

# BEYOND THE STRIPES



September 2017

Welcome to the first edition of *Beyond the Stripes*, a quarterly e-newsletter produced by the North Allegheny School District. *Beyond the Stripes* will highlight District initiatives and feature useful information to help NA Tiger families to succeed beyond the classroom.

## Measuring Success Framework

The "success" of a school district is often measured through test scores, graduation rates, rankings, and awards. However, North Allegheny places equal emphasis on things like student engagement, career and college readiness, digital citizenship, and student and staff wellness.

After a team of District representatives researched this topic and collected feedback from stakeholders over the course of the 2016-17 school year, the District developed the Measuring Success Framework, which will allow NA to more holistically measure success beyond the typical metrics.

Beginning this school year, the Framework will serve as an important communication tool regarding what is measured and why. [Check out the interactive graphic on North Allegheny's website here.](#) This graphic will continue to evolve as the school year progresses.



## Tackling Student Stress

During the 2016-17 school year, the District spent a considerable amount of time unpacking how to best meet the social and emotional needs of students, many of whom feel tremendous amounts of pressure and stress stemming from a variety of factors. This process involved focus group meeting with students, families, and staff members. This year the District is taking that feedback and moving down two parallel paths.

The **first path** is identifying systemic factors that play a role, such as grade weighting, school start times, and homework, and making specific recommendations regarding potential changes.

The District first plans to tackle **school start times** and **grade weighing** by gathering feedback from the NA community and make potential recommendations by the end of January 2018.

### **School start times**

[Research shows that high school students benefit in many ways from later start times.](#) The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Medical Association (AMA), and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend an 8:30 a.m. school start time for adolescents. Currently, the NASD school day begins at 7:25 a.m. (high school), 8:10 a.m. (middle school), and 9 a.m. (elementary school) for students.

The consequences of insufficient sleep include depression, suicide, substance abuse, increased risk-taking behaviors, weight gain/obesity, sports injuries, lower grades, and more. The District will examine possible adjustments to school start times, including:

- pushing all start times back
- flipping the start times for high school and elementary students
- pushing start times back and condense from three to two bus runs (one run for elementary, one run for middle and high school)

### **Grade weighing**

Honors and AP level high school courses are currently weighted which boosts a student's GPA. While trying to get the highest GPA possible, many students focus only on courses that are weighted, and often don't select courses that may suit their future needs more appropriately. This encourages grade and course acceleration, and fosters the myth that students need to take as many of these courses as possible to get into college. The reality? *Nearly all colleges and universities remove the grade weights when students apply.* Possible recommendations that the District may explore in terms of weighted grades include:

- eliminating weighted grades completely
- capping the number of courses a student can receive weighted grades for each year
- weighing AP and Honors courses the same

These recommendations will not be decided by District leadership and the School Board alone... we need your help! Over the next few months, the District will be soliciting feedback from parents, staff members, stakeholder groups, and the public. Two public meetings will be held for parents and guardians on November 9 at Marshall Middle School and November 13 at Carson Middle School. Both meetings will begin at 7 p.m. Save these dates and keep an eye out for more information on how you can learn more.

The **second path** centers on teaching strategies to staff members and students around the concept of mindfulness. These practices focus on developing attention skills, resiliency and social emotional outcomes and ultimately stress reduction. The District recognizes the stress students feel and thus has a renewed focus on creating positive, happy, and healthy learning environments and experiences for everyone.



### **Community Connections**

**Tuesday, October 24, 7-8:30 p.m. @ CMS**

Join Ms. Joni Sturgill of Healthy Body Peaceful Soul for a discussion on the mindfulness training she's implementing across the District at NA. Joni will also offer stress reduction tools for parents to use themselves to take home and use with their children. Learn about the effects of stress on the body and mind, along with the science and benefits of mindfulness. She will also lead simple exercises designed to focus the mind, and regulate mood.

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### **FOCUS 2020 News**

We are excited to see year three of FOCUS 2020 get underway. The District expanded the iPad program to include grades 4-8, and continued the laptop program

at the high school in grades 9-12. Our teachers are energized by the new addition of the iPad as a tool to transform their daily lessons, and provide students opportunities for collaboration, creativity, critical thinking and communication.

Be sure to follow #NASDLearns on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#) to see how FOCUS 2020 is playing a role in transforming learning in our classrooms.

**Student Laptop Cameras:** Beginning later this Fall, the District is planning to expand the functionality of student one-to-one laptops in grades 9 through 12 by enabling students to choose to use the integrated webcam. Opening up the webcams will create more opportunities for collaboration, allow students to create multimedia projects, and much more. By District School Board Policy, no employee may access the PC's webcam at any time, and the District does not install any software to enable such monitoring.



**Last Chance for Renewals:** Families of students in grades 4-12 who wish to continue to participate in the District device protection program at One2OneRisk.com have until September 29th to renew their existing coverage for \$35. Any unpaid claims must be paid prior to renewing the insurance for the current school year. After September 29th, all families that do not respond will be set to a declined status, and there will be no opportunity to reset those accounts. Families are responsible for accidental damage to a device at the full cost of repair. A cracked iPad screen can cost up to \$190 to repair, while a common laptop screen repair costs up to \$150 depending on the damaged parts.



Educating parents of middle and high school students on best practices for digital citizenship.

### Digital Boot Camp for Parents

North Allegheny School District has partnered with the Northland Public Library, CCAC- North, and the North Hills School District to once again offer a Digital Boot Camp for Parents. The six sessions aim to educate parents of middle and high school students on best practices for digital citizenship.

[Click here for more information](#)



## KIDSBURGH

### Kidsburgh.org

Kidsburgh is a go-to resource about the people and ideas making Pittsburgh a better place for kids. You'll find hundreds of feature and news stories about everything from creative learning and health, to advocacy on a wide range of issues, to guides about fun things to do. [Click here to check out this free resource.](#)

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