Lance 8<sup>th</sup> Graders are College-Bound

Lance Middle School will be participating in our annual College Challenge again this year. This program was started by Ron Waynes, a counselor in the KUSD district at another middle school in Kenosha, and introduced to Lance Middle School five years ago.

The goal of the College Challenge is to help students understand what options are available to them after high school. Many people have asked why the program is for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. We believe that 8<sup>th</sup> grade students heading into high school need to know that EVERY class counts (even those freshman classes!), and they must earn the credit to move onto the next level of classes. Also, knowing what is required for incoming freshmen in tech schools, public universities, and private colleges is critical.

We also believe in raising student awareness on what career opportunities are out there for them. This way they have something to strive towards. To complete the College Challenge students must write a narrative essay based on a real college application prompt (done in English class); investigate a school of higher education and answer scavenger hunt questions related to the school they choose; complete two brag sheets that highlight their accomplishments in academics, extracurricular activities, volunteer/work experience; and career goals; request two letters of recommendation from two adults; and lastly, students complete a practice college application form.

Carthage College is a consistent partner of the College Challenge and has supported this program for many years. Greg Huss does a wonderful presentation for the students about all of the opportunities available at Carthage, followed by a college student-led tour of the campus. Students have the opportunity to ask questions to the tour guides about their majors, dorm living, travel programs, and life at Carthage!

UW Madison is also a big supporter, creating college level experiments including the chance to work in a real lab with dedicated scientists, interact with the Animal Research faculty, observe how dairy milk is used to produce many products, visit the Physics museum for hands on activities, discover the life of a college student during the campus tour, and run through the tunnel onto the field at Camp Randall Stadium.

I have permission from a former student to share his College Challenge story, which started when I was on campus with an 8th grade group from Lance Middle School in 2015. It was pouring rain. There were many students on campus, as it was finals time. I was bringing up the rear of the group and there was a UW student walking next to me, but in the rain I couldn’t see his face. He said, "Excuse me. Is this an 8th grade group visiting?" I said, "Yes, it is. We are on our
college challenge trip." He asked, "Are you from Kenosha?" I thought to myself, this voice sounds so familiar. I turned to look at the student. At the same time he asked." Mrs. Kalowski? Is it you?" I knew right away. "Bryan??" This was a student of mine from 2009-2010 when I was teaching at Mahone Middle School (also in Kenosha) who I took on our college challenge tour of UW Madison. As I remember, he wasn't a very motivated student. He was kind and very sweet but not academically assertive. So at this point of meeting him on campus I said, "Bryan Suzan? What are you doing here??" He began to tell me that the college challenge visit had impacted him so much that when a letter came to his home describing the Pre-College Enrichment Opportunity Program for Learning Excellence at UW Madison, he begged his parents to go. Thankfully they agreed and he attended this program every summer throughout high school. He eventually got a scholarship for Computer Science and is currently in his junior year at UW Madison. I treat him to lunch or dinner every time I'm in Madison now, and I've had him speak to my students about how awesome it is to go to college.

As teachers we don't often know what impact we have on our students, so it meant the world to me. This year we are planning a trip to UW Madison on November 8th. We will also visit Carthage College and both Gateway Campuses this school year. Transportation is very expensive and we are accepting donations to help offset this cost. Donations can be sent to: Lance Middle School 4515 80th Street Kenosha, WI 53142. Consider helping the students in your community in shaping their futures.