

A Case Study of

# Huntley Community School District 158

Algonquin, Illinois



LEARNING  
2025

Student-Centered  
Equity-Focused  
Future-Driven  
Education



# An Introduction to the Learning 2025 Case Studies Series

*AASA Learning 2025: Student-Centered, Equity-Focused, Future-Driven Education* is a movement that calls for a holistic redesign of the public school system by 2025. This initiative is grounded in the foundational work of the AASA Learning 2025 National Commission, comprised of thought leaders in education, business, community, and philanthropy. The work of [AASA Learning 2025](#) is guided by the commission's report, *An American Imperative: A New Vision of Public Schools*.

As part of this initiative, AASA Learning 2025 demonstration systems are creating student-centered, equity-focused, and future-driven educational systems that serve ALL learners. This initiative is based on recurrent core redesign components, including: (1) **Culture:** Systems redesign must occur within an intentional and relationships-based culture that is Whole Learner Focused; dedicated to ensuring that No Learner Is Marginalized; and Future Driven, anticipating forthcoming changes in post-secondary and career landscapes to inform all decisions today. (2) **Social, Emotional, & Cognitive Growth:** Educational systems must address the strengths and needs of the Whole Learner, including physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development as a holistic component of educational transformation; and (3) **Resources:** Every learner must succeed and have equitable access to the educational resources and support services necessary to ensure their success.

To demonstrate the power and effectiveness of participating AASA Learning 2025 school districts, AASA is sharing with members of the educational community case studies showcasing exemplary school systems that are a part of this network. In this case study, you will learn about Huntley Community School District 158 in northern Illinois.

According to district leaders, the mission of Huntley Community School District 158 is to be a learning community that will inspire, challenge, and empower ALL students always. As the demographics of the district evolve, educators are faced with growing and complex challenges in meeting the needs of increasingly diverse student population. The district strives to accomplish this goal by providing future-driven, equity-focused educational opportunities for all students. According to Assistant Superintendent Amy MacCrandle, "By joining the AASA Learning 2025 network, we strive to utilize the connections and learning from other districts as we focus on bettering our relationships-based culture, through a focus on learning oriented around the learner, and by utilizing resources that will ensure success on a broader level."

## A Profile of the Huntley Community School District 158

Located in McHenry and Kane counties of northern Illinois, Huntley School District 158 serves approximately 9,000 students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The district is located in Huntley, western portions of Lake in the Hills and Algonquin, as well as surrounding areas. It currently employs more than 1,200 staff members.

Its stated mission is: "To be a learning community that will inspire, challenge, and empower ALL students always." To achieve this mission, Huntley takes a state-of-the-art approach to academic instruction and the many styles of learning available to students. With its focus on equitable access to education, students are able to discover how they learn best as they prepare for their next steps in life and learning.



Scott Rowe, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

## Key AASA Learning 2025 Redesign Components

Huntley's AASA Learning 2025 emphasis is on preparing Future Ready Learners, preparing them to become strong 21st Century contributors to society upon graduation. District priorities involve engaging all learners in a diverse curriculum that allows for flexibility and the room for student choice. The end goal is to provide students a greater sense of ownership over their learning, while strengthening the ability of students to be self-motivated as they monitor their own progress.

## Current and Projected Strategies, Processes, and Programs

Huntley 158's personalized pathways of learning have been taking shape across the district for nearly a decade. This individualized approach to education has been a cornerstone of the district's mission to foster 21st century learners and actively participating members of the community. From kindergarten on, students are equipped with relevant tools and core curriculum knowledge and skills to propel them toward the next stage of their educational journey. Armed with an understanding of how they learn best and the ability to choose from a range of learning modalities across the district, students are encouraged to find success in diverse ways.

This vision for a truly personalized view of learning opportunities began in 2011 with the district's Blended Learning program. What began as an experiment in transforming the boundaries of the traditional classroom (with approximately 100 students) has now grown over 10 years later to encompass more than 1,500 students at Huntley High School. Blended Learning leverages technology to transform the traditional classroom experience into a continuum of learning that combines online learning and face-to-face instruction.

As a pioneer of this increasingly popular approach to secondary education, Huntley 158 has received national attention for its implementation of the program, expanding the curricular options available to students participating in blended learning. This success, coupled with the District's 1:1 initiative in 2016, left Huntley 158 poised to further an educational philosophy founded on student voice and choice.





While the personalization of learning happens in classrooms across all grade levels, traditional learning has evolved to take shape in diverse ways inside Huntley High School (HHS). In addition to rigorous course offerings, Advanced Placement® coursework, Dual Credit offerings, and a new partnership with McHenry County College to offer a Dual Degree program, HHS houses four academic academies.

Students can apply for admission to these academies to participate in cutting-edge curriculum aimed to prepare students for post-secondary education and career paths in our ever-changing global economy. After identifying their learning style at the elementary and middle school level, high school students then have the chance to pursue these specific areas of interest in tandem with job shadowing, volunteering, and project-based learning opportunities.

Vanguard Vision, the district's unique Competency-Based Education program, also embodies an available pathway for student learning. In 2017, Huntley High School was accepted into the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Competency-Based Education Pilot as one of 10 school districts selected. The program has continued to grow since then. As the program prepared to celebrate its first group of graduates in May 2022, it is reinforced the belief that students learn best when they are co-designers of their learning. This pathway is modeled to allow students to show mastery in many different ways. A single project or performance task, for example, may allow students to advance through the curriculum in customizable ways.

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Huntley High School has also developed a new and custom-made Online Learning pathway to meet the needs of students in an ever-changing society. This program will be ready to launch in the 2022-2023 school year and will emphasize a similar level of student choice and flexibility that has found so much success in our Blended Learning pathway. While technology has been in a state of constant evolution for several years, the Huntley 158 staff and students is continuing to be prepared to harness its educational impact in the classroom. The district stands poised to expand on a myriad of technical skills through the implementation of this program. Within these pathways, Huntley 158 seeks to pioneer new and innovative learning styles that will serve today's learners and inspire tomorrow's leaders.



## Longitudinal Evidence of Growth in Identified AASA Learning 2025 Components

In order to prepare students for their success, Huntley 158 intentionally builds in scaffolded opportunities for students to determine how they learn best, starting in kindergarten and progressing throughout the learning design in all classrooms. The district measures success through reporting on the characteristics of a successful learner at the elementary level and habits of work and learning at the secondary level. These characteristics help students, families, and teachers to understand how a student is doing in progressing towards mastery of behaviors and attitudes as learners exhibit what is needed in order to be successful for college and careers.

In addition to this, educators analyze academic data (including universal screeners and state assessments) in order to ensure that students in specialized programs are performing as expected. This longitudinal data analysis process allows educators to take that information to tweak or enhance educational programs as needed.

## Addressing the Needs of the Whole Learner and Eliminating Marginalization

As stated previously, it is the mission of Huntley Community School District 158 to be a learning community that will inspire, challenge, and empower ALL students always. In service of this mission, the district has committed to viewing all decision making through an equity lens. This means that decisions in curriculum and instruction, operations, fiscal services, and all other areas of the district are made after analyzing the impacts they will have on our underserved and marginalized populations, as well as proactively identifying and eliminating inequities. District staff strive to promote, develop, and support equitable practices and policies to ensure a safe and inclusive school community system





Achieving educational equity requires a conscious and consistent focus. Huntley 158 staff are compelled to prioritize systemic equity and provide every student with access to the educational resources and rigor they need at the right moment in their education— regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, and/or socioeconomic status. This learning organization is committed to providing an environment that is culturally sensitive and free from bias and discrimination, protecting students from physical and emotional harm.

Staff members are committed to ensuring that all stakeholders uphold educational equity as an essential principle integrated into all policies, practices, operations, and processes in order to provide equitable educational outcomes for all students. Staff members continually hold one another mutually accountable for examining district policies, practices, and programs to eliminate overt and/or implicit racial, ethnic, and related biases. The district demonstrates a high level of commitment and accountability for eliminating disparities wherever they are found.

## District Focus on AASA Learning 2025 Accelerators

Huntley 158 emphasizes the use of technology as a Force Multiplier to accelerate student learning. The district was among the first large unit districts in the state of Illinois to implement a 1:1 initiative, equipping every student in grades k-8 with a personalized learning device. In the first four years of the program, elementary students received tablets. In fall 2016, all students at Huntley High School received a Chromebook, completing the District's 1:1 rollout and cementing its status as the largest fully 1:1 unit district in Illinois.



The district continues to expand its use of educational technology tools through the integration of learner-focused tools that enable staff to personalize learning in areas in which students need to grow. This tailored approach allows district staff to target instruction, prioritize student choice and voice, and encourage student ownership of learning. With the implementation of courses through Huntley High School's online learning pathways as well as diverse curriculum opportunities (including Explore and Project Lead the Way) at the middle school and elementary level.

Huntley 158 also intentionally selects digital technology tools to best support students in personalizing learning. These tools allow students to receive differentiated support as the learning adapts so that they can progress in their acquisition of knowledge. They also provide teachers with insight into what a student knows in regard to specific skills, identifying gaps to determine a focus for teaching and learning, how to set personalized goals, and to move students to mastery and beyond.

## The Power of Cross-Institutional Collaboration and Partnerships

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement to benefit all learners, Huntley Community School District 158 values student, family, and staff voices. Each school principal and staff members work collaboratively and diligently to create an environment for students and families that is welcoming, safe, and meets the needs of all student learners. The district schools engage with community partnerships that support the educational environment.

The commitment Huntley 158 fosters strong relationships with stakeholders, including the voices of community partners. The district continually engages in meaningful partnerships with local businesses and Huntley area leaders, industry partners throughout both the county and the surrounding Chicago area, representatives from McHenry County College and area universities, among others. The goal of each of these partnerships (whether with parents, industry professionals, learning institutions, or community-based organizations) is to foster a direct connection between the efforts of stakeholders to improve our community and the success of all students.



Huntley 158 works actively to engage our families in feedback opportunities and collaborative committees, while also leveraging relationships with surrounding businesses to offer students job shadowing experiences, internships and career exploration while stimulating the community's economic development. The district also values relationships with surrounding colleges to improve teacher recruitment and retention efforts, while also developing opportunities for affordable post-secondary education through a Dual Degree program and dual credit course offerings at the local community college (e.g., McHenry County College).

As a foundation for leadership in the Huntley area community, these partnerships are essential for promoting the district's growth. Staff members consistently seek opportunities to push the boundaries of a traditional education. With avenues for success in district neighborhoods and support from a wide range of stakeholders, the opportunities for all students to excel are abundant.

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## A Deep Commitment to Sustainability

The vision of sustainability and environmental awareness that has come to define Huntley Community School District 158 began nearly 14 years ago with a need to enhance the district's financial position and find room for savings wherever possible, most notably through energy cost saving practices. Since 2009, the district has seen a reduction in annual energy costs from \$2.5 million to \$1.1 million in energy costs, equating to over \$1.5 million in annual savings. These energy savings came largely from strategic operational changes in both equipment and the equipment's behavior.

One of the largest factors in cementing Huntley 158's status as one of the greenest districts in the state of Illinois has been its use of solar energy. In fall 2020, Huntley 158 "flipped the switch" on the largest solar energy installation on school district property in Illinois. With three large solar installations totaling 15,100 solar panels across three campuses, the project now produces clean, renewable energy to fuel buildings.

In the business of education, it is critical to educate all students on the benefits of sustainability and use those benefits to enhance students' educational experience and overall well-being. In Huntley 158, staff members educate students and establish a sustainable focus on environmentally conscious practices through leading by example. While at school, students see and experience green efforts firsthand through healthy and fresh school meals, food sharing tables, reusable serving trays, recycled copy paper, online learning resources through the District's 1:1 program, and blended learning pathway, solar energy, propane buses, and more.

Huntley 158 continuously strives to share what it has learned over the course of the journey to help others down the path of operational efficiency and sustainability. The district is committed to the students it serves, the community in which they live, and the environment for which they are all responsible for. According to district leaders, "This drives our purpose. The impact of sustainability is one that translates to classrooms, across communities and, eventually, throughout an organization's culture."





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