

Personalized Learning Model Utilizing Summit Learning Program

Realities impacting our community have changed dramatically for the generation of students that we serve at our school. Many of the parents of our students graduated from high school knowing that opportunities awaited them. If they didn't attend college, they had jobs waiting for them as long as they were willing to work hard.

Our students have seen the changes and hardships their parents may have endured due to our economy, such as their parents being laid off from those jobs. Students have realized that the path that was available to their parents is no longer available to them, and that reality is leading to new realities in our school. Higher rates of anxiety and depression are also creating social issues and behavior problems that didn't exist here a generation ago.

Our students are facing a completely different reality than previous generations in our community, and that means that the education provided to their parents will not be sufficient for them. This is why we've embraced a Personalized Learning Model utilizing the Summit Learning Program.

In the past, it seemed sufficient for many of our students to graduate from high school with the finite set of skills that would prepare them to learn a trade and make a living wage. But our economy is changing, and we can no longer predict exactly what our students will need to know in order to live a fulfilled life. This is why we're shifting our curriculum to focus on transferrable, cognitive skills that can be applied to any profession - even those that don't yet exist. By using a curriculum emphasizing creativity and problem solving, and by scoring students based on transferrable cognitive skills, we're providing an education without boundaries, an education that will allow our students to adapt to their changing world.

We know that it is no longer sufficient for our school to only prepare students academically. As our local economy has struggled, our students need broader support than ever before, and this can be provided through 1:1 mentoring, and a focus on habits of success. We've all been worried about the social and emotional struggles that our students face in this increasingly complex world; Summit Learning provides us with structures to address those issues directly. We're intentional about building our students habits of success that will empower them to embrace challenges without fear of failure.

Our students have to show real grit as they engage in a truly challenging curriculum. Through self-directed learning, they are learning to maintain a healthy balance between self-reliance and seeking support. Our students aren't able to earn passing grades anymore just by doing the minimum. They're scored based on real mastery - of critical content and of cognitive skills - the kind of mastery that is earned through hard work.

We all have worried as we've seen many of our students giving up after they don't initially earn passing grades and we believe that this is due to the fixed mindset that has been instilled in so many of our students - a mindset that tells them, "If you're not good enough now, you'll never be good enough." If our students are going to succeed - not just in school, but in life - they're going to need to develop a mindset that tells them, "It's not about how many times you get knocked down; it's about how many times you get back up." When our students don't initially show mastery, they have to dig in again, working harder, making progress step by step. This is teaching them the resilience that will be so important if they are to overcome the economic challenges facing our community and society.

John Dewey wrote that, "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." We now have this opportunity to embrace a new way of teaching that will prepare our students for tomorrow, while still instilling in them the same core values that this school has instilled in the generations of students that came before them.