



Huntley Community School District 158

Located in McHenry and Kane Counties of northern Illinois, Huntley School District 158's stated mission is: "To be a learning community that will inspire, challenge, and empower ALL students always." To achieve this mission, Huntley takes a state-of-the-art approach to academic instruction, addressing the many styles of learning available to students. With the district's focus on equitable access to education, students are able to discover how they learn best as they prepare for their next steps in life and learning.

Huntley 158 serves approximately 9,000 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. Located in Huntley, western portions of Lake in the Hills and Algonquin, as well as surrounding areas, the district currently employs more than 1,200 staff members. It emphasizes an individualized approach to learning, a principle that is a cornerstone of the district's mission to foster 21st century learners and actively engage members of the community.

From kindergarten on, Huntley 158 students are equipped with relevant tools and a core curriculum that propels them toward the next stage of their educational journey. The district reinforces longitudinal foundational skills at all grade levels, including critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and meta-cognition, ensuring that students understand how they learn best. Choosing from a range of learning modalities, students find success in diverse ways— ensuring that they are co-authors of their own learning process. According to district leaders, these processes mean that students consistently encouraged to ask themselves: (1) *How can I best access, engage, and express my learning? How can I challenge myself to think differently?* (2) *What are my learning goals? How do I prioritize those goals?* (3) *Which tool or resource will support me the best? How can I work with other classmates to help me learn?* (4) *What should my learning experience look like? How can I show what I know to others?*

This commitment to student-centered instruction and learning is evident throughout Huntley 158's K-12 academic programs. For example, in 2019, all K-5 students were offered a new STEM-based special called "Explore." This class is designed to prepare students for future careers in STEM-related fields. The Explore program complements more traditional specials such as art, music, and physical education. It also allows students to dig deeply into key concepts of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in a project-based setting that encourages collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity.

Within the district, a core guiding principle in both elementary and secondary programs is the need for an intentional commitment to educational environments that allow students to thrive and find unique opportunities for success. Such programs also enrich all aspects of learners' mental, emotional, and social well-being. As part of this process, Huntley 158 has sought out focused and results-driven ways to support the whole learner, reinforcing new and innovative learning approaches designed to serve today's students and inspire tomorrow's leaders.

In order to foster lifelong learners at every grade level, Huntley 158 has developed four pathways of learning that “have come to life” within Huntley High School. Each of them seeks to inspire, challenge, and empower ALL students. For example, the district’s “traditional” pathway emphasizes that once students understand how they learn best, they have the chance to pursue specific areas of interest and engage in “curated” coursework. These involve a rigorous core curriculum (including AP and Dual Credit options in partnership with McHenry County College); four high school academies (Fine Arts, Engineering, Global Studies, and Medical); diverse elective options; and a range of career development pathways.

Huntley 158’s second pathway, i.e., Blended Learning, currently involves more than 2,200 students at Huntley High School. This pathway leverages technology to transform the traditional classroom experience into a continuum of learning. Students learn through a personalized combination of online learning and face-to-face instruction. The goal is to foster their sense of efficacy and independence through a differentiated and personalized pace of learning and place of learning based upon their individual learner profile, interests, and goals. The district has received national attention for this program, including being ranked as the # 1 blended learning high school in the United States by Study.com.

Vanguard Vision, the district’s third pathway, offers a unique Competency-Based Education (CBE) program. In 2017, Huntley High School was accepted into the ISBE CBE pilot as one of 10 school districts selected in the United States; the program has continued to grow since then. As the district celebrated its first group of graduates in May 2022, it reinforced its commitment to the principle that students learn best when they are co-designers of their own learning. Students in this program can demonstrate their mastery of standards in a variety of ways, including projects and performance tasks that are aligned with the curriculum but customized to the learner.

Huntley High School has also developed a new and custom-made Online Learning Pathway to meet the needs of students in a constantly changing society. Launched in 2022-23, the program emphasizes student choice and flexibility. Specifically, staff and students receive support, coaching, and collaborative feedback necessary to ensure learner mastery of the myriad technical skills required for 21st century success.

The district also fosters strong relationships with stakeholders, actively engaging the voices of community partners. It also continually engages in meaningful partnerships with local businesses and Huntley area leaders, industry partners throughout both the county and the surrounding Chicago area, and representatives from McHenry County College and area universities. The goal of each of these partnerships is to foster a direct connection between the efforts of stakeholders to improve the community and the success of all students.

Huntley 158 continuously strives to share what it has learned over the course of the journey to help others down the path of operational efficiency and sustainability. The district demonstrates a deep commitment is to the students it serves as well as the community in which they live, including the environment for which they will one day be responsible. According to Amy McCrindle, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Learning and Innovation, “This drives our purpose. The impact of sustainability is one that translates to classrooms, across communities and, eventually, throughout an organization’s culture.”