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Program at Horizon Science Academy of Lorain shapes student's personal, academic growth

By Briana Contreras
The Morning Journal

As the academic year begins, many students may involve themselves in extracurricular activities or programs to participate in.

Staff and students at Horizon Science Academy of Lorain, 760 Tower Blvd., shared the importance of the Concept Young Scholars Program that begins in October each year.

The initiative is part of other concept schools, like Horizon, that focus on academic challenges, healthy lifestyles, building confidence, volunteerism and exploration through various activities, according to Amy Strohsack, a mentor in the program.

Strohsack said the program is available to students who register and attend concept schools in grades 5-12.

Students also must be in good standing or have good behavior, maintain their grade point average, test scores and attendance throughout the year.

Strohsack said it is a large extra-curricular program where students participate in a number of activities outside of school, while assigned a mentor.

Parents also can get involved, she said.

Students are either required to participate in a number of activities or put forth a certain amount of time in their four focus areas, Strohsack said.

The four focus areas are: personal development; voluntary public service; physical fitness; and expedition and exploration.

Students can choose three different levels — gold, silver and bronze — to participate in.

Each level has a different set of requirements.

And some requirements are optional depending on the level, according to the academy's website.

When focusing on personal development, scholars are required to participate in either clubs, sports or advanced study teams, reading, attending the academy's weekend school and participating in individual test practices, the website says.

Voluntary public service requires students to be active in tutoring services, an internship and community service, it



Horizon Concept Young Scholars Program (CYSP) students in both Mrs. Gibson's and Mrs. Dewey's middle school classes, worked on a project making fleece tie blankets to donate to patients in need at Rainbow Babies and Children's Hospital.

says.

Scholars must participate in physical fitness, whether it's a sport or exercise, for the required amount of time in their level.

Lastly, students need to be involved in overnight activities like camps, trips or study nights; intercultural activities such as family visits, attend cultural themed museums or cultural centers; go on in or out-of-town trips and study abroad.

Strohsack said if students meet those requirements, or "goals" by the end of the year, they can get incentives like gift cards, iPads, headphones or other items.

"The purpose of this (program) gives students a chance to build their character, exposing them to new things and challenging themselves academically," she said. "The program can prepare them for college, or their futures, as they are introduced to different parts of Ohio or other areas."

In last year's program, 91 students were involved, she said.

"The kids enjoy it and look forward to doing these activities," Strohsack said. "They don't see it as extra work; they sign up for it."

My'Jia Brown and Abigail Laurenti, 10th graders at the academy, have been involved in the Young Scholars Program for a few years and said has influenced

growth into their lives.

My'Jia said she has been involved since the eighth-grade and the program has since helped her meet new people, make friends and create new relationships.

When not working toward her goals in the program, she is using her personal time to participate in further community service.

"You learn how to manage your time with test practicing (and other activities in the program)," Strohsack said. "It's a lot, but it's fun."

Abigail started the program when she was in seventh-grade.

She said she did not know what she was getting herself into once starting, but now enjoys it and believes the program has helped her build character.

Abigail said she feels more open to new opportunities and has made new friends with not only with classmates, but teachers and mentors of the group.

"We get support that (some may) not get at home," she said of the mentors.

"We need that support because it brings up a position that the more work on education we do, the better experience we have in life, the better college we go to.

"It all just adds up in the long run. I'm just very thankful for my experience."