



Winter Newsletter (2016-17)

Important Dates to Remember -

http://www.relevantacademy.org/downloads/news/2016-17_calendar_20160822_142854_1.pdf

Staff Members -

- Program Director **Jennifer Varney**
- Office Manager **April Delecki**
- Team Leader **Loretta Williams**
- Learning Coach **Maggie Jada** (Math)
- Learning Coach **Austin Wegener** (English LA)
- Learning Coach **Lauren Zoumbaris** (Social Studies)
- Learning Coach **Brian Barden** (Math)
- Reading Specialist **Christine Krupka**
- Learning Coach **Andrew Fergus**(Science)
- After Hours Only Learning Coach **Elisabeth Welfare** (Art)
- Special Education Consultant **Pat Moffitt**
- After Hours Only Learning Coach **Khati Brazee** (Health/PE)

Winter Weather

Please note that with the uncertain winter weather upon us, we have several methods in communicating delays and cancellations. Wilx-Channel 10, WLNS-Channel 6 and Fox 47 will be notified with the determination once it has been made. Along with these options, we will also post on our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Testing Updates 2016-2017 School year
Lauren Zoumbaris - Social Studies Learning Coach/Testing Coordinator

Juniors at Relevant Academy took the PSAT/NMSQT in October. Scores have become available and students will be meeting with their mentor teachers to go over their scores and next steps.

To further help our students prepare for the SAT students will be linking their PSAT scores to Khan Academy test prep. Khan Academy is a free, online resource that offers video tutorials on a wide variety of subjects, including SAT prep. Khan Academy will use your student's' PSAT scores to give you personalized study recommendations for the SAT. If students don't have PSAT scores to upload, then they can still get your personalized study recommendations by taking diagnostic quizzes. Find out more at www.khanacademy.org/SAT.

Spring 2017 Testing will include the SAT, WorkKeys, and MSTEP to begin the week of April 10th, 2017.

Book Reviews
Chris Krupka, Reading Paraprofessional

Read any good books lately? Here are two that I can recommend.

***The Residence: Inside the Private World of the White House* By: Kate Andersen Brower**

Kate Andersen Brower is a journalist and reporter who decided to investigate the lives of the people who work in the White House. She interviewed employees of the residence; the ushers, butlers, housekeepers and chefs who worked for various administrations. From their stories, she put together events that went on in the past administrations and gave a view of what it is like to live in the White House. She shared stories related to the assassination of JFK, the temperament and quirks of different administrations, and how 9-11 played out for those who lived and worked in the White House. The book shares a feel for what it is like to work in the White House, how the transition to a new administration is executed and what is expected of the staff. After reading, you gain a better understanding of what life is like day to day in the White House and get a glimpse into the life of some of the world's most powerful people.

***The Rosie Project* By: Graeme Simsion**

Don Tillman is a socially awkward genetics professor. When he decides it is time to get married, he approaches it the same way he approaches his work, with research. He designs a 16 page survey to scan for the perfect mate. Rosie in no way passes the survey, but Don is intrigued by her quest to find her biological father. He continues to help her locate her father and zany, crazy, fun things happen. This is a laugh out loud book that will put a smile on your face.

The Importance of College

Shelbe Klebs, College Adviser

College is an investment. It is an investment in the person who attends and his or her future. Going to college - whether it is a vocational school, a community college, or a four-year university - can unlock a number of opportunities and change a person's life for the better.

Higher education allows students to gain new knowledge and skills that will be beneficial when they begin to look for jobs. It will make them more desirable as an employee and will help them make more money over the course of their life. A college education can also help students become more independent. They will have much more control over class schedules and what to study as well as what extracurriculars they want to pursue. College helps students become more responsible and independent adults.

As I have previously stated, college really is an investment. College in all of its forms is a place where students can encounter new ideas and have new experiences. It is also a place where students can develop new skills and discover new passions. They have the ability to explore what exactly they want to do and a college degree will set them up for long term success. It is important that every student research their options so that they have a concrete plan for what they will do after high school. Going to each school's website and looking into the degree options is a great way to start the process. Researching college options early on will help students be successful when they graduate from high school.

Monthly Activities

By Maggie Jada, Math Learning Coach

Did you know that we offer various school based activities? Each teacher offers a content related activity every month. Each month we post a sign up sheet and description of upcoming activities in the hallway. Students should definitely take advantage of the opportunity to have fun while learning something new! It is also a great way for students to build relationships with fellow classmates. They must sign up in advance to be included in the activity and have achieved their weekly percent the previous week. Some past activities, include Bottle Rockets, Toothpick Geometry, Math Bingo and Mystery Skyping. I am looking forward in seeing some new faces in all the upcoming activities.

The Importance of Reading

By Austin Wegener, English Learning Coach

“I don’t like reading,” “I can’t remember the last time I read a book,” are sentiments commonly expressed by teens when asked about reading. There are many out there who don’t see the reason for reading. If someone can be just as entertained by a movie as a book, why bother encouraging your kids to read?

Research has proven that there are significant benefits to be gained from reading. For starters, reading has been shown to help people become better writers and are able to express themselves more easily. People who read for pleasure consistently outperform those who don’t on reading tests. Reading has even been shown to lead to people becoming more engaged in society through voting and volunteering.

A person doesn’t need to read Shakespeare or classics like *Crime and Punishment* to feel the benefits of reading. A person simply needs to read. Oftentimes, however, encouraging kids to read is a tough task and finding a book even tougher. If your kid likes history, there are many historical fiction novels out there that may grasp their attention. If they like Call of Duty, they may actually find some enjoyment in Ambrose Bierce or Tom Clancy novels. If they were fans of a movie or movie series based off of a book, that book may be right up their alley.

Help your kid find books they like. Take it from someone who used to brag about how few books they’d read and felt they would never find a book they wanted to read. That book for you is out there. You just have to find it.

Relevant Academy staff attend conference

By Andrew Fergus, Science Learning Coach

In December, three Relevant Academy learning coaches; Brian Barden, Andrew Fergus, and Austin Wegener; attended the Wired Differently conference, a conference focused on “Acting In” and “Acting Out” disorders. The conference expanded beyond traditional psychological and behavioral disorders, discussing traits seen throughout much of teenagehood.

The presenter, Mike Paget, talked about several interesting things. He explained that teachers should treat all students with dignity, even in moments where students don’t. He stated that improving certain behaviors in a student takes constant reminders over a long span of time. He discussed how educators should accept all ways students prefer to communicate with them, such as speaking in person or sending an email. And he explained the importance of having more positive conversation with students than negative to make them feel welcome or appreciated.

There was much more conveyed over the day-long conference, mainly focusing on strategies educators can use to approach students who “act in” or “act out.” Learning coaches at Relevant Academy attend such seminars or conferences a few times a year to expand their professional

horizons. If you are at all curious about more of what we learn, feel free to contact our learning coaches.

Fuel up to Play 60

By Jessica Walters, Paraprofessional

Relevant Academy is continuing our participation in the Fuel Up to Play 60 program developed by the National Dairy Council and the NFL. The program promotes nutrition and physical activity by providing learning opportunities and offering physical activity within the school day. Students are encouraged to share what they learn and adapt with their family and friends to help set a positive example of wellness in our community.

This Fall, Relevant Academy submitted a grant application to Fuel up to Play 60 and was approved to purchase paint and supplies to spruce up our cafeteria. Students will have the opportunity to complete a survey regarding color and design for the walls. This spring we will create our new look to keep students excited about making new and healthy food choices. In addition, students will be participating in a field day on May 26th in conjunction with promotion for “Don’t Fryday” from the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention.

Creating the appropriate mindset for Math students

By Brian Barden, Math Learning Coach

In my years of teaching Math, I have found that possibly the one most important factors in a student’s success is the mindset they have for Math. If you look up mindset in the dictionary, it will be formally defined as “The established set of attitudes held by someone”. How this transfers over to math is simple. When we have students who have convinced themselves by the third grade that they “suck at math”, the ability to be successful at it is almost an impossible hill to climb. So the remaining question is how do we help our students develop a positive mindset for math? Here are four things that we all can do help our students succeed.

1. Reinforce what our students CAN do.

Everyone knows some math, which points to the fact that they learned it somewhere. We can use that to build some confidence within our students that they have the ability to learn. Many students tend to fear (and ultimately avoid) the unknown, which leads them to resist even trying to learn new concepts. If they have the mindset that they are able to “get” a new concept, they will be more willing to try.

2. Create realistic expectations.

Students often approach a new concept as if they should be masters of it the very first time they see it, and become frustrated if they struggle even just a little bit. We have to help students understand that not knowing something they have not learned is normal, and that learning it is going to be a process. They will need to see it, they may need to question it, they might struggle with it initially,

they must practice it...all with intentions of then and only then saying “they know it”. Having the mindset that not knowing at first and having to work to learn it makes math less intimidating in general.

3. Build the foundations

Just like a house, the best math learning is built upon a strong foundation. A mastery of the foundations of math (counting, place value awareness, operations) allows a student to focus on understanding deeper math concepts without using up valuable energy trying to do simple operations instead. Even in high school, students can always benefit from taking just a few minutes a day to practice the foundational skills. There are several practice resources that exist (many online and free) to facilitate practicing these skills. Even for students who have a solid mastery of the foundational skills, it doesn't hurt to practice as a way of maintaining. Having the mindset that they have a solid foundation makes exploring deeper concepts a less daunting task.

4. Connect math to the real world

The most often asked question in Math is “where am I ever going to use this in the real world”. The truth is, math is literally everywhere. From creating a budget to planning a wedding or buying a car or house, we are constantly using math in some way. Any time we use math for something, we also have the opportunity to point it out as something that was covered in a math class at some point in time. We also cannot look past the problem solving skills we are using when we do math that transfer over to problem solving in other facets of life. Having the mindset that math has real life applications makes it more relevant to them.