

WYANDOTTE HIGH SCHOOL

Pride Through Excellence. Pride Through Tradition.

To educate, empower, and encourage all learners, that they may create a better tomorrow for themselves and our community.

SCHOOL INFO:

Location: Kansas City, KS

Type: Public

Focus/Network: PREP-KC

BY THE NUMBERS:

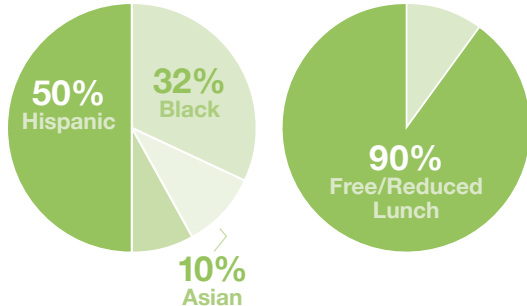
Date Opened: 1928

Grades Served: 9-12

Enrollment: 1460

Teachers: 93

Students Demographics:



At Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Kansas, students are encouraged to be ready—which Principal Mary Stewart defines as confident and competent—for whatever choices they make next in their lives. Wyandotte works with local professionals to provide authentic, real-world educational experiences for its students.

Like other Kansas City high schools, Wyandotte benefits from PREP-KC, an organization dedicated to improving the education of Kansas City’s urban students by providing resources to prepare all students for college and careers. PREP-KC was formed in 2005 to fast-track the improvement of Kansas City schools by requiring a more rigorous math curriculum, providing the opportunity for students to earn college credit while in high school and offering career-readiness experiences to prepare students for future employment opportunities.

In addition to traditional proof of content mastery, Stewart and her staff encourage self-analysis and criticism. For example, a Wyandotte teacher who was working on ACT prep asked her students how they felt about their ACT practice test. She wanted to know what they thought worked and what didn’t in terms of their approach to the exam. She asked them how it felt when a reading passage was boring and what they could do next time to power through and present their best possible selves on the test.

What is Deeper Learning?

Deeper Learning teaches students to master core academic content, think critically, solve complex problems, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, direct their own learning, and develop an academic mindset.

Wyandotte Literacy Student Expectations:

1. **Use literacy strategies** in class on a daily basis.
2. **Reflect** on your use of the strategies and teacher feedback to continually improve.
3. **Ask for help** with literacy when you need it.
4. **Hold yourself accountable** for engagement in developing your own literacy.
5. **Understand and discuss** the importance of literacy in life.

Student Spotlight:



Wyandotte freshmen, deep in thought, during Career Jumping on the first day of school in August 2013.

Susan Wally, CEO of PREP-KC, and Principal Stewart have been bringing professionals from a wide range of careers into the school for several years to speak with students. In September 2012, Wally said they combined those disparate visits into a wall-to-wall career-focused event, called Career Jumping, for ninth graders.

On the first day of school, almost 400 students armed with interview questions about education, personal interests, and daily work responsibilities and rewards met with nearly 100 professionals in a 90-minute speed-dating-style marathon.

Many of the students would be the first in their family to attend college or even graduate from high school. Wally said this experience helped them understand that high school isn't the "end game" and that decisions made there would reverberate through their futures.

The freshmen came away saying, "I learned the importance of staying focused in school and going to college," and "I am now going to pay more attention in math." They were impressed that strangers "came and took time to tell us about their jobs and what it took to get there." And they learned that education is needed in everything to be successful. One student said they made new plans based on that exercise, stating "I will do my best in school so I can achieve my goals in life."

What a wonderful way to begin high school! However, that is not the end of the student-community connection. During the school year, PREP-KC will call upon their database of 223 companies, which have all indicated a willingness to talk to students, organize worksite visits, customize campus visits, and help with FAFSA-completion and college application initiatives.

HOLDING STUDENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Wyandotte is organized into eight small learning communities: Business Academy, Health Careers, Hospitality, Global Engineering and Technology, Performing Arts, Visual Arts and Technologies, Foundations of Applied Skills (carpentry and computer-aided design), and Public Service (teaching and law enforcement). Each has a maximum of 200 students who are focusing their learning projects, class collaborations, and work examples on areas they are inherently interested in pursuing.

Students use these small, family-like communities to develop their academic mindsets and take responsibility for their own learning. Principal Mary Stewart believes strongly in this approach, saying her students "deserve to graduate, ready to make the next choice."

"Taking responsibility for their own learning starts the minute they walk in here," said Stewart. In addition to having access to all their own performance data, they meet weekly with an advisor for a minimum of 90 minutes to talk about what that data means. Those advisors stay with them throughout their tenure at Wyandotte, so they get to know and trust each other well enough to form a strong relationship. Those relationships are important when it comes time for honest conversations that ensure students understand their strengths, where they need help, and how to access the assistance they might need to improve.

Serving a large number of students who have come from refugee camps in such countries as Nepal and Burma, and a growing number of migrant students, Wyandotte staff work to learn more about the needs of their student's families outside of school and partner with social services and other networks to support them. The staff at Wyandotte understands that their role is more than teaching content. In many cases, it is about supporting students and families so that they are emotionally ready to learn. In some cases, students are entering a completely new type of educational system, which means Wyandotte staff must transition students and families to those new learning demands without overlooking the obstacles.

The advisory system, known as the Family Advocate System, is one way that the school provides assistance in those areas while working with families to help them navigate high school with their child and prepare for the next step, whether that is college, trade or vocational school, or work.

Currently Stewart and her staff are working on a literacy priority project designed to ensure their students become innovative, creative, critical thinkers, so their voices are heard by the world. "It is the civil right of every student to be literate," she said, adding that this is especially important for her students because, "the voices of students of poverty are not always heard. They have to be just that more literate, just that more articulate in order to be heard. This is the major focus of everything we do, because we want them to leave here and be able to hold jobs that satisfy their passions and have the life they choose, not one that is forced upon them."



GettingSmart.com
Deeperlearning4all.org

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