



Shaler Area School District

Shaler Area School District is a suburban school district bordering the City of Pittsburgh, PA. During the 2022-23 school year, student enrollment is 3,829. Like all AASA Lighthouse Districts, Shaler emphasizes Learners as Co-Authors of their own learning process. It is a member of the Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools. According to Superintendent Sean Aiken: "Our programming and staff mindset are inclusive. We instill in our students the need for selfadvocacy and celebrating differences."

As a result of the district's commitment to reinforcing students as co-authors and collaborators in their own learning, Shaler has implemented a range of initiatives emphasizing the Whole Learner. For example, its Respect for All Campaign (launched in 2020) is a comprehensive celebration of the four communities it serves, committing to practices across all grades and subjects to encourage students to think critically and actively collaborate to "disrupt systems of oppression." As a result, its Response to Racism (RTR) Committee involved students, families, and community to ensure that all members of the learning community feel welcomed and included.

As part of its commitment to student agency and engagement, instruction in Shaler emphasizes innovation and creativity. Its Human-Centered Design process (HCD), for example, encourages learner-centered problem-solving involving input from multiple stakeholder groups. Leadership is transferred to students throughout the K-12 continuum, including active student participation in collaborative projects to influence their community.

Another key component of this Lighthouse District's work to promote student-focused learning involves the creation and sustainability of a culture of kindness and caring. For example, the district's LIGHT Education Initiative was created by a high school teacher and now extends from 4th to 12th grades. This incentive-based educational initiative is designed to inspire, prepare, and empower students to assume leadership roles in Holocaust, genocide, and human rights education, remembrance, and advocacy.

Collaborative, authentic, and cross-disciplinary opportunities abound in the Shaler Area School District. It currently offers a K-12 STEM program involving the integration of the arts with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education. In K-3, students learn the Engineering Design Process and solve real-world problems using coding, circuitry, building, and design. In grades 4-6, students engage in the IKS Titan simulator classroom, allowing students to work as a class to complete complex and authentic tasks. In grades 7-12, students take specific STEM courses, electives such as E-Sports, and join STEM-related clubs. All students take a 9th grade STEM Seminar. Also, high school STEM staff and students design a yearly STEM challenge competition, focusing on teams solving a real-world problem.

Finally, "Reshaping the Learning Environment" is another priority in this Lighthouse District. During 2021-22, Shaler was accepted into the League of Innovative Schools, a national coalition of forward-thinking K-12 districts organized by Digital Promise (a non-profit organization whose mission is to accelerate innovation in education and improve opportunities to learn through technology and

research). By partnering with many local and national foundations, businesses, organizations, and higher education institutions, Shaler Area School District demonstrates its commitment to all students learning to cultivate, design, and navigate successfully in their classrooms, schools, and post-secondary education as well as professional pathways.

District staff members work closely with school-based educators to promote student-centered learning as the forefront of everything they do. Key outcomes include seeing positive changes in all buildings as they work with their Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) teams to develop meaningful interventions, enhance support services, and maximize the impact of their PBIS systems. As a result, the Pennsylvania Secretary of Education (Noe Ortega) recognized the district's high school language students for advocating on behalf of all world language students in the state. As a result, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania launched the Pennsylvania Seal of Biliteracy Program.

Superintendent Aiken emphasizes: "Shaler Area students learn everyday with dedicated teachers and staff who give them the opportunity to use their voices to make a difference for the diverse communities in which they live. Our students work both independently and collaboratively to make impactful choices in their schooling. These choices allow them to explore and learn to better themselves and those around them. As a school district, we recognized that we needed to change our perspectives, our paradigms, and cultivate awareness."