

## Fox West Academy of Collaborative Learning – Executive Summary

Fox West Academy of Collaborative Learning (Fox West Academy) is a middle level charter school serving sixty students of the Hortonville Area School District in grades 6-8 (approximately 20 students per grade level). Integrated subject areas, flexible grouping, collaboration with other students, and project based learning are integral components of Fox West Academy. The goal of Fox West Academy is to provide Hortonville area students with a learning option that unites learning in the classroom with experiences in surrounding communities in order to foster meaningful, personalized learning and provide students with opportunities to demonstrate the applications of academic content.

*The mission of Fox West Academy of Collaborative Learning, in partnership with the community, is to provide project-based learning opportunities that strengthen each individual learner's unique learning styles, intelligences, and interests.*

The following elements are central to the vision and mission of Fox West Academy of Collaborative Learning:

- ✓ Integrated curriculum and project based learning
- ✓ Gradual shift of responsibility from teacher-directed to student-selected projects and application of concepts
- ✓ Goal setting and project management skills
- ✓ Differentiation and individualized learning (account for activity and map for outcome)
- ✓ Student awareness of individual learning strengths
- ✓ Strong relationships and community involvement
- ✓ Problem-solving skill development and collaborative learning
- ✓ Development of communication, interpersonal, and leadership skills
- ✓ Partnerships with area community members, businesses, and service organizations
- ✓ Effective utilization of a variety of technologies for communication and use as learning resources

The structure of Fox West Academy is somewhat unique in that it includes elements of teacher led instruction integrated with project based and collaborative learning in all core content areas. Middle school students, especially those in the first year of learning at Fox West Academy, will require significantly more guidance and will likely respond more successfully to a structured project framework outlined by the instructors; whereas, as students experience subsequent years at Fox West Academy, they will gradually take on more and more responsibility for developing the projects and selecting the avenues to apply content and demonstrate comprehension of concepts, drawing benefit from instructors' guidance. These experiences in developing ideas, setting and meeting goals and deadlines, and eventually demonstrating understanding through final project presentations will provide meaningful learning opportunities and require students to develop project management skills.

Teachers will serve multiple roles at Fox West Academy as instructors, learning facilitators, and mentors for students over the course of a student's three years. This ongoing connection provides an unprecedented opportunity for members of the teaching staff to get to know each student as an individual learner, help identify learning strengths, and develop personal skills that will translate into future success.

Community involvement and meaningful interaction will be encouraged both inside and outside the walls of Fox West Academy. Long-term relationships between students and instructors, as well as opportunities for collaboration with other students and community members will foster a sense of belonging, encourage students to stretch their learning potential, and require effective communication of ideas. Partnerships with area businesses and service organizations will serve two vital functions: 1) Fox West Academy seeks to utilize the currently untapped opportunities that the community can provide to our students as learning resources, supplemental experiences, and exposure to career options that they may otherwise be unaware of. 2) Students will learn to apply concepts and skills developed in school in ways that benefit the community through service projects.

Finally, incorporation and utilization of technology as a resource and means for communicating ideas will enhance all areas of learning. Developing technological fluency will allow students not only to use *specific* programs or hardware, but more importantly promote a critical approach to the benefits and limitations of technology as a medium. Students will develop skills that allow them to evaluate critically the uses of technology; this critical engagement will promote understanding and effective use of future technologies.

Fox West Academy of Collaborative Learning will create a unique learning environment as an option for Hortonville area middle school students. Its emphasis on community involvement, collaboration with others, formation of personal relationships, focus on the individual learner, and project based approach to learning will provide truly meaningful learning experiences that build life-long learning skills.