

April 1, 2016

Dear parents/guardians of 7th grade Riverside Middle School students:

We are proud to announce that the Watertown Unified School District is continuing the RMS Science Academy for the 2016-2017 school year. Modeled after Watertown's Endeavor Charter School, the Riverside Science Academy is a science challenging course that is responsive to learners' abilities, interests, learning styles, and backgrounds. Learning will be an interdisciplinary, inquiry and project-based, collaborative learning model where students take ownership of their education through the development of a personalized learning plan. Students would replace their current science course with the Riverside Science Academy option. Interdisciplinary learning means that your teachers will seek connections with other subjects like history, reading, and communication skills.

#### **What does Riverside Science Academy "look" like?**

- If you and your son or daughter decide to apply for this new option, they will be highly engaged by a learning plan that they help design. In project-based learning, students actively explore, research, and solve complex tasks to develop a deep understanding of core academic concepts. Students direct their own learning by designing projects related to educational standards set by the State of Wisconsin. By designing their own projects, students experience educational opportunities that are relevant to them. They feel connected to the learning and in charge of their education as they make choices that will make learning more valuable to them. Rigor and high expectations are an integral part of this learning process.
- Emphasis will be placed on developing the essential skills of communication, collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity and innovation that is often less evident in a traditional classroom. These fundamental skills will empower your student to excel in their post-secondary education and/or career.
- Students in the Riverside Science Academy learn at their own pace as part of a team that may include their parents, advisor, and experienced professionals who work in the areas they are exploring. The learning team develops a personal learning plan that helps you to reach educational goals through a combination of direct instruction, targeted projects, online learning, and real-world experience.

#### **Who might benefit from student-centered, project-based learning?**

- Curious learners who embrace a real-world, "hands-on" experience.
- Learners who are able to set and meet individual goals with the help of their teachers, staff, parent(s).
- Learners with a desire and motivation to make connections among subjects.
- Learners willing to display their knowledge in meaningful, unique and thought-provoking ways.
- Learners who thrive in a smaller, more personalized learning environment.
- Learners who are eager to serve and improve their school and the Watertown community.
- Learners striving to reach high levels of performance as defined by their personalized plans.

#### **How do I apply?**

- **Complete and return the attached application to your science teacher by Friday, April 22nd.**
  - Participation in the Riverside Science Academy is limited, therefore, you should sign-up as soon as possible. If the participation cap is met, students will be placed on a waiting list based on when their application was returned.

If you have additional questions, please contact [agara@mywusd.org](mailto:agara@mywusd.org) or [brembergerb@mywusd.org](mailto:brembergerb@mywusd.org).

Thank you,  
Ms. Agar and Mr. Bremberger