

Your Brain

The brain - is the control and application of all the working systems of the body. It helps align all those systems to work successfully. At an effective school the brain is represented by all of us working together to help every child be successful.

Five Habits of Mind

Critical Thinking

1. How do you know? (Evidence)
 - How do we know what we know?
 - Is the source of this knowledge credible?
 - What is the difference between what is known and what is believed?
 - What is the difference between fact and opinion?
2. Whose point of view are you seeing? (Viewpoint)
 - From whose point of view is something coming?
 - What are his/her intentions?
 - What previous knowledge/event contributed to this view?
 - What is the tone (author's attitude) towards the material??
3. What causes what? (Connections)
 - How are things connected to each other?
 - Has this been heard or seen before?
 - What comparison/contrasts can be made?
4. How might things have been different? (Alternatives)
 - What if and how else?
 - How possible or feasible are the other choices?
 - Compare/contrast the alternatives to the original.
5. Who cares? (Relevance)
 - Who thinks this is important and why?
 - What difference does this experience/knowledge make?
 - What does it all mean?

Where We Are - Where We Are Going Together

What we have established:

- * Developed a comprehensive academic achievement plan
- * Created scope and sequence work in each subject area
- * Used a standard syllabus format
- * Created and implemented teams
- * Designed and implementation of thinking skills/graphic organizer tool kit
- * Created a master schedule that supports teaming, collaborative planning, inclusion, ESL parallel design, and Special Education support.
- * Redesigned and/or created systems that support our number one goal of academic achievement for all students.

Where We Are Going - Standards Based Teaching and Learning

- * Create academic standards and assessments that address the developmental needs and abilities of every student including, "kids in the middle", special education inclusion and resource, bilingual parallel teaching, and challenge curriculum for high achievers.
- * Develop and design school-wide rubrics in major category areas which will help all staff assist students by creating a consistent and cohesive program across all grade levels and subject areas.
- * Fine tune and adjust thinking skills/graphic organizer tool kit.
- * Review, discuss, adopt, revise, and monitor throughout the school year.
- * Review and assess scope and sequence in each subject area as to the degree of implementation in each grade level and compatibility with state and district assessments.
- * Determine contents and application by grade level and subject area of a working, dynamic rather than static, exit portfolio.

Recommended Item In Middle School Academic Tool Kit

Listed below are the tools we are recommending that all students be able to meet standard in order to exit our school at the end of eighth grade. These will be combined with subject matter content and concept expectations.

The task is to work in teams or by grade level to discuss and recommend which tools should be attached to which subjects. As we complete this work our goal would be that any student could demonstrate proficiency in any of the above listed tools in any subject we offer. Further, we want our portfolio and exit project to be evidence of this.

6th	7th	8th
Observing	Point of View	Fact & Opinion
Comparing/Contrasting	Finding Evidence	Inferring
Sorting/Classifying	Main Idea	Synthesis
Sequencing	Summarizing	Bias
Finding Patterns	Cause & Effect	Analysis
Predicting	Problem Solving	Evaluation
Goal Setting	Group Work	Decision Making
Group Process	Group Process	Group Process
Test Taking	Test Taking	Test Taking
Presentation Skills	Presentation Skills	Presentation Skills
Keyboarding	Word Processing	Internet
Service-Learning	Service-Learning	Service-Learning
Wellness	Wellness	Wellness
Belonging/Self-Acceptance	Belonging/Self-Acceptance	Belonging/Self-Acceptance

Parents Are Brain Action Leaders At Home

Dear Brain Action Parents:

We love working with middle level students because we believe that the transition known as early adolescence, between childhood and young adult, is the most important one any person can make. If we work together, parents, teachers, students, and community we can create a school that encourages all children to be successful for themselves, and in so doing, for our country as well. Every child here matters and each of us have important roles to play to support each child's best effort at becoming the best person they can be. As the year goes along here are the important aspects you can do as a parents/guardian on a daily basis to help your child succeed.

1. Ask your child often - daily is best - about school. Ask specific questions so that your child gets the opportunity to talk about specific assignments, classes, subjects. Ask to see their work and talk with them about it. Ask them their opinions about different current events.
2. Talk to your child about the importance of getting along in a civilized way with everyone. Ours is a diverse society where we celebrate and respect our differences but also recognize how, in so many ways, we are similar.
3. Give your child specific comments that praise their achievements, attitudes, interests, and characteristics. "You're great!" is a much better message if it tells why, "You're great, because you stuck with that homework assignment, even though it was tough, and finished it. Persistence is a positive trait. Good work."
4. State your values to you children. Say things like, "Honesty is what we value and here's why..." It is OK to be corny - parents are entitled.
5. Listen to your child. Get the whole message from what you hear. If your child was enthusiastic about school and now is not, it needs to be explored. If your child has always talked openly but changes to being very closed, hear that message too. Research tells us that there is nothing more important to adolescents than being able to talk about their opinion with someone who wants to hear what they have to say.
6. Set boundaries and guidelines for your children. They need, especially at this time of their lives, to be safe, and safety is being able to say, "I can't do that because my parents would ground me until the end of time." They want parents to be the heavy because it gives them time to deal with all the peer pressure and it is their safety net. So be comfortable being the heavy and accept the role with love, of being the only parent who won't go along. If you explore it, you'll find you've got lots of company.
7. Talk to school personnel at the first sign of a concern. We are here to work with you for your child's wellbeing and success. If we don't know of a concern, we can't help. Call us and talk about it.

The Beginning Of Every School Year

Disproportionality remains our major issue to resolve at our school and in the district. There are schools in this country who have higher poverty rates and more disadvantages than we do who have found a way to help every child succeed. If there are schools who have eliminated this as an issue and who faced more dire circumstances than we do, we need to follow their lead.

Our kids deserve no less than our best, and they deserve a solution to this issue. If they can't read, we must all teach them reading, for what is literature without comprehension? If they can't write, we must all teach writing, because deficits in writing will cause them immeasurable damage throughout their lives. If they do not understand math, we need to teach at the very least how to do their own monthly budgets. If they are lacking the understanding of science, teach them the impact of the concepts they will face. If they don't connect to the content, then we must draw meaningful connections to their lives, hopes, and dreams. We know as educators, that information with no frame is meaningless trivia that students forget after the test, and never use it later.

In the final analysis, despite standardized tests and measures, despite the standards, despite all the content we should or could teach, we must be child centered and learning must be framed so that it starts with each child. It cannot be something we deliver, and they accept or reject. It must be something that we frame in a way so that they seek it, want it, and need to know it, so that it connects to their lives. I submit it works exactly the same way for each of you in anything you have learned that is really important to you. Our job takes heart, brains, and courage, as well as a sense of home and belonging. We are up to the task - we always have been. Let our hearts lead the way. This is the year to make the dream come true.

Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools

- 1) A cleared and shared focus,
- 2) High standards and expectations for all students,
- 3) Effective school leadership,
- 4) High levels of collaboration and communication,
- 5) Curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with state standards,
- 6) Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching,
- 7) Focused professional development,
- 8) Supportive learning environment, and
- 9) High levels of family and community involvement.

Application Self-Knowledge of You

Open House

To help every single child be successful we believe all our support systems must work together towards that goal. A school is like the human body, in that all of its supporting systems must work together in order to be successful. We'd like to give you a quick overview of why our school is successful.

Heart

First – You've got to have heart...

The heart of our school is represented by all of our efforts to create a positive and nurturing place for children to be.

All teachers give students the message that they are valued and make a difference. This includes:

A Team Time Advisory so students get the help they need with both personal and academic concerns.

A model counseling system with support groups in anger management, goal setting, drug/alcohol prevention, peer mediation – to help students be ready to learn.

Students joining STARS – Students Taking a Right Stand – for the best drug/alcohol intervention project.

These activities, energy and focus keep our school's Heart beating strong.

Digestive System

A big part of our job as a professional staff is to sort through all the data, all the latest research – and pick out the very best approaches both individually and collectively to help each child succeed. It is important that we use those things that are practical and common-sense approaches to solid instruction, but it is also important that we continue to learn and use new information that will enhance our program.

The alignment of 6th grade academic, social, and behavioral skills completed will serve as a base line for 7th and 8th grades continuity.

We are also aligning all subject instruction with the State Requirements and the School District Curriculum Frameworks.

We developed team and individual plans for moving students to their individual best performance level.

These and many other specific activities serve as the fundamental nutrients in our school system.

Nervous System

In the body, the nervous system carries messages, signals pain, warns of danger, and communicates a sense of safety and well-being.

Our school system has

- a. Clear communication
- b. Consistent and stated behavioral expectations
- c. All teachers using helpful strategies to help students learn
- d. Absolute, no tolerance of harassment, fighting, drugs, or weapons with severe and immediate consequences
- e. A discipline system which holds students accountable
- f. Students who want to be safe at school and have been taught to take their part of creating a safe school seriously.
- g. There are peer mediators and they have learned how to negotiate conflicts.

So, we're not worried or nervous at our school. Our nerves are calm – because we have a safe, and supportive environment for all of us.

Lungs

In order to breathe free – to feel great – to achieve success – oxygen must get into the blood and run throughout the entire body. A key element of our school is recognition of our cultural diversity and teaching students...

- a. Smart is not what you are born with, but what you become through hard work, consistent effort, and the recognition that each human being was born with inalienable dignity just by being human.
- b. The elements in our school include celebration of diversity, walking our talk - giving a consistent message that we value each person's heritage and making sure that our assemblies and curriculum are consistent in giving that message as well.

We have an oxygen rich system at our school because of consistent repetition of the message – everyone counts – and together we're better.

Skeletal and Muscular Systems

The support for the body comes from the parents and the community who function in a proactive partnership with the school.

- a. An active Site Council with parents, staff, and community representation involves authentic decision making.
- b. An active PTA providing parent volunteers, raising thousands of dollars and support many hundreds of daily activities that take place at school.
- c. An effective communications and outreach system is established.

We stand tall, supported by muscles, and backbone, with heads held high as we march toward our goals of academic achievement.

Brain

The brain - is the control and application of all the working systems of the body. It helps align all those systems to work successfully. At our school, the brain is represented by all of us working together to help every child be successful.

- a. We have Incentive Programs to encourage students to achieve - such as Yea/Nay
- b. Teacher expertise in diagnosing, designing, and implementing an appropriate academic achievement plan.
- c. Students setting goals to help them see the connection between school and life.
- d. Students, teachers, staff, and parents believing that every child will learn and learn well.

At our school, we develop the brains, the heart, and the courage along with all the other systems working collaboratively, to make our students' dreams come true.