

Significant Staff Changes Doesn't Extinguish 'Spark' of K-12 School Guidance Plan



School:

Warrior Run School District
Medium-sized rural district
2016 Graduating Class -112

Location:

Turbotville, PA Northumberland
County

Challenge:

Maintaining K-12 School
Guidance Plan over multiple
years with staff changes

Solution:

Fully integrate the K-12 plan into
the curriculum, making it a part
of school culture.

Results:

- 100% of 5th grade students complete an entrepreneurship project.
- 88% of 8th grade students participated in a job shadow related to their Holland code and career cluster.
- 87% of seniors feel good or excellent about their preparation for transition after high school. Up from 68%
- 100% of 12th grade students successfully completed the senior exit interview.

K-12 School Guidance Plan in a Rural Pennsylvania School District

Warrior Run School District (WRSD) is a medium-sized rural school located in Turbotville, Pennsylvania, graduating 112 students in 2016. Implementing the K-12 School Guidance Plan in 2013 was the first step in changing the way students are engaging in learning. Even though 85% of administrators and counselors have changed over the last three years, WRSD maintained continuity of the plan by integrating career development into the curriculum and within the school culture.

"Initially we only met on professional development days. Former Superintendent, Dr. Kurelja's support of regular monthly meetings was key in creating and sustaining the program," says Chris Long, Middle School Counselor.

Creating the spark and fanning the flames of interest

Starting in Kindergarten WRSD students are encouraged to find their 'spark', that thing that fires them up and holds their interest. As they move through their elementary and middle school classes, they are provided opportunities to explore careers that contain their spark. Allowing them to explore this spark at an early age, gives them time to change and refine "who they want to be when they grow up" through a series of interconnected and coordinated activities. By the time students reach tenth grade they are well versed in the many post graduations options and have a real-world basis to choose career pathways.

In fifth grade, 100% of the students explore their spark by participating in an entrepreneurial project, which spans across the disciplines of English, math, and science. Two girls found their 'spark' in baking. They were able to explore it further by developing a plan on what would be required to open a bakery. They were asked to present their project to the spring career advisory council. Not only did they learn if their baking spark was what they thought it was, but they were also able to learn and get real-world experience in presenting their findings. This is just one of many ways the K-12 School Guidance Plan has changed the way the students at Warrior Run School District learn.

"Students will gravitate toward what they are familiar with so it is important to expose them to other experiences outside their family experience." – Council Member

COUNSELING SPOTLIGHT

empowerment to enhance systemic change

In their senior year, all students participate in an exit interview in front of a panel of community volunteers and K-12 teachers. They tell their story of how they explored their spark through school-endorsed activities. They present their career goal and the transition plan to achieving that goal. The panel provides feedback on how realistic their plan is and provides additional suggestions on how the student can be successful as they transition out of high school. Teachers on the panel are amazed at the growth in student maturity and confidence.

K-12 Career Development as a School Culture

Eleven ways you can make the K-12 School Guidance Plan part of your school culture

1. By taking a leadership role, counselors can impact faculty and curriculum
2. Engage faculty during professional development days with hands-on activities involving community
3. Make time to create, implement and revise a workable plan
4. Update and refine the plan during regularly scheduled counselor meetings
5. Create a structure that adds academic and social/emotional components to the K-12 School Guidance Plan based on the ASCA (American School Counselor Association) model
6. Involve community stakeholders through senior exit interviews, job shadowing and the career advisory council
7. Effective plans include post-secondary education and direct workforce options
8. Job shadowing allows students to experience professions in the real-world that match their interests
9. Involve the career and technology center for all students beginning in elementary school
10. Senior exit interviews provide feedback to all seniors and highlight student growth to K-12 teachers
11. Core of program is so integrated into curriculum that it is easier to continue than to abandon the plan during major changes in personnel

Measuring Success

The K-12 School Guidance Plan resulted in more Tier 1 implementations, which engaged all students. Teachers found that engaged students are easier to teach. Integrating the K-12 School Guidance Plan beginning in lower grades and fanning the flames of the child's sparks keeps students engaged throughout their school years resulting in an over 97% graduation rate.

"The counselor's role has transitioned from primarily providing support and consultation to also focusing on the important choices students are making throughout their school years with an emphasis on preparing them for future success."

*– Dr. Alan Hack, Superintendent
Warrior Run School District*

