



## **Rochester Community Schools expands global awareness initiatives Chinese students visit Rochester High School**

Rochester Community Schools will be hosting 25 students from Hai'an Senior Middle School, Nantong, China, on January 29 – February 4.

"We are enthusiastically embracing the visit, as it serves as a wonderful opportunity for RCS students to establish relationships with teenagers from across the world and expand their global awareness and understanding," said Executive Director of Elementary Education Michael Behrmann.



The Chinese students, along with their adult chaperones, will be visiting Rochester High School, where students will be paired up with their American counterparts to engage in a variety of academic and cultural experiences. The Chinese students will attend classes during the day and spend afternoons and evenings with their host families. Several activities and excursions have also been planned for the students to include a visit to the Detroit Institute of Arts, University of Michigan campus, Henry Ford Museum, Ford Rouge Factory, Great Lakes Crossing mall, Detroit Pistons game, and the annual Crosstown Showdown basketball game (Rochester versus Adams High School).

A Memorandum of Understanding between Rochester High School and Hai'an Senior Middle School was signed during the Rochester Community School District's December delegation trip to China. The goal of the initiative is to foster global awareness and international cooperation while providing stakeholders with a better understanding of each school's culture and educational systems.

"This is such an exciting opportunity for our students, staff, and community members. The impact of this visit extends far beyond the classroom," said Rochester High School Principal Neil DeLuca. "We are also fortunate to have the support of our host families who will be opening their homes to our guests."

Global awareness is one of three focus areas in the Rochester Community School District's Strategic Plan. Global awareness initiatives include expanding international exchanges and school partnerships between countries such as Costa Rica, Germany, France, and China, and introducing new programs within the district, such as the Chinese language program.

"The excitement in the expressions of our students when they talk about their international experiences is truly gratifying. Our children are learning first-hand about other cultures. They gain a new perspective and can look at even their own family traditions through a new lens," said Assistant Superintendent for Instruction Debi Fragomeni.



RCS students travelled to China during the inaugural student exchange program share notes with their new-found friends.

During the 2014-2015 school year, the district introduced Chinese language and culture exposure in all of its elementary schools, as well as middle schools at the seventh-grade level. All first through fifth graders receive 30 minutes of instruction per week, and seventh graders receive a two-week block as part of the Introduction to World Language course. High school students are also provided the opportunity to study international languages in Chinese, Spanish, French, and German. In spring 2016, eighth and ninth-grade students participated in the district's inaugural trip to China. In 2017-18, an Introduction to World Language and Culture course will be added as an elective for sixth grade students.

A student group is also scheduled to go to Costa Rica this year. "We were able to establish a partnership with a school in Costa Rica through the ministry of education. Twenty-three students and four staff members will be making the sojourn to Costa Rica in June," said Behrmann.

"At Rochester Community Schools, we believe that it is critical to provide an enriched learning environment where our students can experience a variety of customs, lifestyles, and backgrounds," said Superintendent Robert Shaner, Ph.D. "By educating our school community through such diverse programs, we can continue to build awareness and understanding that is so important in today's global environment."

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