



Northgate School District

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For Immediate Release

Northgate Attends National Association for Middle Level Education Conference

In November, the Northgate School District sent a team of teachers and administrators to the National Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE) Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. The conference offered more than 300 sessions addressing issues vital to middle school educators. The team from Northgate was selected to present a session on how the District's Advisory Program has positively impacted our middle school students over the past year.

The mission of the District's advisory program is to help every child foster a connection with at least one adult advocate during their middle school experience. Pride in students arises from feelings of safety, trust, empathy, and belonging, along with the support of a positive self-image, respect, and connections. The focus of the presentation centered on finding ways to connect with individual students and provide advocacy opportunities for them as they navigate the pivotal transition through the middle grades. Through the Advisory Program, students are "drafted" into groups based on an interest survey completed in 6th grade. Teachers spend a lot of time considering which faculty advisor will best fit the needs of each incoming 7th grader. Once in an advisory cohort, the group becomes somewhat of a family at school. Students and their advisors check in each Monday to discuss weekend happenings and review current events. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the groups work on developing essential social and emotional skills our students need to navigate successful futures. Wednesdays are dedicated to goal setting, peer tutoring, and grade monitoring, and Fridays are full of fun. In addition to all of these important tasks, the middle school team works to improve school culture by embarking on multiple school-wide projects such as service-learning, hallway decorating, mindfulness, spreading positivity, and kindness.

Additionally, the AMLE Conference provided an opportunity for our teachers and administrators to learn new ways to improve the experience for Northgate students. The conference featured several keynote speakers including Baruti Kafele and Jessica Lahey. Baruti Kafele engaged the audience of more than 4,000 middle level educators as he talked about instructional leadership and how to "Walk Your Why" every day. Both captivating and realistic, Mr. Kafele gave advice on how to strive for continuous improvement in our schools with a focus on ensuring that everyone in a leadership position is perceived as someone who can make everyone around him or her better. Mrs. Lahey, author of the book "The Gift of Failure," spoke about the mistakes we make as parents and educators in an effort to help our students succeed. According to Mrs. Lahey, by motivating students using extrinsic rewards and encouraging them to focus on things such as points and grades, we are undermining motivation and long-term learning. While both speakers presented well-researched and essential perspectives to consider, these two sessions are just a sample of critical lessons learned about students in the middle grades. The Northgate team also had the opportunity to learn from expert educators in important areas such as trauma-based teaching and learning, culture building, safety and learning, technology in the classroom, and formative assessment.

The faculty at Northgate understands that a well-rounded approach to education consists of much more than general subjects such as Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic. Teaching students vital soft skills to prepare them for a global society is an important piece of the Northgate curriculum, and the middle level team is proud to have been invited to speak on behalf of the amazing things that are happening every day at Northgate.