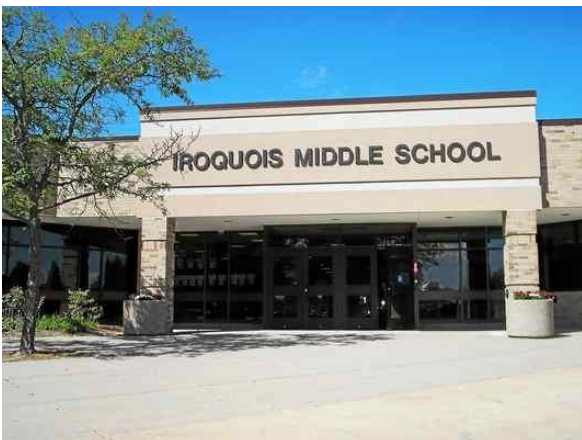


Chippewa Valley preps to academically restructure middle schools



Chippewa Valley Schools Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Ed Skiba recently outlined some upcoming changes to Chippewa Valley Schools middle school academics. Photo courtesy of CHIPPEWA VALLEY SCHOOLS

By Nicole Tuttle , For The Macomb Daily
05/13/16



In the 2017-18 school year, Chippewa Valley Schools middle schools such as Iroquois Middle School in Macomb Township will offer new and updated exploratory classes for students. Nicole Tuttle — For the Macomb Daily

An eighth grade capstone project, global challenges and project based-learning will be among the new challenges Chippewa Valley Schools district middle school students face in the 2017-18 school year.

On April 18, Chippewa Valley Schools Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Ed Skiba brought a presentation regarding middle school academic restructuring before the Chippewa Valley Board of Education. He was assisted by principals from the district's middle schools.

“The biggest restructuring is in exploratory classes. We’ll have half a day of core area subjects, ELA, math, social studies and science, and the other half of the day exploratory classes. There are global challenge classes, five total. Those are part of the exploratory classes...” Skiba said on April 25. Additions at the core classes level will include English 9 and Spanish 1, both of which are high school level courses that eighth graders can

earn high school credit for, according to Skiba. Students will also have an advisory period, in which they will be able to connect with a teacher or counselor, Skiba said.

“Besides the global challenge courses, we’ll add to the mix robotics and coding, basically the beginning of computer programming,” Skiba said.

Global challenge courses will have several concepts embedded in them, such as democratization and peace and conflict. The challenges are based upon 15 challenges recognized in the United Nation Millennium Report. Students can begin taking their first global challenge course as an exploratory class in the sixth grade year, according to Skiba. Seventh and eighth grade students can take two global challenge classes in their seventh and eighth grade years, he added.

“Not all students get both classes because of the number of kids, but every year they’ll have at least one global challenge class,” Skiba said.

Although district middle schools do offer some classes similar to the anticipated changes, the offerings will become universal in these schools in the future. The district is in the process of designing the new courses and will prepare teachers next year to implement them in the 2017-18 school year, according to Skiba.

“Teachers are working on developing sample lessons right now...” Skiba said.

Changes were prompted in response to the district’s strategic plan and the AdvancED Report, according to the PowerPoint portion of the presentation. Strategic planning assisted the district in a plan it had been developing for the middle school level including real-world relevancy, students working together in cooperative groups, creativity, and problem solving.

“One of the issues that came up is that they wanted a more relevant curriculum,” Skiba said.

Not only will middle school students learn to work in a more collaborative manner, they will also learn to do more presentations orally and develop a capstone project in their eighth grade year, according to Skiba.

The eighth grade capstone project will include a presentation based on one of several global challenges, and will be done before a group of adult community members.

“By the time they leave, they can work on a project, do research, they’ll research some area that is relevant, and then take a stand on the issue and present it,” Skiba said.

Enhancements will also be made to several different academic support classes, according to Skiba. Other considerations for middle school students include field trips to colleges, job fair or career day activities in conjunction with the high schools, and additional competitions or learning activities, according to the PowerPoint presentation.