

Redesigning education

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I am looking to redesign what education and learning looks like in Warren County High School in Warrenton. The school has several new initiatives to redesign the high school experience for students. First, the culture in the school has changed to hold every person in the building accountable. A sharing of power, passes from administration to the staff and students to take the lead. I say that by sharing the power, everyone has ownership in what happens within the school.

WCHS now has a house system within the school that they call "NEST." NEST stands for Nurturing Every Student's Transformation. The NESTs include students from different grade levels. During NEST, students are developing a sense of school pride and working to embody social-emotional skills. NEST allows a time to build camaraderie with people they do not usually interact with on a daily basis. When asked if they think that NEST builds school spirit, one junior in the Synergy NEST said, "Yes, it does because it gets everyone in the mood to do work and stay focused." A senior in the Collaboration NEST responded to the question what NEST means to him by stating, "It helps us work together. It makes us able to trust one another."

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them." Students work to master numerous soft skills that they need to be a successful learner in school and in life.

Another new initiative is having a High School and Beyond plan. The goal is to "begin with the end in mind" and develop a pathway outlining the course of four years in high school and a charted path after graduation. This plan will ensure that every student who crosses the stage has a concrete plan with options for life after high school.

Now, all the plans above can and are working but if the students are not in school, what progress are we making in education? So, to answer that question the staff decided to implement, in phases, restorative justice. This year, we identified students with a history of discipline issues and created a restorative justice group. Led by our school's social worker, the premise of this group is to foster students' preventative actions; thereby reducing suspensions which in turn, can help them have a better year. We have an anger management group that meets with a behavioral specialist from our local community health partner geared to arming students with tools necessary to resolve conflicts. Lastly, the counselors and administrative team work to do peer mediations. These mediations help students take responsibility for their actions but also repair harm and keep the issue from recurring. The Dean of Students, Paul Plummer, says "the goal is to keep the students in school so that learning

Our students need to know we are invested in them and that we believe in them. We see the hardships they endure and we let them know that your circumstances shape who you are but they don't have to define you. They are being taught to overcome the barriers of life. Once we work to overcome those barriers, then it makes educating the students more productive.

People have asked me what has produced the change in the school. When they do, I simply smile and say "the students and staff." When probed, I chuckle and say, "last year I put out the challenge... instead of taking in the negativity and living in the picture painted by others, we are going to paint our own picture and prove the negativity wrong. I became the "Joe Clark" as some staff call me of Warren County High. I set high expectations and set them for all students and staff. You either rose to the challenge or you got left behind. I do not have room or time for people who are not here to do the work. It was a difficult road with some tough decisions, however, I can guarantee you that every decision was based on a single question: "Is it best for the students?"

So, as the administrative team moves into year two, we are continuing to "paint our own picture," one that is allowing education to look, sound, and feel different within WCHS. The school's motto this year is "level up" and by the looks of it, we are doing just that and then some. Go Eagles!

LaAlice Hopkins will be presenting at

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School leaders arranged intervention time within the daily schedule where students go back to teachers to receive tutoring assistance. The school recognizes the barriers that families face with a lack of transportation. School day intervention overcomes that barrier and gives access to every student.

Part of this intervention time frame includes one monthly homeroom advisory meeting. Students are working to build and establish meaningful relationships with their homeroom teacher, who will follow them throughout their high school career. As Urie Bronfenbrenner says, "every child needs at least one person who is irrationally crazy about

a better year. We have an anger management group that meets with a behavioral specialist from our local community health partner geared to arming students with tools necessary to resolve conflicts. Lastly, the counselors and administrative team work to do peer mediations. These mediations help students take responsibility for their actions but also repair harm and keep the issue from recurring. The Dean of Students, Paul Plummer, says "the goal is to keep the students in school so that learning can take place. We want to be proactive and not reactive in our approach with students."

The school staff feel that these new initiatives will make a positive difference in the performance of the students and the school.

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LaAlice Hopkins will be presenting at the Redesign Student Success conference for secondary schools in February 2019 in San Diego, California to share with other educator professionals what she and her staff have implemented at the school.

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