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NEWS

March 28, 2014 – Shelburne Middle School: Moving Forward with Tomorrow in Mind

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Shelburne Middle School: Moving Forward with Tomorrow in Mind

The “Middle School Years” is a phrase that is often looked upon with discontent. At Shelburne Middle School, we embrace these years as a time of transition, growth and exploration as we have the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of the City of Staunton’s youth as they prepare for both Robert E. Lee High school and their future. We seek to provide students with an educational program that addresses the academic, social, and emotional well-being of our kids as we recognize that each child who comes to us is unique.

One way that we embrace these years is innovation. While Shelburne has a long standing tradition of excellence, we do not rest on our laurels. Two years ago we built time into our schedule to offer struggling students more time and support to learn. That time has since become known as Success Block, during which our students have the opportunity to experience both intervention and extension-type activities -- from clubs and enrichment opportunities to re-teaching and targeted intervention. It is not uncommon to see kids getting extra help, planning for a school dance, or researching a big question or idea during Success. In fact, Success has helped shape our schedule as last year we chose to change from a block to a period schedule. Now, each child has equal access to all subjects every day.

This year, Shelburne Middle School is proud to announce the advent of the BETA (Build, Explore, Tinker, Apply) Learning Academy for half of the rising 8th grade student body in the fall of 2014. The BETA Learning Academy is a technology-infused instructional pilot program built around hands-on, project-based learning in all subject areas. Students in the BETA Learning Academy learn by making and creating. They document and reflect on their work and transfer new knowledge and skills between projects and classes. The BETA Learning Academy prepares students for careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields and also assists students interested in the arts to approach their studies using design thinking and problem solving. The goal of the program is to help ALL students see themselves as capable students in STEM disciplines and to help ALL students prepare for jobs that haven't yet been invented.

In addition to our BETA Learning Academy, our staff has worked hard to review our school-wide behavior plan for the 2014-2015 school year. Recognizing that the Latin origins of the word discipline, *disciplina*, means teaching or learning, we are moving towards a program that incorporates restorative practices as a way to provide positive behavior supports to students. When fully developed, this program will reflect a student's desire to participate in a warm and engaging learning environment by focusing on developing good relationships and strong interpersonal skills. For students requiring behavioral supports beyond the scope of our invigorated discipline plan, we will provide an alternative instructional setting which will focus on teaching pro-social skills within a community-focused program.

With an emphasis on rigor and engagement, the Shelburne staff challenges all students to achieve at a high level of academic performance, but that's not all. This development includes experiences outside of the regular school day. The recent Literacy Lock-in exemplifies Shelburne's commitment to the whole child. This event included 200 students in varying middle grades spending an entire night reading one book. Shelburne was filled with children, teachers, chaperones, sleeping bags, pillows, and most importantly, books. This opportunity for teachers, community members and students to engage and interact in a fun-filled, literacy-infused night provided relationship and community building experiences for all stakeholders.

Shelburne Middle School strives each day to face the challenge of providing engaging, rigorous programming that enhances the development of each and every child. We look forward to changing and adapting, in real-time, to the rapidly advancing demands of 21st century learning to create rigorous, engaging programming to develop the whole child, academically, socially and emotionally.



Shelburne students enjoy reading through the night at the recent Literacy Lock-in.