



A brief introduction to



In USD 434 in the 2020-21 school year, the Summit Learning platform will be the primary instructional method used in most core classes (Math, Social Studies, Science, English Language Arts). In electives classes in grades six through twelve, and for students at SFTHS enrolled in Washburn Tech or Allen County Community College classes, other platforms will be used to carry out instruction. This document will serve as a broad overview for parents and the community to the Summit Learning platform.

Summit Learning is a research-based approach to education designed to drive student engagement, meaningful learning, and strong student-teacher relationships to prepare students for life after school.

Created by teachers in diverse classrooms, Summit Learning is grounded in decades of research about how children learn. With Summit Learning, students gain mastery of core subjects like math, history, English, and science, while also carefully developing the skills and habits of lifelong learners.

The Summit Learning Program offers schools customizable curriculum, a range of educational resources and technology tools, professional development for educators, and ongoing coaching and support for schools. Summit Learning is independently led and operated by the nonprofit, TLP Education.

Summit Learning has three core drivers:

Teaching Through Projects

Students learn from teachers through whole group instruction, small group sessions, and one-on-one time. With hands-on projects and group learning, teachers show students how to apply lifelong skills — such as collaborating with a team, interpreting data and presenting persuasive arguments.

Summit curriculum in ELA, Social Studies, and Science centers on projects that relate to the real world. Whether they're working on projects individually or together with peers, students learn and refine skills, such as working with a team, interpreting data, or presenting a persuasive argument.

At the end of every project, students share what they've learned through essays, presentations, debates, or other creative ways that relate to the specific project.

While students are directing the project work together, teachers oversee their progress, and give feedback along the way. Teachers use class time to work with students individually or in small groups to provide specific support, especially for students needing extension or added support. With projects, students are learning both the subject matter and how to direct their own progress toward their end goal for the project.

Math is similar in structure with some key differences. In Math, instead of focusing on projects, students work on Portfolio Problems which accompany each Math Unit. Portfolio Problems apply to math courses only.

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Fostering Lifelong Learning Habits

When completing work independently, students access a range of additional helpful resources through the Summit Learning platform — it's like having a library at their fingertips. By studying in different ways, students gain a self-awareness about how they learn best. Teachers guide students to build habits -- like curiosity, resilience, and a sense of purpose -- that help them thrive throughout their lives.

Student learning in Summit is built upon the “Self-Directed Learning Cycle.” It is through instruction, direct teacher support, and practice that students learn how to manage their own education. In the Self-Directed Learning Cycle, teachers work with students to:

- reflect on what they've learned;
- set goals for what they want to learn;
- plan for how they will reach their goals;
- learn new facts, skills, or ideas;
- show or demonstrate their learning, then reflect.

The Self-Directed Learning cycle



All instruction within the Summit platform uses the Self-Directed Learning Cycle. It is referred to daily as a way of students and staff to internalize the process.

Mentoring Students

In addition to classroom instruction, teachers also mentor students during dedicated weekly one-on-one meetings. With their mentors, students set long- and short-term goals, and discuss both their academic and emotional experiences while working toward these goals. Mentoring sessions build strong relationships between students and their mentors. Together, they celebrate successes, discuss reasons for roadblocks, and talk about areas of learning opportunity.

Students meet weekly with their teacher-mentors to discuss their progress at school. Each mentoring session has a discussion guide that students use to prepare for the conversation. By building a deep connection and foundation of trust, mentors have honest discussions about struggles and successes with students. During each meeting, students reflect on what went well — and what didn't — during the previous week, and mentors share useful feedback and suggestions for refining an existing goal or setting a new one based on recent experiences. As a student becomes more familiar with goal-setting and planning, they also learn which tasks they should focus on every week.

Mentors also provide support to students while they practice important learning skills. They do this by helping students deal with stress in positive ways, exploring post-graduation options, coaching students on the Habits of Success — social and emotional skills that enable students to be successful at both academic and non-academic pursuits — and more. Mentors are a key part of Summit Learning because they help students learn to succeed on their own.

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Summit plugs in to the day-to-day schedule through three types of instructional time:

1. **PROJECT TIME.** This time is the traditionally scheduled core content class time (ELA, Math, Social Studies, Science). Instead of focusing exclusively upon content instruction, students work on large real world projects. Their main learning goal is building skill with [36 KEY COGNITIVE SKILLS](#) rather than specific core content objectives. These projects are very self-directed, and are completed in part by using core academic content provided separately by core teachers. Projects are scaffolded with supports and include measurable progress expectations that are set by (and monitored by) the core teachers.
2. **SELF-DIRECTED TIME.** Students work on content area checkpoints set by their core teachers. They use technology to access instruction at their own pace and ability level. They may participate in real-time small scale “workshop” instruction where selected students work directly with a teacher for a mini-lesson. The entire SDT process is driven by student need and by teacher data. Part of the SDT process includes daily goal setting and reflection. Weekly mentoring meetings also take place during SDT.
3. **ELECTIVE TIME.** Students attend classes with their elective teachers outside the Summit Platform. Any students with identified learning support needs (as documented on an IEP, or identified through academic assessment) are also addressed at these times. Supports such as reading and math intervention are delivered at this time in place of some electives for some students.

At USD 434 we are excited to bring Summit Learning to our students in a school district implementation from grades six through twelve. The increased rigor and student engagement we expect will better prepare our students to succeed in the world beyond the walls of our schools. We look forward to the challenge and success of implementing Summit Learning in USD 434 in the 2020-2021 school year.

Respectfully,

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