

RIGHT AT SCHOOL & CHELTENHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT • WYNCOTE, PA



CASE STUDY



Creating an Inclusive Program That Addresses the Needs of the Whole Child

a place to
BE A KID!



Wyncote Elementary School is one of four elementary schools in Cheltenham School District (CSD), located in a diverse, suburban community on Philadelphia’s northwest border. For several years, the K-4 school offered families the option to participate in the Cheltenham Landmark After-School Program (C.L.A.S.P.), a before and after school program operated by the district.

In 2021, CSD began to explore other options and decided to partner with Right At School to provide extended day enrichment on-site at each elementary school.

“Right At School addressed our needs, and it was more cost-effective,” said Jim Taylor, principal of Wyncote Elementary.

When CSD announced that C.L.A.S.P. would close, however, some parents expressed concerns.

“Parents worried that our before and after school program would lose its family feel,” said Taylor. “They liked the C.L.A.S.P. employees and that they knew their children so well. Right At School did a good job hearing people’s concerns and building relationships. Right At School even offered personnel from C.L.A.S.P. the opportunity to interview for program positions. Parents now say that Right At School has a family feel and that it’s the best part of their kids’ day.”



“Right At School provides a safe space for children and a structure and schedule that works well for our population. It addresses the whole child, which is very important to our district mission.”

— Jim Taylor, principal of Wyncote Elementary.



Providing enrichment in an inclusive environment.

Wyncote Elementary began offering Right At School's enrichment programs in fall 2021. Families can sign up for the before or after school program or both. They can also choose from one to five days a week or do drop-in care.

"The Right At School curriculum is excellent," said Taylor. "When I do pop-ins, I see a variety of things happening — academic enrichment, physical activities, creative projects, reading in a quiet space. I'm impressed by how it's all managed. There are multiple modalities of learning taking place. Kids are engaged. Every child's needs get met. I see the response to the whole child."

"We place a strong emphasis on social-emotional health in our district, and that's a strength of the Right At School program," he said. "We have three autistic support classes and students with significant emotional and behavioral needs, and some of those kids go to Right At School. One big plus is that it's an inclusive environment. Everybody gets to come regardless of learning status. I see Right At School educators using best practices with our students, like restorative practices. It dovetails into what we do during the school day."



Social-emotional learning (SEL) is carefully woven into Right At School's Disguised Learning™ curriculum, and all Right At School educators are trained in SEL and trauma-informed care.



Providing homework support.

Every afternoon, students have time to get their homework done, too. Right At School educators group kids into age-appropriate homework pods and help everyone complete assignments on time.

“Parents say how appreciative they are that homework gets done here,” said Taylor. “Often they’re picking their child up and then running to sports or music lessons or one of the million other things families do at the end of the day. Not having homework pressure is a great benefit.”

RAS SUMMER CAMPS in CSD

In addition to before and after school programs, Right At School provides Summer Camps in CSD.

“The summer program is very successful,” said Taylor. “The kids love it. There’s a purpose to everything, but it’s play. They’re doing what kids do in the summer, which is have a good time.”



Creating a consistent, caring environment.

School leaders and families also appreciate the dedication of the program staff. “Right At School staff are terrific. They care about the kids and each other, and I appreciate that because this is a very special school. They stepped right into the culture here,” said Taylor.

“Right At School employees are loyal so there’s consistency. Kids know they’re going to see the same person. They’re punctual, too,” said Taylor. “If the program says it opens at 7 a.m., it does. It’s not that staff are arriving at 7 o’clock; they’re opening at 7 o’clock. There’s a difference between those two things. On the dismissal end, parents are respectful of the pick-up time. We’re in an urban center so sometimes traffic is a nightmare, but parents make it work.”



Supporting administrators.

To eliminate headaches for administrators during the summer and school year, Right At School handles all aspects of program implementation, including the structure, curriculum, and hiring and training of staff.

"I don't have to worry about Right At School because it runs so well," said Taylor. "They're excellent communicators with all of our stakeholders, particularly parents and guardians. I see Right At School being responsive to their needs, and I hear very, very few complaints."

Finding a true partner.

"Right At School has been a terrific partner to us," said Taylor. "The Right At School space in our building is the auditorium, which is also the cafeteria. When we have evening events, Right At School is very flexible. When I was a new principal, I forgot to tell Right At School that we had a Back to School Night. I was about to have hundreds of parents descend on us and didn't have a plan for what to do, but Right At School had a contingency plan, which was great. The director also suggested that I include Right At School on our weekly memo so they could plan around school events. It was a moment of great partnership."

"But the benefit is wider than that. It provides a service to our community, which is very diverse. There are folks working hard to make ends meet, and I wonder what they would do if we didn't have this program."



"I think the pricing is very reasonable, and it's working well. It's been a good addition to our district."

Meeting **kids' needs.**

"At the end of the day, it's really about what's best for kids. Are our kids getting what they need at Right At School? Are they getting a break after school from the academic rigor of the day? Are they getting a snack? Are they getting to play outside or play indoors? Are they getting center time? Are they getting homework time? Yes, they are. There's intentionality and Right At School makes it fun," said Taylor.

"We have kids here from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. That's a long day for little people, and the Right At School staff get that. They know the kids. The fundamental question is, 'Do you know who I am? Do I feel seen and valued by you as an adult?' Kids at Right At School do, and that's a tribute to the staff. Kids feel cared for. That was one of parents' greatest concerns up front and RAS addressed that head on."

School Data

Grades K-4

380 students

<https://www.cheltenham.org/WE>

Student Demographics

5% Asian

47% Black

8% Hispanic

<1% Native American

<1% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

32% White

8% Two or more races



"A common refrain I hear now from parents is, 'This is my child's favorite part of the day.' It all goes back to the kids, and kids love Right At School."

— Jim Taylor, Principal of Wyncote Elementary