their individual profiles to put them in the best position possible to succeed. They take into account a variety of factors, including learning style, amount of extra help needed, time of day the student is most productive, and student/teacher personality match.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Connecting with the Community



IMPACTO

New Albany Middle and High School, New Albany, MS

Lance Evans, Superintendent

levans@nasd.ms

IMPACTO (Industry as a Means to Prepare for Academic, Career, and Technology Opportunities) is a two-year career exploration program for juniors and seniors. The district provides funding for students to do 100-hour internships at local businesses and get paid \$8.50 an hour. Students get on-the-job training and a foot in the door, and many get hired after they complete the internship. The program has attracted more than 70 business partners, who now are more connected to the district and support its efforts.



Credit Union

John Clemens High School, Madison, AL

Brian Clayton, Principal

hbclayton@madisoncity.k12.al.us

John Clemens High School has a credit union in the school. Students can work there during their free periods, and students and staff can all use the credit union's services.



Branding

Rock Hill High School, Rock Hill, SC

Ozzie Ahl, Principal

OAhl@rhmail.org

The school has made a concerted effort to display their Bearcat mascot throughout the school, including in classrooms, the JROTC room, and on office doors, as well as in the hallways and many other rooms. The principal supplies staff with shirts sporting the school logo. On one Thursday, more than 25% of the teachers were wearing Rock Hill High School apparel.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Alumni Association Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, Jacksonville, FL

Tina Wilson, Principal
wilsont3@duvalschools.org

Douglas Anderson School for the Arts has an active alumni association to keep former students in touch with what is happening at the school. The association also helps with fundraising to help pay for up-to-date facilities, materials, and equipment.



Postcards Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School, Sergeant Bluff, IA

Jason Klingensmith, Principal
klingjas@sblschools.com

Throughout the year, teachers send postcards to families highlighting various types of growth and development they've seen in their students. Teachers are encouraged to send postcards about academic achievement, improvement, and social-emotional growth. Most students will receive postcards sometime during their high school experience.



Partnerships FAIR School for the Arts, Minneapolis, MN

Mary Pat Cumming, Principal
marypat.cumming@mpls.k12.mn.us

The FAIR School for the Arts has more than 40 partnerships throughout the community, which are vital to the school's programs. The school doesn't have a theater, but downtown theaters allow them to hold concerts and productions on professional stages. A local university provides 10 social work majors each year, who work regularly with students. The school partners with a local business that provides materials and an on-site career counselor. Many public venues throughout the downtown area display student artwork. And there is a school-based health clinic with a doctor, nurse practitioner, LPN, and receptionist, all provided at no cost to the district.



Community Showcase La Crosse Polytechnic School, La Crosse, WI

Garrett Zimmerman, Principal
gzimmerm@lacrossesd.org

At the end of each semester, all students present a project in a "Shark Tank" meets science fair-type environment instead of taking final exams. The showcase is open to the whole community. Student grades are based on the completion and quality of their presentations.



Volunteer Program Murray High School, Murray, KY

Tony Jarvis, Principal
tony.jarvis@murray.kyschools.us

The Murray school district has an extensive volunteer program throughout all of its schools. A designated volunteer coordinator is responsible for training and vetting the volunteers. Before the pandemic, the school had more than 400 volunteers who logged a total of 30,000 volunteer hours per year.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

 **Dog Grooming**
Blackman High School, Murfreesboro, TN
Leisa Justus, Principal
justusl@rcschools.net

Blackman High School runs a dog grooming business through its small animal program. The school has a separate entrance and kennels just for the program. Anyone in the community can use the grooming service for a fee.

 **Ram's Cave**
Clarkstown High School North, Clarkstown, NY
Harry Leonardatos, Principal
hleonardatos@ccsd.edu

The Ram's Cave is a school store where students can buy snacks, drinks, and spirit wear. The store is open from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. each day and is staffed by PTO parent volunteers, who order items to sell, manage the finances, and decide how to spend the profits. The store averages \$1,200 a day in sales. These funds have allowed the school to purchase picnic lunch tables, a projection screen for the theater as well as a digital projector and soundboards. Sales from the store also fund 12 student scholarships of \$750 each year, a luncheon for staff, equipment for the senior lounge, teacher impact grants, and help for families in need.

 **Electrical and Plumbing Partnerships**
Har-Ber High School, Springdale, AR
Margaret Robinson, Associate Principal
margaret.robinson@sdaledale.org

The school partners with local manufacturing businesses that supply materials and assist with instruction in electrical work and plumbing, which allows the students to be qualified to apply for an apprenticeship right out of high school. The manufacturing classes at school also run a business where students go to homes to measure and then build and install custom-made cabinets.

 **Alumni Association**
Amarillo High School, Amarillo, TX
Andrea Pfeifer, Principal
andrea.pfeifer@amaisd.org

Amarillo High School has a very strong alumni association; many of the current students are the fifth generation in their families to attend the school. The association provides scholarships every year for graduating seniors.

 **Site-Based Decisions**
Amarillo High School, Amarillo, TX
Andrea Pfeifer, Principal
andrea.pfeifer@amaisd.org

Amarillo High School has a site-based decision team. More than just school staff, the team includes students, a parent, and a local business leader. The team solicits input from all the representatives to make their decisions.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

 **CLEW Club**
Barstow High School, Barstow, CA
Frank Jimenez, Principal
frank_jimenez@busdk12.com

CLEW stands for community leadership empowering workshop. The club at Barstow High School works in conjunction with the community to provide high school volunteers for various projects throughout their town. The student activities help develop leadership skills that students can apply to the real world.

 **Financial Reality Fair**
Downingtown S.T.E.M. Academy, Downingtown, PA
Art Campbell, Principal
acampbell@dasd.org

The school brings in a variety of local vendors with their products—typical services and goods needed to survive in today’s world. The students are allotted \$2,000 per month and must figure out how they can survive on that limited budget. The event gives students a dose of reality and helps them better appreciate what it will take to be self-sufficient.

 **Theater Tech Program**
Langley High School, Langley, VA
Kimberly Greer, Principal
kpgreer@fcps.edu

In the school’s theater technology program, students learn how to do lighting, sound, and run the Genie Lift. The students go through a certification program that will allow them to perform these tasks without supervision. Once certified, students get paid to be techs for programs that use theaters throughout the school district and the community.

 **Alumni Association**
Lincoln High School, Portland, OR
Peyton Chapman, Principal
peytonc@pps.net

Lincoln High School has an extensive alumni association that provides resources for the school and keeps former students connected to what’s currently happening in the school.

 **Blackman Visa Card**
Blackman High School, Murfreesboro, TN
Leisa Justus, Principal
justusl@rcschools.net

The school has developed its own debit card in conjunction with Redstone Federal Credit Union. Anyone who wants a card can apply for it through the school. The school receives 10 cents for every swipe on one of the cards. Once the card is fully in use, it could raise up to \$30,000 per year.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Youth-Based Health Services Cumberland Regional High School, Bridgeton, NJ

Ralph Aiello, Principal

aiello@crhsd.org

The school has a program funded by an outside agency that provides medical services, health career training, and job placement opportunities. The program provides medical assistance for physical and mental health issues.



Extensive Art Collection Amarillo High School, Amarillo, TX

Andrea Pfeifer, Principal

andrea.pfeifer@amaisd.org

Amarillo High School has over \$2.5 million worth of art, donated by alumni over the years, displayed throughout the school. The artwork is both a centerpiece of the school and a source of pride for the students; it has helped motivate many students to choose a career in the arts. When the school burned down in the 1970s, many students went back into the burning building to salvage the precious artwork.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Curriculum and Instruction (*Student-Focused*)



STEAM

New Albany Middle and High School, New Albany, MS

Lance Evans, Superintendent

levans@nasd.ms

The STEAM program is designed to prepare students for the next level of school: middle school prepares students for the high school program, and elementary schools prepare students for the middle school program. The middle school program is well equipped with the latest technology. Instead of hiring a new person to run this program, they approached an innovative, dynamic elementary teacher and asked her to develop the program, including paying for her training.



Hands-On Classes

John Clemens High School, Madison, AL

Brian Clayton, Principal

hbclayton@madisoncity.k12.al.us

Through its various academies, the school gives students real-life work experience. In the medical academy, for example, students wear scrubs and practice on classmates who pretend to have medical issues. They also have full-size medical mannequins that simulate patients with real ailments. The room is equipped with modern medical devices and furniture. Students in the medical academy wear their scrubs throughout the day.



All-School Book Read

Bristol Central High School, Bristol, CT

Peter Winger, Principal

peterwinger@bristol.k12.org

Bristol Central High School recently had a schoolwide book read. All students and staff read *A Chance in the World* by Steve Pemberton, which is his life story about starting in an orphanage and rising to the level of vice president for Walgreens. After everyone had read the book, the author came for an all-school assembly.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Unified Athletics and Classes Hollis Brookline High School, Hollis, NH

Tim Girzone, Principal
tim.girzone@sau41.org

Students can sign up for regular and unified classes. In the unified classes, regular education students sign up with the understanding that they will help a student in special education also enrolled in the class. In unified athletics, students with special needs participate alongside regular education students in basketball, soccer, and track.



Language Arts Library Buchanan High School, Buchanan, MI

Stacie DeMaio, Principal
sdemaio@buchananschools.com

The school's language arts teachers have created a library filled with high-interest books for teenagers, funding it with grant money and district funds. The students get to pick the books they want to read for their language arts class. All their teachers encourage them to read during the last couple of minutes of class when they have completed the lesson. The school reports significant increases in their SAT reading scores.



Bilingual Classes John Adams High School, South Bend, IN

James Seitz, Principal
jseitz@sbcsc.k12.in

This program allows English as a Second Language students to take core classes together so teachers can move at a pace that is appropriate for all students.



Competency-Based Instruction Huntley High School, Huntley, IL

Marcus Belin, Principal
mbelin@district158.org

This program allows students to work at a negotiated pace to get through their subjects based on competency in the material instead of seat time. Students complete performance assessments instead of more traditional assessments to show they have mastered the content. If they want to concentrate on specific subjects, students can work through two levels of classes in one year.



Blended Classes Huntley High School, Huntley, IL

Marcus Belin, Principal
mbelin@district158.org

Students can take blended, project-based classes that don't require daily attendance. Teachers determine which days each week are in-person days with required attendance. During those lessons, the teachers cover the necessary content in a traditional fashion. During the other days, students are expected to work at their own pace on various projects. Students who have lower than a "C" are required to report to class every day. Teachers can choose to teach blended classes but must complete a training session first.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Teaching from Cultural Perspectives Betty Fairfax High School, Phoenix, AZ

Chandra Alexander, Principal
calexander@phoenixunion.org

Betty Fairfax High School has a diverse student population. Students can choose to take regular core classes or take those classes from a different cultural perspective: African American, Mexican American, or Native American. No matter what perspective they choose, students still are expected to meet the state standards. By teaching the material from different perspectives, students can see themselves in the curriculum.



Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation Services Program Betty Fairfax High School, Phoenix, AZ

Chandra Alexander, Principal
calexander@phoenixunion.org

The program allows students to get certified so they can assist the sports trainers. They also have the chance to develop workout plans for various athletic programs. Students who need to do physical therapy exercises can do them in the school's lab.



Pedagogical Professional Development with Students Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School, Sergeant Bluff, IA

Jason Klingensmith, Principal
klingjas@sblschools.com

To help students understand how they learn best, they go through professional development similar to that of their teachers. Understanding teaching strategies helps inform the students about generally accepted instructional practices.



Farm-to-School Project Holmen High School, Holmen, WI

Wayne Sackett, Principal
sacway@holmen.k12.wi.us

Through their FFA program, the school uses various commodities in their lunch program that students grow. For example, they raise cattle for beef; they have learned to grow lettuce using a hydroponic system in their Ag Science class; they have an asparagus field on school property; and they help grow and harvest apples at a local orchard. The program gives students firsthand knowledge of how their products are being used.



Model Store Holmen High School, Holmen, WI

Wayne Sackett, Principal
sacway@holmen.k12.wi.us

Through their entrepreneurship class, students set up a model store that sells arts and crafts that are donated free or at a significant discount. The class exposes students to all aspects of running a retail operation, including management, human relations, sales, inventory, customer satisfaction, and marketing. Students are required to solicit advertising, and they make a radio ad that gets aired locally. Proceeds from the store go to a family identified as having significant needs; this year students raised \$14,400.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Capstone Projects
Holmen High School, Holmen, WI
Wayne Sackett, Principal
sacway@holmen.k12.wi.us

Students complete integrated capstone projects that benefit the whole school. One student's graphic arts project involved designing metal signs, with input from staff, representing each department in the school. Students in the Tech Ed classes worked with their teacher to use the plasma cutter to make signs, which will be displayed throughout the school.



Up and Out
La Crosse Polytechnic School, La Crosse, WI
Garrett Zimmerman, Principal
gzimmerm@lacrossesd.org

A teacher can say "Up and Out" to any student at any time. The student is then required to stand up and talk about the progress they have made on the project they're working on. This is done in front of other students and staff members.



Home Builders Academy
Harrisburg High School, Harrisburg, SD
Brad Seamer, Associate Principal
brad.seamer@k12.sd.us

The school's Home Builders Academy gives students hands-on experience building a home. The school has a large building that allows students to build a house (up to 1,800 square feet) in a climate-controlled environment. A local builder provides all of the materials and oversight of the building process. Subcontractors demonstrate to the students how to do the specific parts of the home-building process: They learn roofing, basic carpentry, electrical, insulation, and drywall. The finished house is transported to a homesite and sold by the builder.



Physical Education Choice
Harrisburg High School, Harrisburg, SD
Brad Seamer, Associate Principal
brad.seamer@k12.sd.us

Students have the daily option to determine which of three areas they want to participate in during PE class. They can choose aerobic fitness, anaerobic fitness, or stretching/yoga. Students keep a log of their goals and how they plan to accomplish them.



Custom vs. Traditional Education
Harrisburg High School, Harrisburg, SD
Brad Seamer, Associate Principal
brad.seamer@k12.sd.us

Students can choose from two separate tracks of learning in the core areas. The traditional track is taught with a teacher leading all students at the same pace. Students in the custom track are allowed to work at their own pace with the teacher serving as the facilitator.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Language and Math Interventionists Lander Valley High School, Lander, WY

Brad Neuendorf, Principal
bneuendorf@landerschools.org

Lander Valley High School has two teachers who serve as language/reading and math interventionists. They are assigned to 8–10 freshmen who are struggling in their respective subject areas. The interventionists work with the students in their classrooms to help make sure they understand what's being covered. The language specialist mostly uses reading recovery tools she has developed to improve reading abilities.



Blackman Collegiate Academy Blackman High School, Murfreesboro, TN

Leisa Justus, Principal
justusl@rcschools.net

In order to provide more rigorous opportunities for students, the principal created the Collegiate Academy. Students who choose to be in the academy must take at least 12 honors or dual credit or AP courses, as well as either speech or critical thinking class. These students also are required to be involved in co-curricular activities, demonstrate leadership, and participate in a 40-hour life experience shadowing. Students complete a capstone activity where they do an independent research project.



Ultimate Dual Credit Early College High School at Delaware State University, Dover, DE

Evelyn Edney, Principal
evelyn.edney@dechs.k12.de.us

Early College High School is a public charter school that partners with Delaware State University (DSU). Students take regular first-year classes with their schoolmates during their freshman year. During that year, students' college readiness is assessed using a rubric that measures elements such as cognitive abilities, attendance, discipline, and attentiveness to schoolwork to determine which college content areas each student is ready to take. Students then are placed in college classes at the university, which are taught by professors, with regular college students as classmates. Students' readiness is assessed regularly throughout the year to ensure they are being challenged at the appropriate level. Most students receive between 30–60 college credits tuition-free, which can be used at DSU or transferred to another university.



Early College High School Program Cumberland Regional High School, Bridgeton, NJ

Ralph Aiello, Principal
aiello@crhsd.org

Cumberland Regional High School has a partnership with Rowan University to provide students with the opportunity to obtain enough dual credits to earn an associate degree along with their high school diploma. Students enroll in the program at the end of their 8th-grade year and commit to summer school before 9th-, 10th-, and 11th-grades. They take some regular classes, some classes that are aligned with Rowan University courses, and some courses taught by professors at the university. The credits earned in this program are accepted at any college in New Jersey. The school also has a partnership with Syracuse University that allows students to earn dual credit for two classes (4 credits each) they take in the science department, which culminates in a research project.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Academies

Cumberland Regional High School, Bridgeton, NJ

Ralph Aiello, Principal

aiello@crhsd.org

The academy programs offer students the opportunity to pursue rigorous studies and advanced learning experiences in a targeted field of interest. Academies are designed to help students develop the knowledge and skills to pursue a career or postsecondary education in agricultural sciences, biomedical life sciences, business, dramatic arts, informational technology, justice studies, and STEM.



Digital Music Class

Clarkstown High School North, Clarkstown, NY

Harry Leonardatos, Principal

hleonardatos@ccsd.edu

Students learn how to produce music digitally using a variety of software, including Garage Band. They remix established music as well as create their own original music. In the process, students also learn to play basic guitar and piano.



Aviation Program

Har-Ber High School, Springdale, AR

Margaret Robinson, Associate Principal

margaret.robinson@sdaie.org

Har-Ber High School has an aviation program that provides students with a hands-on experience exposing them to a variety of career opportunities. The school offers Aviation I and II and will be offering a third level next year. After they complete the third level, students will be well on their way to getting their pilot's license. The classroom has 15 flight simulators to give students the ultimate hands-on experience. The instructor has developed partnerships with two area airports to give students additional information and opportunities.



Anatomy-Sports Medicine Class

Booker T. Washington High School, Tulsa, OK

Melissa Woolridge, Principal

woolrme@tulsaschools.org

Booker T. Washington High School has an anatomy-sports medicine class where students design a workout program for a sport or activity they participate in. One of the requirements for the class is to participate in a 5K run during that semester. Each student posts their number tag on the wall in the classroom signifying they have completed the run.



World Language Lab

Booker T. Washington High School, Tulsa, OK

Melissa Woolridge, Principal

woolrme@tulsaschools.org

The World Language Lab allows teachers to communicate with students individually, as a class, or in small groups. The lab has 32 individual stations, each equipped with a computer and headphones, where students can practice their speaking and get feedback from the computer or from the teacher. All of the sessions are recorded so teachers can review and listen to the students' responses.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



EDGE Liberty High School, Liberty, MO

April Adams, Principal
april.adams@lps53.org

Using money from the passage of a recent bond referendum, the district set aside \$1 million for innovation. The principal proposed using funds to renovate the former fine arts area into a space that could house the EDGE program (Empowering Discovery of the Global Experience). The facility is open concept with some space for traditional teaching, but is used mostly for cross-curricular collaborative, self-paced learning. Students take all of their core classes and some of their electives in the EDGE program. They fill out a weekly punch list that lets the teachers know what they will be working on during the week. The three teachers assigned to EDGE developed competency-based assessments to give the students an authentic experience. All of the projects, instruction, and lessons are globally based.



Fab Lab Reynoldsburg High School, Reynoldsburg, OH

William Bayless, Principal
williambaylis3@gmail.com

The Fab Lab is a classroom equipped with 3D printers, laser cutters, and other fabrication equipment. Students manufacture a variety of products in the lab for businesses in the community. Because of savings on labor, the price of each item is only 40 percent over their material costs. The program gives the students an opportunity to be involved with both the manufacturing and sale of that item. They have a partnership with a board game company in Germany that allows the students to submit game ideas and get advice and refinement ideas.



Dual Credit Opportunities Barstow High School, Barstow, CA

Frank Jimenez, Principal
frank_jimenez@busdk12.com

Barstow High School has aligned many of its courses with the local community college. The school's goal is to have 90% of the core classes receive dual credit. Credits students earn are accepted by all public community colleges and state universities in California.



AP Academy Coronado High School, Henderson, NV

Michael Piccininni, Principal
piccimn@nv.ccsd.net

The AP Academy is for motivated, high-achieving students, which is about 25% of the school's enrollment. Students who meet the rigorous criteria start as freshmen taking AP Human Geography. During that year, students not only learn the course content, but the teacher also works with them so they learn how to be successful in future AP classes. Students must take at least one more AP class in their sophomore year, and two each in their junior and senior years. They are required to take the AP exam in all of their classes. Students who successfully complete the requirements of the academy receive a stole to wear at graduation.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



School Farm **Coronado High School, Henderson, NV**

Michael Piccininni, Principal
piccimn@nv.ccsd.net

A teacher at the school asked if he could start a small farm to give his students in special education some hands-on experience. A small area was designated for the farm, and students planned and designed it. They now grow numerous fruit trees and vegetables. The school is in the middle of the desert, so the students are getting firsthand experience taking care of the plants in that environment, making sure there is enough water, and cultivating and selling the crops.



Soft Skills Training **Downingtown STEM Academy, Downingtown, PA**

Art Campbell, Principal
acampbell@dasd.org

Downingtown STEM Academy brings representatives from an outside agency to conduct soft skills training with their students. In the 9th grade, students get three 90-minute sessions, and two each in 10th and 11th grade. These sessions focus on topics such as communication, time management, understanding of others, teamwork, networking, professionalism, enthusiasm and attitude, interpersonal skills, and leadership. The teachers are trained to reinforce these skills during their lessons throughout the school year.



Theory of Knowledge **Downingtown STEM Academy, Downingtown, PA**

Art Campbell, Principal
acampbell@dasd.org

Juniors and seniors are required to take a class called Theory of Knowledge. At the center of the course is the student as a “knower.” Students are required to think about thinking and the knowledge, beliefs, and opinions they’ve gained from academic disciplines and their lived experience outside the classroom. Teachers personalize prompts for each student to make their experience unique. This reflection helps prepare them for their future as students and beyond.



Argument Mapping **Langley High School, Langley, VA**

Kimberly Greer, Principal
kpgreer@fcps.edu

One of the teachers worked with Harvard University professors to develop a graphic organizer that helps facilitate classroom discussion while reducing emotional ties to disagreements. Argument mapping is designed to help students understand both sides of controversial topics so they can engage in a civil disagreement, which is particularly helpful when discussing political issues.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



District Farm
Big Sky High School, Missoula, MT
Cameron Johnson, Assistant Principal
crjohnson@mcpsmt.org

The school district has its own farm, shared by all of the high schools, that gives students hands-on experience in a variety of areas of farming. It includes a meat processing facility where students learn how to butcher cows and pigs. The meat processed at the facility is provided to families in need. Students who complete the training can get jobs in the local meat processing plants. Students also learn how to artificially impregnate a cow and a pig through their vet tech program.



Team Taught Engineering
West High School, Anchorage, AK
Sven Gustafson, Principal
gustafson_sven@asdk12.org

West High School has developed a program for students who are interested in engineering but don't have strong math skills. The classes have two teachers to enable them to provide more one-to-one instruction to those students who need more support.



Oil Field Apprenticeship
West High School, Anchorage, AK
Sven Gustafson, Principal
gustafson_sven@asdk12.org

The school has a partnership with the Alaska Safety Alliance, a nonprofit organization, to provide a hands-on journeyman program for students who want to work in the oil fields.



Portrait of a Graduate
Reynoldsburg High School, Reynoldsburg, OH
William Bayless, Principal
williambaylis3@gmail.com

The school has developed a portrait of what a Reynoldsburg High School graduate should look like, and everything the school does with students is focused on helping them reach the portrait. Five areas have been identified as essential components: innovative problem solver, effective communicator, socially and emotionally competent, collaborative, and socially aware global citizen.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Curriculum and Instruction *(Teacher Focused)*



Maintaining Focus Brockton High School, Brockton, MA

Carrie Copp, Associate Principal for Curriculum and Instruction
carolynacopp@bpsma.org

In order to help students and teachers stay focused, the school has all teachers display course, unit, and daily objectives every day. They also post the lesson agenda daily. The students find this beneficial in helping them stay focused and knowing what to expect each day.



Cross-Curricular Skills Brockton High School, Brockton, MA

Carrie Copp, Associate Principal for Curriculum and Instruction
carolynacopp@bpsma.org

Brocton High School recognizes the need to cover various curricula in order to prepare students for their futures, but they also understand the need for skills that reach across all curricular areas. One of the school's goals is to incorporate meaningful reading, writing, speaking, and reasoning skills into every student's day. One way this is done is through posters on classroom walls that give examples in each of these areas.



Full-Time Instructional Coach Brattleboro Middle School, Brattleboro, VT

Keith Lyman, Principal
klyman@wsesdvt.org

The school took an accomplished science teacher, provided training, and assigned her to work full time as an instructional coach in the school where she used to teach. Already having a working relationship with the staff helped her gain the teachers' trust quickly. Her role is to work with teachers to provide thorough, ongoing feedback. No information from her work with teachers is shared with the administration.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

 **Dunlap University**
Dunlap High School, Dunlap, IL
Scott Adreon, Principal
sadreon@dunlapcusd.net


Teachers open their classrooms for their best lessons or some other instructional tool they do well. The school's weekly bulletin to staff lists the teachers who will host others for observation. Other teachers attend during prep time. They write a short description of how they will implement what they learned into their own classes. The observations count toward required professional development hours for license renewal. The principal also awards other incentives (such as T-shirts, lunches, and Chromebooks) for those who participate.

 **Incorporating the Arts into Their Curriculum**
FAIR School for the Arts, Minneapolis, MN
Mary Pat Cumming, Principal
marypat.cumming@mpls.k12.mn.us

To enhance the arts experience, core teachers are required to incorporate the principles of art and design into their lessons.

 **Cinematic Arts Program**
Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, Jacksonville, FL
Tina Wilson, Principal
wilsont3@duvalschools.org

Douglas Anderson School of the Arts offers a well-equipped cinematic arts program. One thing that helped the program is that it was declared a career and technical education program. That classification allows the school to use different grants to help fund the equipment needed to keep the classes on the cutting edge.

 **Authentic Intellectual Work**
Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School, Sergeant Bluff, IA
Jason Klingensmith, Principal
klingjas@sbclschools.com

Since the school adopted the Authentic Intellectual Work framework a few years ago, it has become a cornerstone of teachers' instructional practice. It is a collaborative practice where teachers form cross-curricular teams that meet weekly. They bring artifacts of their teaching (labs, lessons, assessments, etc.) to the meeting. Collectively, the team assesses the quality of the artifact and gives suggestions to the teacher on how to make it more powerful for student learning.

 **Trans-Disciplinary Approach**
La Crosse Polytechnic School, La Crosse, WI
Garrett Zimmerman, Principal
gzimmerm@lacrossesd.org

All student work is done using a trans-disciplinary approach. Students choose their project and determine how to meet standards throughout the curriculum while completing their project. This allows them to take ownership of their learning and helps them find passion, purpose, and agency. Students have structured opportunities to collaborate and give each other feedback on their projects. They are taught how to give effective feedback and how to receive constructive criticism.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Districtwide Professional Learning Communities Elkhorn Grandview Middle School, Omaha, NE

Mike Tomjack, Principal
mtomjack@epsne.org

The district utilizes districtwide Professional Learning Communities. When they work with 7th-grade math, for instance, all 7th-grade math teachers across the school district take part in the discussion.



Daily Professional Learning Communities Davies High School, Fargo, ND

Troy Cody, Principal
codyt@fargo.k12.nd.us

Davies High School has professional learning community meetings every day. Two days a week, teachers work with students in an academic advisory role, while the other three days they meet with other teachers to discuss teaching and learning. The sessions are 40-minutes long.



Standards/Evidence-Based Grading Davies High School, Fargo, ND

Troy Cody, Principal
codyt@fargo.k12.nd.us

The school has started the process of adopting standards/evidence-based grading, with the goal of being completely standards/evidence-based by 2025. This will allow the school to provide authentic feedback, which will show students and parents exactly where there are learning needs. The teachers have developed a matrix to be able to convert standards grades to letter grades.



Technology Integrators Jackson High School, Jackson, MO

Seth Harrel, Principal
sharrell@jackson.k12.mo.us

Jackson High School has two full-time technology facilitators to help teachers implement various technologies in their classrooms. They go into classrooms to help teachers learn new software or internet applications, and they publish a monthly newsletter with the newest tips and tricks to better utilize the available technology.



Annual Book Study Blackman High School, Murfreesboro, TN

Leisa Justus, Principal
justusl@rcschools.net

Each year, the principal picks a book for her leadership team to read. The book is selected with the purpose of supporting an initiative the school is focusing on that year. Past book selections have included *Yes, And; Belonging and Becoming; We're All in this Together;* and *Switch*. Although teachers are not required to read the books, they are made aware of which book is being studied that year and which initiative it ties into. During each faculty meeting, some aspect of the book is discussed with the staff.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Standards-Based Grading Big Sky High School, Missoula, MT

Cameron Johnson, Assistant Principal
crjohnson@mcpsmt.org

The school is in the process of transitioning to standards-based grading, although some teachers are already using the approach. They are incorporating a four-point scale that reduces the power of the zero; they are using formative assessment as a tool to help students and teachers understand strengths and weaknesses; and they are using flexible and formative grading (i.e., once you demonstrate understanding, your grade can go up). They also have students show what they know so teachers can then assess the work that the student provides. The school is also taking time to educate parents on what standards-based grading means and how it will affect their children.



New Tech Curriculum Reynoldsburg High School, Reynoldsburg, OH

William Bayless, Principal
williambaylis3@gmail.com

Reynoldsburg High School uses the New Tech curriculum, which is a project-based program. The program gives teachers access to hundreds of ideas on cards that explain various teaching techniques and practices that can be used to give students a more authentic learning experience.



Portrait of an Educator Reynoldsburg High School, Reynoldsburg, OH

William Bayless, Principal
williambaylis3@gmail.com

The school has developed a portrait of what a Reynoldsburg High School professional looks like. They use this portrait to help guide professional development and hiring decisions. The five essential components include being culturally literate, focused on classroom culture and collaboration, a reflective lifelong learner, a flexible relationship builder, and a contributor to the community and the education profession.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Making Connections *(Student Perspective)*



Painted Parking Spaces **Murray County High School, Chatsworth, GA**

Gina Linder, Principal
gina.linder@murray.k12.ga.us

For \$40, seniors can purchase their own parking space for the year. They are allowed to personalize the space by painting a 6-foot-by-6-foot section. They must present their plan for administrative approval to assure the spaces are appropriate. Not only does this idea increase the students' sense of belonging to the school, but also it raises about \$4,000 a year.



Color Building System **Brockton High School, Brockton, MA**

Carrie Copp, Associate Principal for Curriculum and Instruction
carolynacopp@bpsma.org

In order to give a 4,000+ student building a smaller feel, Brockton High School was divided into four separate buildings: green, red, azure, and yellow. Students remain in their building during their entire four years at the school. Counselors are assigned to each building, and all the students in that building see the counselors in their building. Each building has a cafeteria where students assigned to that building eat breakfast and lunch.



Festivus **Bristol Central High School, Bristol, CT**

Peter Wininger, Principal
peterwininger@bristol.k12.org

Festivus is the day before the holiday break. Staff and students celebrate by incorporating fun activities throughout the day, culminating in an assembly with various entertaining activities for everyone. This creates excitement and helps students be more connected to the school.



Popcorn **Hollis Brookline High School, Hollis, NH**

Tim Girzone, Principal
tim.girzone@sau41.org

To help students with serious educational needs in their life skills class connect with the rest of the school, the students make and sell popcorn throughout the school every Tuesday. It has become a part of the school culture and increases opportunities for interaction among students.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Brothers (Boys)/Love (Girls) Groups **John Adams High School, South Bend, IN**

James Seitz, Principal
seitz@sbcsc.k12.in.us

These are co-curricular organizations that were developed to address graduation and suspension rates for students of color. The groups discuss racially sensitive issues that are not otherwise addressed. The point is to develop connections among these students and to allow upperclassmen to serve in leadership/mentor roles for freshmen and sophomores. They bring in speakers to address concerns that impact students of color. The school has seen a significant drop in suspensions, while the graduation rate has increased for students of color.



Academic Challenge **Sergeant Bluff-Luton High School, Sergeant Bluff, IA**

Jason Klingensmith, Principal
klingjas@sblschools.com

Throughout the year, the school holds a series of academic challenges. These quiz bowl-type activities culminate in an all-school assembly, where the finalists compete.



Opportunity Courses **Lander Valley High School, Lander, WY**

Brad Neuendorf, Principal
bneuendorf@landerschools.org

Lander Valley High School has resource time at the end of the day for students who need extra help from teachers. Students who don't need the extra help can take an "opportunity course." These are elective enrichment opportunities that are not for credit. Some of the courses they offer include gaming, rock climbing, FFA, art, and yoga.



The Freshmen Experience **FAIR School for the Arts, Minneapolis, MN**

Mary Pat Cumming, Principal
marypat.cumming@mpls.k12.mn.us

The Freshmen Experience allows all incoming students a chance to explore all of the various areas of the arts that the school offers. This exposure to the arts helps them figure out what interests them and how they will define themselves as artists.



Spring Fever Reliever **Jackson High School, Jackson, MO**

Seth Harrel, Principal
sharrell@jackson.k12.mo.us

On a Friday with about four weeks left of school, the school has a Spring Fever Reliever day for the students. Instead of classes, they have a series of fun activities designed to address spring fever and help students get it out of their system. Activities include trivia, relay races, yard games, karaoke, dodgeball, punt pass and kick, gaming activities, and a student car show. During the Spring Fever Reliever, one of the senior activities is to put their handprint and name on a designated wall with their class. The handprints stay on the wall indefinitely.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

 **Bully-Free Forever Club**
Atholton High School, Columbia, MD
Robert Motley, Principal
robert_motley@hcpss.org

This club's only charge is to promote positive interactions among students.

 **Peer Group Connect**
Early College High School at Delaware State University, Dover, DE
Evelyn Edney, Principal
evelyn.edney@echs.k12.de.us

To help new students fully understand what is expected of them and how to transition to their new school, the school came up with the Peer Group Connect program. Seniors meet weekly with the new students to help in their adjustment at the school.

 **Sticky Note Day**
Clarkstown High School North, Clarkstown, NY
Harry Leonardatos, Principal
hleonardatos@ccsd.edu

Sticky Note Day is an activity developed by language arts teachers to expose students to prose and poetry written by students, staff, and members of the community. The day culminates in a Java Jive activity where all of the writers get together to celebrate the day.

 **Safe Team**
Booker T. Washington High School, Tulsa, OK
Melissa Woolridge, Principal
woolrme@tulsaschools.org

The Safe Team is a student-run group that does various activities to provide positive affirmations for the school community. Some of the activities include notes on lockers, statements written on the walkway into school in chalk, and an organized thank you note campaign for teachers.

 **8th-Grade Academy Prep Class**
Piper Middle School, Kansas City, KS
Steve Mercer, Principal
smercerc@piperschools.us

Piper High School moved to an academy model for the 2022–23 school year. In order to prepare the middle school students, they required all 8th graders to take an academy prep class. The teachers use an interdisciplinary approach in the core areas. Students get exposed to aspects of each of the academies so they can make an informed decision when choosing their 9th grade academy.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



6th Grade Buddy Program Wallace Junior-Senior High School, Wallace, ID

Don Almquist, Principal
dalmquist@wsd393.org

Sixth graders come to the junior high school in late spring and spend a day and a half mirroring a 7th or 8th grader. They follow their junior high “buddy” and participate in all school events. As the 6th graders get off the bus and enter the school, all the staff are there to greet them and welcome them.



La Chispa Leadership Camp Jemtegaard Middle School, Washougal, WA

David Cooke, Principal
david.cooke@washougalsd.org

Every year, the school sends 40 Hispanic students to Chispa! (The Spark!), a one-day regional camp. The program includes activities that helps students develop leadership skills, build self-confidence, strengthen their cultural identity, and increase their academic success. The principal attends the workshop with the students to show he cares about their success.



Students as Individuals North Middle School, Colorado Springs, CO

Christopher Kilroy, Principal
Christopher.Kilroy@d11.org

The school administration sees all students and staff as individuals and provides them with specific support to meet everyone’s needs. This requires more resources to provide a more personalized experience for everyone.



Student Art in Bathrooms Coronado High School, Henderson, NV

Michael Piccininni, Principal
piccimn@nv.ccsd.net

During the pandemic, the principal offered students the opportunity to submit a design to paint a bathroom. The design had to be positive in nature, as bathrooms are often a destination for students who are struggling with emotional issues. Once approved, the students got to paint their design/artwork on the stall doors. To protect it from damage, the custodial staff placed plexiglass on top of all artwork.



Restore the Roar Jefferson High School, Shenandoah Junction, WV

Mary Group, Principal
mgroup@k12.wv.us

The principal realized early in her tenure that school pride had diminished since she was a student there, so she developed a plan to bring back pride in the school. She started a “Restore the Roar” campaign to instill school pride. She reports that students have bought into the concept, and she is seeing significant gains in student ownership and pride.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Senior Class Puzzle **Cleveland High School, Rio Rancho, NM**

Scott Affentranger, Principal
Scott.Affentranger@rrps.net

Every year, a large jigsaw puzzle is made of pictures from the school, and the class year is put on the top of the picture. Each senior gets to sign one piece of the puzzle. Once it's completed, the puzzle is mounted on a board that is hung in the cafeteria.



School Self Promotion **Central High School, Bristol, CT**

Peter Winger, Principal
peterwinger@bristolk12.org

The school has a tech teacher who, with the support of the principal, put together a lab with high-end equipment that gives students the opportunity to share various school events through social media. They also purchased their own T-shirt printing machine. The printing is done by students, which saved the school enough money that it paid for itself the first semester. Having their own printing machine not only allows the school to do their shirts in a timely manner, but it also helps them promote their motto of "Ramilly" (Bristol Central Rams: Ram Family) on the back of all shirts.



Piano in the Hall **Lincoln High School, Portland, OR**

Peyton Chapman, Principal
peytonc@pps.net

Lincoln High School has a grand piano in the hall that is available to students to play before and after school as well as during lunch and passing time between classes. This has been a great way for kids to connect with the school and their classmates. When the school moves to a new building next year, six pianos will be available in the halls for students.



Senior Lounge **Clarkstown High School North, Clarkstown, NY**

Harry Leonardatos, Principal
hleonardatos@ccsd.edu

A large classroom was converted into a senior lounge that provides an area to relax and rejuvenate. The lounge is equipped with a ping pong table, various video games, bean bag chairs, and comfortable furniture. Any senior can sign into the lounge, space permitting.



Painting the Bus Lot Like a Football Field **Cleveland High School, Rio Rancho, NM**

Scott Affentranger, Principal
Scott.Affentranger@rrps.net

To give the marching band a place to practice without interfering with athletic teams or physical education classes that use the football field, the school painted the bus parking lot with football field markings. This allows the band to practice their routines anytime other than right after school when the buses are parked waiting for students.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Making Connections *(Teacher Perspective)*



 **Eagle Fest**
Dunlap High School, Dunlap, IL
Scott Adreon, Principal
sadreon@dunlapcusd.net

Instead of the usual “sit and get” session on the first day of in-service before school starts, staff are sent videos of all the information that was going to be disseminated to watch before school starts. During the time that they typically used for this information sharing, they instead do a team “Great Race” type of activity including kayaking in the pool, bag contests, dribble tag, and Handbook Jeopardy. Teams are made of cross-department groups.

 **Door Decorating**
Atholton High School, Columbia, MD
Robert Motley, Principal
robert_motley@hcpss.org

For Black History Month, the staff decided to do a door decorating contest. Each department had to have at least one door decorated highlighting how Black History influenced their curricular area. More than 70 teachers decorated their doors, with the winning classroom getting breakfast.

 **Certified Staff College Displays**
Buchanan High School, Buchanan, MI
Stacie DeMaio, Principal
sdemaio@buchananschools.com

All certified staff have a laminated sheet hanging outside their room listing the colleges they attended and the degrees they received. During college and career week, students are encouraged to ask staff about the colleges and universities they attended.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Freshmen House **Betty Fairfax High School, Phoenix, AZ**

Chandra Alexander, Principal
calexander@phoenixunion.org

Freshmen House is a program that concentrates on making sure students start their high school experience with a good foundation. All freshmen core classes are taught in the same building. The freshmen teachers meet weekly to discuss struggling students and develop solutions, including daily interventions, for concerns that arise. They also stress getting all freshmen involved in some co-curricular activity. Since the program was implemented, the school has the highest percentage of on-track freshmen in the Phoenix Union District.



Personal Workout Programs **Holmen High School, Holmen, WI**

Wayne Sackett, Principal
sacway@holmen.k12.wi.us

The school has a large workout facility, managed by one of their physical education teachers. The teacher will develop a personalized workout plan for any student or staff member, which can be accessed on their cell phone. In the advanced fitness class, students work with coaches to develop a specific in-season or out-of-season program for whatever sport they play. The coaches use those programs as part of their training.



Helping Tardy Students **Jackson High School, Jackson, MO**

Seth Harrel, Principal
sharrell@jackson.k12.mo.us

Every student who comes late to school must meet with an administrator before going to class. Rather than imposing discipline, the school personnel use the time to make sure everything is OK with the student and that they are emotionally ready to be in school to learn. The school has seen a drop in tardiness, and many problems with students are identified before they manifest themselves in more serious ways.



Positive Post-Its **Murray High School, Murray, KY**

Tony Jarvis, Principal
tony.jarvis@murray.kyschools.us

The principal started a campaign to have teachers write short positive comments about other teachers on Post-It notes and put them on their colleagues' classroom doors. The messages can be anonymous or signed. The campaign was so successful that students wanted to join, too.



Jr. ROTC **Atholton High School, Columbia, MD**

Robert Motley, Principal
robert_motley@hcpss.org

Atholton High School has an extensive Jr. ROTC program that serves about 225 students annually. This program provides ambassadors and color guards for various events and is described as the school's moral compass.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

 **Appreciation Days**
Booker T. Washington High School, Tulsa, OK
Melissa Woolridge, Principal
woolrme@tulsaschools.org

Two to three times each year the whole administrative team goes to each classroom to present teachers with some type of treat and tell them how much they are appreciated in front of the students. They personalize each message for every teacher.

 **Therapy Dogs**
Liberty High School, Liberty, MO
April Adams, Principal
april.adams@lps53.org

Liberty High School has two full-time therapy dogs, Bear and Bentley. They are owned by the school and the handlers who are employed by the school. The school pays for veterinarian bills, insurance, and food. Bear spends his day in the student services office, where students and staff can access him if they need a pick-me-up; Bentley stays in the room with students who have moderate to severe special needs.

 **Freshmen Home Visits**
Jefferson High School, Shenandoah Junction, WV
Mary Group, Principal
mgroup@k12.wv.us

During the summer, six pairs of staff members (administrators, teachers, counselors, and school resource officers) make home visits to all of the incoming freshmen students. The staff members have a 30-minute conversation with the incoming student and their parents about what to expect when school starts. They answer questions from the student and parents to help them feel more connected to the school. They also accommodate families who prefer to meet at school. They reach about 95% of the families.

 **SRO Utilization**
Jefferson High School, Shenandoah Junction, WV
Mary Group, Principal
mgroup@k12.wv.us

The school resource officer spends the majority of his time in classrooms, often team teaching when the subject matter lends itself to his knowledge and experience. He also conducts freshmen summer home visits.

 **Setting a Tone for Connection**
Hurricane High School, Hurricane, UT
Darin Thomas, Principal
darin.thomas@washk12.org

Hurricane High School uses a four-period block schedule. Every day during the passing period between blocks 1 and 2 and blocks 3 and 4, the principal, two associate principals, and school resource officer stand in an area where most of the students must pass. They interact with as many students as possible, asking about sports, academics, clubs, and the students' personal lives. They give fist bumps, high fives, and hugs.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Staff-Student Connections **Rio Rancho Cyber Academy, Rio Rancho NM**

Julie Arnold, Principal

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Since it is a cyber academy, there are relatively few students in the building each day. That gives students who are in school on a given day ample opportunity for one-on-one interactions with staff, whether for academic issues or social-emotional concerns.



Buildings and Grounds Can Do Attitude **Langley High School, Langley, VA**

Kimberly Greer, Principal

kpgreer@fcps.edu

The facilities at Langley High School are impeccable and well maintained. The facility manager calls the school his second home and treats it that way. When he noticed the chairs were wearing down the wax on the floors, he put tennis balls on the bottoms of every chair that didn't have wheels. When the school needed storage space, he converted the unused area under stairwells into locked storage space. Over the holiday break last year, he noticed the grout in the office bathrooms was looking bad, so he redid the grout.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Social-Emotional/Mental Health



Focus on Social-Emotional/Mental Health Chariho Middle School, Wood River Junction, RI

Greg Zenion, Principal

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Even before the pandemic, Chariho Middle School emphasized students' social-emotional/mental health. In a school with just over 1,000 5th–8th graders, they have four counselors, two social workers, and one psychologist. Having this much support for students allows the mental health staff to get to know their students. Counselors are assigned to their students for the entire four years they attend the school. If the principal gets a call from a parent, he goes directly to the assigned counselor to discuss the parent's concern before talking to any teachers.

Outside Counseling Dunlap High School, Dunlap, IL

Scott Adreon, Principal

sadreon@dunlapcusd.net

Dunlap High School has a full-time personal counselor to work with students who need outside counseling that's not covered through the guidance department. This is a wellness counselor, not a school counselor, who is available to students four days a week. On Fridays, she is available for staff.

Buck's Closet Buchanan High School, Buchanan, MI

Stacie DeMaio, Principal

sdemaio@buchananschools.com

The school has collected a variety of clothes, shoes, and personal items (such as deodorant, soap, and shampoo) that are available to all students. To avoid any stigma, the room is always open, and students can go there whenever necessary.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Behavior Interventionists Har-Ber High School, Springdale, AR

Margaret Robinson, Associate Principal
margaret.robinson@sdale.org

The school has two behavioral interventionists responsible for addressing discipline and academic issues before they become serious. They work with students at the early stages of truancy, excessive tardiness, failure to hand in work, not preparing for tests and quizzes, and not engaging in the learning process. The idea is to catch the underperforming students early and provide intervention and support before they fail.



Mad Minute Piper Middle School, Kansas City, KS

Steve Mercer, Principal
smercer@piperschools.us

In the middle of each semester, the counseling team visits classrooms and has a short conversation with individual students to see how they are doing. The counselors ask a series of questions to determine if the student needs extra academic or emotional support. They look not only at individual students, but also at the school as a whole. If they see a large number of students having similar problems, they can develop a plan to address the issue.



Peer Counseling Program Barstow High School, Barstow, CA

Frank Jimenez, Principal
frank_jimenez@busdk12.com

The peer counseling program is designed to be a tool for providing prevention, intervention, and referral services to students experiencing difficulties. The success of peer counseling is based on the premise that peer counselors, who are motivated and effectively trained, might be in a better position than adults to connect with and have a positive influence on the attitudes and behaviors of their peers.



Mock Car Crash Wallace Junior-Senior High School, Wallace, ID

Don Almquist, Principal
dalmquist@wsd393.org

Prior to prom every year, Wallace Junior-Senior High School stages a mock drunk driving car accident to show students why they shouldn't drink for prom. They use student actors in a variety of roles, including as a student who dies in the accident, to demonstrate how devastating an accident can be.



Schoolwide Mental Health Fair Lincoln High School, Portland, OR

Peyton Chapman, Principal
peytonc@pps.net

Lincoln High School has a mental health fair every year. This year, they had three keynote speakers and 52 breakout sessions. Each breakout session had trigger keys identified to help participants pick sessions that were of interest to them. More than 50 community members volunteered as presenters for the fair, which was attended by both students and staff.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Student Support Flow Chart **Jemtegaard Middle School, Washougal, WA**

David Cooke, Principal
david.cooke@washougalsd.org

In order to provide consistent feedback on behavioral issues, the school developed a flow chart for teachers of what to do and how to handle disciplinary issues. The process attempts to help solve issues in the classroom if at all possible. The school reports that the process has helped reduce disciplinary issues by 60%.



Reset Zone **Begich Middle School, Anchorage, AK**

Brendan Wilson, Principal
wilson_brendan@asdk12.org

Instead of using an in-school suspension room for students displaying disruptive behaviors, the school has a “reset zone.” The aim is to get students to own their behavior, develop a plan for how to improve, and be able to return to the classroom. The room is staffed by a teacher and security staff. The school has seen a drop in suspensions and students taking more responsibility for their actions.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

Teacher Preparation



Educational Practicum Class Holmen High School, Holmen, WI

Wayne Sackett, Principal
sacway@holmen.k12.wi.us

Holmen High School offers an educational practicum class for students interested in becoming educators. The class explores all aspects of teaching, and students serve as teaching assistants in elementary schools.



Day Care Center Jackson High School, Jackson, MO

Seth Harrel, Principal
sharrell@jackson.k12.mo.u

The school has a daycare center that operates daily in the mornings. Students in the Early Childhood Development and Services Program are trained to work with children, and then they get hands-on experience working with the 15 children enrolled in the daycare. The program gives high school students teaching experience to help get them interested in education as a career.



Teacher Academy Atholton High School, Columbia, MD

Robert Motley, Principal
robert_motley@hcpss.org

Atholton High School offers an academy for students interested in becoming a teacher. Students take an introductory course on Human Growth and Development, and they can continue with Foundations of Curriculum and Instruction, Teaching as a Profession, and then a field experience opportunity. The school has a daycare center, which allows students to explore their interest in working with children.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



Kinder Care **Clarkstown High School North, Clarkstown, NY**

Harry Leonardatos, Principal

hleonardatos@ccsd.edu

Kinder Care is a daycare in the school for 4-year-olds. In addition to serving the children and their families, the center gives high school students who are interested in becoming a teacher hands-on experience working with young children. Students in the program take three courses, two of which—Introduction to Teaching and Child Development—are dual credit classes that give students the opportunity to earn eight credits from SUNY Cobleskill at no cost.

[→BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

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