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Fitzgerald High School to Launch 9th Grade Academy this Fall

9th Grade Academy boosts student achievement, builds stronger relationships

WARREN, Mich. — **Fitzgerald High School** will be launching a 9th Grade Academy this fall to boost student achievement, keep students on track and help them build stronger relationships with staff. The 9th Grade Academy will also increase students' participation and attendance.

“Freshmen tend to struggle during the transition to high school, and this innovative 9th Grade Academy will help students achieve greater academic success, increase their participation and attendance in class, and strengthen positive relationships with staff,” said **Kim Cerrini**, the principal of Fitzgerald High School. “By focusing our efforts on 9th graders, we give them a solid foundation for the rest of their high school education.”

About 130 of the high school's 240 freshmen will be part of the 9th Grade Academy for the first year; in its second year, it will expand to include all 9th graders. Students in the academy will be taught by the same team of teachers and share the same counselor and transition coordinator. As part of the academy, students will also participate in a teen leadership curriculum.

The team of teachers will incorporate cross-curricular conversations into their classes so that students may build on their knowledge and make stronger connections with the subjects they're learning. A counselor that is dedicated solely to 9th graders will be better-equipped to follow up with parents about their student's attendance. The counselor will meet weekly with 9th grade teachers to discuss student needs.

“Students who struggle in the beginning of high school can have difficulty catching up, so the 9th Grade Academy is just one of the ways we take a proactive approach by offering extra support to students during their high school transition,” said **Barbara VanSweden**, superintendent of Fitzgerald Public Schools. “We want students to feel that they're a part of the ‘Fitzgerald Family’ and feel empowered to come to their teachers and staff with any problems they may be struggling with.”

The team of teachers and staff participated in trainings this spring and summer to learn about classroom management and relationship-building techniques that would assist them in developing positive classroom cultures.

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