Somers Middle School WIN Program Meets Students Where They Need It

Enrichment or intervention? Sixth and seventh grade students at Somers Middle School can opt for what they need each week during a designated WIN period and the choices abound. It might be bridge building, writing challenges, open art studio, collaboration space, relaxation, library, extra help in math or science. Maybe it’s just a fun session of karaoke.

WIN, an acronym for What I Need, is a new program that gives middle school students choice in how they spend a 45-minute period each day. WIN was implemented at the start of the school year with class offerings that change each week and vary by grade. The enrichment program has been embraced by students who are enjoying the freedom to choose new classes or extra help each week and by teachers who are seeing how students can take charge of their own learning opportunities.

“Students self-select what they need each week,” said assistant principal Jen Mangone. “Teachers are doing a great job giving students a variety of different experiences to try. As for the intervention, extra help is based on student initiative and that is a really positive thing.”

A recent session of bridge building had sixth grade students using popsicle sticks and bright colored straws to create bridges. The lesson included many STEAM elements as students explored truss bridges, bridge spans, the usefulness of triangles in bridge design, and the need for flexibility. To see if the design was successful, students used large batteries placed on the span to see how much weight the bridge could support.

Boys bridge failing test of strengthEmil Klein, Albion Selimaj, and Liam Colderbanks worked together to build a sturdy drawbridge that could sustain several batteries. They said they were happy to take the bridge building course in WIN and the trial and error adding and removing the straws for flexibility was interesting.

Alex Donnelly said he was inspired to take the class because of another recent STEM related offering. “I took the egg drop design class and wanted to try bridge building,” he said.

The WIN period also is a place to join with other students outside of class. “I like being able to work together with kids I don’t normally get to work with,” said Sophia Klugherz in a recent Thanksgiving-themed ELA escape challenge that had students working in small teams to use their knowledge of ELA topics.
ELA teacher Christina Sweeney said students can opt for different academic interventions, quiet time, library sessions, or extra help during their WIN periods. “It can be very helpful for some students who need a space to read or catch up on missed work,” Sweeney said.

“Math WIN is helpful because if you don't understand a concept, it gets you caught up,” said seventh grader Bekim Sinanaj. He added that WIN is helpful to make study guides before tests. “The ELA WIN helps me catch up on reading and make up missing work.”

This month, WIN options will include a Book Club, Gift Writing, Inquiry Science, Mindfulness Tools, Mock Trial, Open Studio Art, and Karaoke. Additionally, school counselors are offering "About Me" sessions in both sixth and seventh grade.

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