

Parkway Northeast Middle School

In the early 1990s Parkway Northeast Middle School (PNMS) made a bold and progressive change in educational instruction. Though it might have appeared a benign event as the “junior high school” became a “middle school for grades six through eight”, the transition was much more than a matter of words. It represented a major philosophical change for PNMS and instruction was completely redefined. “Collaboration” became the hallmark for instruction and for learning. Students began to learn in teams and these teams of students reaped the benefit of focused and coordinated academic collaboration by their instructors. It was a dramatic and bold move within the school, and the benefits of it were both swift and clear.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of this team approach to instruction is that it allows teachers and students to build stronger working alliances. Every grade level is comprised of three instructional teams and three corresponding learning teams. Every team has a Math, a Social Studies, a Science and a Communication Arts component. Teacher teams meet every day. This enables them to coordinate instruction and it helps them to identify and address larger patterns, trends or concerns they may have about an individual student.

Another unique element at PNMS is that every grade level has its own School Counselor and Principal. The Counselor and the Principal follow students throughout their entire middle school career. In this way, they are able to forge stronger relationships with students and thereby provide better support during what can be trying years for many young people.

The academic year is based on the trimester system and students are encouraged to take ownership of their educational careers by assuming an active role in both the creation and evaluation of trimester goals. With a population of 1050 students, enrollment is diverse, as is reflected in the more than 35 national flags displayed in the cafeteria to represent the nation-of-origin for current and former students. The student/teacher ratio is 18:1. More than 80 teachers practice their art at PNMS, bringing an average 15 years of experience to the school.

According to the website, “The mission of Northeast Middle School is to foster a love of learning in its students so they will recognize their work as authentic, significant and worthwhile and who will grow to be effective citizens in an increasingly global and technological society” - a lofty goal, perhaps, but one that is alive and well at Parkway Northeast Middle School.

