



Quest Elementary School

Education begins with the curiosity of the learner.

Quest Annual Report for the 2023 - 2024 School Year

Quest Elementary School offers a dynamic, hands-on, project-based learning environment for students in grades 3-5 in the Ripon Area School District. Quest students are learners who thrive in collaborative, interdisciplinary learning environments and are afforded an opportunity to delve into the exciting world of interactive, inquiry-based project learning. Their learning is enhanced through designing projects that explore personal, real-life issues where students collaboratively share with peers and teacher/facilitators. Community showcase events provide a forum for project presentations. Autonomous charter school governance attends to the daily operations of Quest Elementary School. Parents and community members, along with educators, utilize democratic decision making to guide the Quest Governance Council as it leads the school in its mission to benefit students, parents and the community.

Quest Mission

The Quest mission statement reinforces this belief: Quest Elementary School provides a rigorous and challenging interdisciplinary, project-based curriculum grounded in 21st century skills leading to a collaborative environment for personalized learning and group engagement. “Education begins with the curiosity of the learner” (Dewey). This statement represents the heart and soul of Quest Elementary School. The vision of Quest, that all children become active, engaged learners, is grounded in the methodology of project-based learning and the pedagogy of a rigorous, technologically enhanced curriculum. The vision of Quest Elementary School incorporates a wide array of characteristics centered in a learning community grounded in 21st century Skills. The integrated inquiry based pedagogy of Quest offers students and families high-quality educational choices.

Professional Development

Teachers in Quest engage in ongoing professional development to improve school instruction and meet the needs of all students through a variety of teaching methodologies. Student-initiated projects driven by collaborative learning teams and based in a standards-driven curriculum are central to the Quest vision. Students who are connected to the community through real-world issues and mentors, and engaged as young citizens, are more likely to remain engaged in their education. Quest strives through community showcases and a community-led Governance Council to produce a community-oriented culture of academic and personal learning.

This summer, Quest teachers attended and engaged in a school wide training of Responsive Classroom. The purpose of this training is to create a safe, joyful, and engaging school environment and community. By incorporating the practices and principles of Responsive Classroom, it allows students to be more successful in and out of the school by understanding and learning social and emotional competencies - cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy and self-control. It also supports academic competencies like academic mindset, perseverance, learning strategies and appropriate academic

behaviors.

Quest teachers meet weekly to collaborate and implement learning initiatives. Teacher-led professional growth activities are incorporated into these weekly meetings, as well as discussing the effective management of Quest's project-based learning goals. Quest staff also used these meetings to help facilitate the implementation of curriculum in reading, math, language arts, science, CQI, and district-wide mental health initiatives.

Highlights of the 2023-2024 School Year

All Quest classrooms began the year with a study of the Habits of Mind. These habits have been identified through extensive research as a skill set of highly successful people. Quest staff identified nine "habits" to be the focus for Quest: perseverance, managing impulsivity, metacognition, striving for accuracy, thinking and communicating with clarity and precision, taking responsible risks, listening with empathy and understanding, questioning and posing problems and creating, imagining and innovating.

For Fall Project Showcase, the third grade students displayed the habits of minds through vision boards that included affirmation statements. Along with the vision boards, students created a reflection video that demonstrated each group acting out a specific habit of mind. For the Winter Project Showcase, students held formal presentations for their Tiger Rescue project. The Tiger Rescue project showed how the students could use engineering skills to create a machine that would help save the tiger from the mote. In order to be successful, students needed to follow specific criteria, which included using at least two simple machines to create one compound machine and being able to use the Vex Kit pieces to assemble the machine. With this project, students also wrote user manuals that included warnings, step by step instructions for assembling the machine, instructions for lowering and raising the cage and more. Lastly, for Spring Showcase Night, the third graders used their social studies curriculum to create projects related to "trailblazers", people who have positively changed history. As part of their science curriculum they also displayed the house they built that was suited for a specific climate.

For our Fall Project Showcase, 4th Grade students took on the role of a naturalist and wrote a narrative nonfiction text about an octopus. They also designed a plant with structures that enable it to survive in a specific environment. They wrote a descriptive nonfiction paragraph to describe their plants. Students collaborated with a partner to design and build a model prosthesis to help an animal with a missing body part and created an electronic presentation to explain their prosthetic and also included an active nonfiction writing to accompany their descriptions. Our Winter Showcase, 4th grade students studied the History of Wisconsin using our social studies curriculum, InquireED. In this Inquiry, students learned about the first peoples to live in their state and region, and they investigated major events at the root of their state's history. During the Spring, 4th grade students each had an integral role in the play, Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory. From memorizing, to acting and being comfortable in front of an audience, the students were able to successfully put on an amazing performance for families and community members. Mrs. Ernst did a fabulous job leading our 4th graders. We also welcomed families for our annual Spring cookout. Mrs. Muenchow also led the students through a whole school song before the families were able to view and interact with their child's projects.

5th grade students showcased their habits of mind projects for our Fall Project Showcase. They collaborated in groups to create games and activities for their given habit as a way to teach others about that habit. They also showcased their narrative and informational writing pieces they had been working

on. For our Winter Showcase, 5th grade students were able to show off a variety of projects: robotics toy commercials and final robots, a pamphlet with information about a disease they researched during our “Infection Detection” unit, and both memoirs and opinion writing pieces. The toy commercials were the first step in our robotics unit where students had to design a unique toy with a partner and create a commercial trying to sell it. That leads into collaborating as a group of four to build a working robot that will move around some obstacles. Our Spring Showcase also had a variety of projects to share: science fair projects, poetry booklets, a brochure to persuade others to join their colony, and a volume zoo project. For volume zoo, students chose an animal to build out of boxes. They measured and calculated the volume of each box before putting them together to create their animal.

During the spring showcase, we were excited to join Murray Park families at our Annual Spring Cook-out and Picnic. Many families enjoyed sharing a meal together while viewing their children’s projects. In our greenhouse, Quest grew over 40 different varieties of plants which allowed us to hold our Annual Spring Plant Sale.

Community Outreach

At the end of the 2022-2023 school year, Quest students planted squash in our outdoor garden. This squash was donated to area food pantries in the Fall. At the end of the 2023-2024 school year, Quest students planted many different varieties of vegetables in our outdoor garden. The garden was available for families to come and pick vegetables they would like to take home throughout the summer. Many families took advantage of this opportunity to bring home fresh vegetables for their families.

Beyond Brick and Mortar

Throughout the year Quest grade levels reached out locally, nationally, and globally to connect with individuals, professionals and classrooms to learn, grow, and share. Various digital platforms were used to go beyond the classroom walls for information to assist and promote connections with experts for student projects.