

Holton High School

Holton School District, Holton, Kansas

Location type: Town

District enrollment: 911 students

School enrollment: 287 students

Percentage of students at school eligible for free and reduced price meals: 34

Key Takeaways

Holton High School participated in the OECD Test for Schools in 2014. The school's results indicated a need to focus on the development of students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, especially in reading and science: fewer than 10 percent of students performed at levels 5 and 6 on the assessment in these content areas. The school is committed to using its assessment results to continuously improve instruction and drive higher student achievement.

Actions Taken

- ✔ School leaders have consulted the school's results as they revised existing curricular resources to support more rigorous instruction. Following the discovery that relatively few students were performing at the highest levels, Holton had conversations, as a district, about whether its students are engaged in learning, or merely compliant. There has been an emphasis on creating engaging opportunities for students, especially in the areas of STEM.
 - Principal Rod Wittmer has led the effort to create a Technology Applications classroom where students learn to apply mathematical and scientific principles to computer programming and robotics.
 - Holton Public Schools is exploring a possible partnership with Emporia State University to participate in a robotics initiative as well as initial plans to pursue adding Project Lead the Way to build students' problem-solving skills.
 - Holton is also planning a partnership with the local library to bring more relevant resources into the classrooms, as well as a partnership with the local Banner Creek Science Center and Observatory to bring STEM-related activities and professional development to the district.
 - The district sent students to the Flint Hills Discovery Center to learn about the native Kansas environment.
 - A teacher in the Gifted and Talented program is planning a trip to Breakout Kansas City, an event that requires participants to solve a series of clues in order to break out of an escape room. This will be a unique opportunity for students to develop their problem solving and critical thinking skills.
 - In order to help students make the connection between school and the real world, Principal Wittmer arranged a trip to a local manufacturing firm to discuss topics with engineers and business managers. The district also sent several students to Kansas City to job shadow with engineers at Black and Veatch, an international engineering firm.
 - ✔ Holton High School has partnered with the Kansas State Department of Education to lead professional development to encourage reading and writing across the curriculum.
 - ✔ The school has reexamined its resource adoption policies and procedures to ensure that the school's investments in curricular materials support its goals around increasing student achievement to globally competitive levels.
 - More resources have been dedicated to Holton's recent K-12 math textbook adoption, and this has caused the district to create a regular schedule of textbook and resource reviews to ensure that their tools are up to date.
 - Additionally, as Holton High School's master schedules are one of Holton's most important curricular resources, the school is reviewing the times allotted for instruction, as well as times designated for academic interventions.
 - ✔ Taking advantage of peer-to-peer learning through the Global Learning Network, Holton connected with its in-state colleagues at Blue Valley School District in Overland Park, Kansas. Representatives from Holton also attended the Global Learning Network's Convening of World-Leading Schools in 2014.
- Those wishing to learn more about the practices at Holton High School may visit the school's website [here](#).*