Sumner Memorial High School

Advocate Program: Personal Learning Plan

"We need to find ways to engage all students in meeting high expectations, using essential knowledge to create their own futures, guided by caring adults in school and community."

At Sumner Memorial High School we believe that every student can meet the high academic standards necessary to succeed in some form of postsecondary education. We believe that every student is different and learns differently. Therefore, we are working towards developing a learning community in which all learning must be personalized. The personalization of learning involves providing students and parents with clearly stated learning standards, providing learner-centered classroom instruction, making flexible decisions around individual learners, and engaging students in a personal learning process.

In the system to personalize learning at Sumner Memorial High School, classroom teachers and homeroom advocates work in concert with each other. Classroom teachers work diligently to differentiate the learning experience for each student. Sumner teachers ask students to reflect on their learning and provide continuous feedback to promote kids' thinking about how they are learning; teachers assess student learning using a wide variety of assessments. In the PLP process it is the homeroom advocate time that provides the continuity for each student, over four years, with guidance of one caring adult, to set learning goals, modify them, collect evidence, and demonstrate that they are meeting their learning goals. The advocate also assists each student to identify postsecondary education and career goals and the connection between those and what they are learning.

The role of the Sumner homeroom advocate/student relationship is CRITICAL to the PLP by means of guiding and encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning and their own futures. Over four years a successful Personal Learning Plan is one that culminates with the students connecting their aspirations for success to a viable postsecondary plan.

Sumner Memorial High School

Role of the Advocate

Your role as an advocate is critical to the effort to help each Sumner student reach his/her postsecondary education and career goals. It is important to build a relationship with your homeroom students that results in mutual trust and support. Experience shows us that each advocate will bring his/her own personal touch to advocate time, and that is a good thing. What is critical is that you be committed to the belief that, over four years, your guidance and support can make a difference in a child's high school learning experience and postsecondary success.

Some advocates prefer structure; others like to ad lib a bit more. The common link is the very clear expectation that each advocate will make a sincere effort to fulfill the GOALS of the program by completing the required homeroom activities. The Aspirations Team and lead advocates for each grade will provide you with activities and tasks that are designed to help you and your homeroom students strengthen your relationship and make progress toward their personal academic goals and postsecondary plans. Some tasks are highly structured and time sensitive. These will be noted on the Monthly Advocate Report and sometimes by school-wide announcements and/or faculty conversations. It is important to complete these tasks according to real time information provided during the school year. When the Monthly Advocate Report is given to you by your lead advocate, you should review them and take note of the due dates.

Using Progress Reports and through formal and informal conversations with classroom teachers, parents, and students themselves, it is important to make an effort to monitor your homeroom students' academic progress. Once you get to know your students, there will be a few who require more attention to their academic progress than others. A pep talk with the students and a quick “heads up” message to a parent could make a big difference.

In the ongoing guidance of students through the Personal Learning Plan process, there should be close attention paid to the documentation required in the students' portfolio. The portfolio tasks for each grade level, along with the monthly advocate/homeroom tasks, are clearly listed on the Monthly Advocate Report. Students should be encouraged to work on these tasks WHENEVER they have time: stay-at-home days, regular homeroom time, at home, or in study hall. Close to the end of each quarter, you should engage with your students in portfolio assessment and reflection on the Personal Learning Plan progress towards their postsecondary plans.

Special effort should be given to overseeing the collection of student work to be placed in the portfolio each year as evidence of learning. In this work, the CLASSROOM TEACHER plays a critical role. While students should engage in self-assessment of learning and the selection of work that best demonstrates mastery of the standards of the Guiding Principles, the advocate should help collate this documentation in the personal portfolio. The advocate also guides the students in reflecting on their learning relative to their personal and postsecondary education and career GOALS.

As a teacher you have many classroom obligations that occupy most of your time. Yet, your role

as an advocate is extremely important to the mission of our school and the success of our students. So, the bottom line is to do the best you can. Ad lib whenever you have to. Don't go it alone. Seek advice from fellow advocates, colleagues, and your lead advocate. Our experience with this program teaches us that it is the ATTITUDE you bring to your role as advocate that is most important. Be positive and supportive of the process and show your kids you care about them and you will be a great advocate.

In June of the senior year, YOU will hand your homeroom students their diplomas at the graduation ceremony. It is our hope that you and your kids will cherish that experience.