



# Connecting Students to **Health Care Careers**

**Kettle Moraine's High School of Health Sciences is opening doors to health care careers for students**

*Shelby Anderson*

**F**or Spencer Scherwinski, a senior enrolled in the Kettle Moraine High School of Health Sciences, a typical school day looks quite different. Before school, he goes out on calls with a local EMT team; later in the morning at school, he takes several AP courses, participating in various dissections and other hands-on projects; and, a couple times a week, he works a shift as a certified nursing assistant (CNA) at a nearby hospital.

“The experiences I’ve had over the past two years have been some-

thing most students could only dream about,” Scherwinski said, who can cite witnessing a childbirth among those experiences.

A lot of Scherwinski’s learning takes place in the “real-world” and the classes and courses that he takes in school are dictated by his interests. The High School of Health Sciences, known as HS<sup>2</sup>, offers students personalized learning with a focus on health care careers. The district made the school possible with some outside-the-box thinking and through key partnerships with local health care professionals.

## **■ Building Partnerships**

It all started when the district reached out to Aurora Health Care. The nearby hospital had built a new facility and the district asked to use one of its halls for a professional development day. The hospital opened its doors to the district and a relationship between the two developed.

Dr. Pat Deklotz, superintendent of the Kettle Moraine School District, said that the district quickly realized that the partnership could be good for more than just professional development space. Soon they

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came up with the idea of opening a health care-focused charter school within the high school. That idea became a reality in 2014.

“There is a shortage of people entering the workforce in the health care career pathway and there wasn’t a good understanding among our students about the myriad of roles that are supported in the health care industry,” Deklotz said.

Additionally, opening a charter school focused on health care was exactly the kind of innovative learning that the Kettle Moraine school board supports in its mission and vision.

“Part of our board’s mission statement is the idea of learning without boundaries,” Deklotz said. “We want to continue to rethink how we engage our students in their learning.”

However, the school board did hesitate at establishing a charter school because it didn’t want to relinquish control of the school to a governance counsel. However, the Kettle Moraine school board controls the expectations of the school through the contract language. According to Deklotz, the school board now views the school’s governance counsel as a strength because it consists of professionals from the health care industry who have expertise in the field.

Since that initial partnership with Aurora Health Care, two other organizations joined — ProHealth Care and the Medical College of Wisconsin.

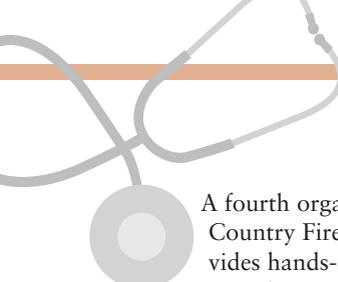
ProHealth Care is a community-based health care system located in southeastern Wisconsin. The organization sends one of its doctors to regularly visit the school and lead

hands-on activities like human tissue dissections. The Medical College of Wisconsin, one of only two medical colleges in Wisconsin, is getting increasingly involved in outreach education opportunities with schools in the Milwaukee-area. Tim Sobotka, program manager of the Education Outreach Program, sits on the governance counsel of HS<sup>2</sup> and teaches a course at the school.

“Part of our mission and vision is to help educate about the science and health care fields at all levels,” Sobotka said. “They’re going to be our future doctors and health care professionals.”

These three organizations — Aurora Health Care, ProHealth Care, and the Medical College of Wisconsin — are represented on the school’s governance counsel.





A fourth organization, Lake Country Fire & Rescue, provides hands-on EMT training to students.

### Life at HS<sup>2</sup>

HS<sup>2</sup> occupies its own wing at Kettle Moraine High School. It is separate from but also a part of Kettle Moraine High School. The two schools run on the same schedule, which allows students enrolled in the charter school to take courses in the high school.

Walking into the wing of HS<sup>2</sup>, you can tell that it is different. HS<sup>2</sup> is outfitted with flexible learning spaces and an assortment of learning environments to suit different student learning styles. In addition to an open-concept classroom, the school also has two lab spaces. It may look chaotic to some but Stephen Plum, director of HS<sup>2</sup>, said it's personalized learning in action.

"Personalized learning is incredibly messy," Plum said. "As teachers,

you have to be flexible and as students you have to be flexible as well."

For instance, in one of the school's math classes, several courses are being taught at once with some students taking Algebra I while others are taking pre-Calculus. Plum said it is challenging for the teachers and students but it allows for personalized learning.

One class that really epitomizes the school's personalized learning approach is a music appreciation class focused on music of the Motown era. It is taught by Tim Sobotka from the Medical College of Wisconsin. The class covers a number of different topics and issues from the history of the Civil Rights Era, to music composition and more. Students can personalize it — focusing on the history and social studies aspect of the course to get the related credits or focus on the music side of the class for an elective credit. It can be customized to fill the requirement that the student needs.

"How we do school is just so much different than traditional school environments," Plum said.

From the student perspective, personalized learning can be challenging, yet rewarding. Students get out of it what they put into it. Scherwinski noted that he was taking a math class and government class online.

"It's a little scary at first," Scherwinski said. "Your teachers are going to ask a lot of you. You have to be motivated to keep up with your work."

### Relevant Learning

For some students at HS<sup>2</sup>, their personalized learning includes working as an employee at a local hospital. With the help of Aurora Health Care, 16 students have gained certification as CNAs. Once the students are certified, they can apply for a position at the hospital.

The students go through the application and interview process.



Not all are hired but those that are gain experience (and pay) as an employee of the hospital. They work four to eight hours a week, after school or over the weekend. Plum said getting students credentialed has been a big step forward for the school and hospital, which is continually looking for qualified people. Eventually, the school hopes to train 24 students a year at Aurora Health Care.

As employees of the hospital, the students are encouraged to job shadow doctors, nurses, and lab technicians to learn more about other fields. Plum said the partnership works because the school is providing the hospital with engaged, qualified students and in turn, students are gaining learning and professional experiences. This is a process that begins when students enroll in HS<sup>2</sup>.

“You can’t just go to a hospital and say I’m going to give you a bunch of high school students, that

is not going to work,” Plum said.

Students also have an opportunity to learn about emergency medicine with Lake County Fire & Rescue. The EMTs work with the school and provide job shadowing and EMT training courses to students. While they aren’t an official partner of the school, they provide important experience and learning to students.

“Those guys at Lake County Fire & Rescue are just devoted to education and devoted to the future,” Plum said. “For them, it really important to be involved in the process.”

### ■ Hands-On Learning

In addition to experiences outside of the school, students are also exposed to some impressive learning opportunities in the school. Dr. David Dominguese, an anatomist with ProHealth Care, one of the school’s partners, visits the school to lead various hands-on activities like human tissue dissections. This

## About the High School of HEALTH SCIENCES

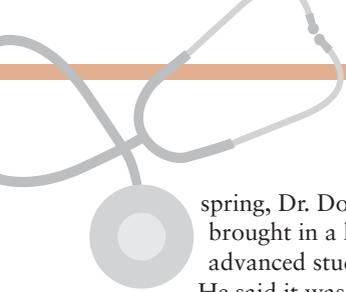
**T**he High School of Health Sciences (HS<sup>2</sup>) is a public charter school that exists on the Kettle Moraine High School campus. HS<sup>2</sup> opened in the fall of 2014 and currently serves students in grades 9 through 12. The school’s governance council has established a class size of 40 students per grade.

HS<sup>2</sup> partners with ProHealth Care, Aurora Medical Center, and the Medical College of Wisconsin to provide hands-on experience and outreach for students at Kettle Moraine High School, allowing the district to directly meet the needs of area business partners. Students in HS<sup>2</sup> learn through immersive environments where they are introduced to diverse career pathways and professionals in the world of health care.

The philosophy behind HS<sup>2</sup> is that learning is a social, diverse and collaborative experience. HS<sup>2</sup> empowers students to be the architects of their own learning, making connections between relevant course instruction and their future endeavors.

The school’s vision is to make sure that students are not just learning, but learning well. Students will ultimately master a relevant course of study that equips them for success in health care, research and other related fields. □





spring, Dr. Dominguese brought in a human torso for advanced students to examine. He said it was the first time in his career that he had a complete torso and was excited to share the learning opportunity with the students.

“The experiences that these high school students are having is just phenomenal,” Dominguese said. “I don’t believe any high school anywhere in the country is doing these sort of things.”

These learning experiences are only possible with the help of the school’s health care partners. For instance, for a high school to bring in and handle human tissue samples, the school would need someone on staff with the proper credentials. But, through its partners, like Dominguese, HS<sup>2</sup> is able to provide students with unique opportunities.

Plum said the health care partners are involved because they want to improve health care training in hopes of supporting students who will go into health care fields. In addition, the school can also offer benefits. In the case of the ProHealth Care partnership, in return for



giving students hands-on learning such as human tissue dissections, the school lets ProHealth Care use its lab on the weekends for professional development training.

Overall, the charter school doesn’t cost that much more to operate than a normal high school. For instance, the school’s lab is a rather normal high school science lab.

“We could have put a lot of money into our lab but decided against it,” Plum said. “It’s not so

much about the technology, it’s about how you’re using it.”

As of this school year, HS<sup>2</sup> has only two full-time teachers — Plum, who teaches science courses, and Maureen Muldoon, who teaches English. Since the school’s schedule is aligned with Kettle Moraine High School’s schedule, students from HS<sup>2</sup> can take other needed courses in the high school. Some students also take online courses. Next school year, as the school enrollment increases, HS<sup>2</sup> will have six full-time teachers.

The school also accepts special needs students. Currently, eight percent of the students have special needs with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). The school doesn’t have any English-language learners but Plum says they could in the future, especially considering that bilingual students are in high demand in health care.

### ■ Student-Led Learning

When HS<sup>2</sup> first opened in 2014, it had 60 students in its first class. The school currently has 112 students. Next year, enrollment is expected to be between 165 and 170.

Plum and Deklotz are adamant that other school districts can replicate what they are doing in Kettle Moraine. Plum said if you have a local hospital, it’s likely they are



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— Dr. David Dominguese, anatomist with ProHealth Care

looking for qualified employees and may be interested in training and working with high school students.

“You can develop the partnerships, things can happen,” Plum said. “You just have to get rid of the barriers.”

It also takes a supportive school board as their decisions will guide the process and, in some cases, district policies may need to be adjusted.

“It has been beyond my expectations in providing exciting learning opportunities and creating some very deep partnerships with our community,” Deklotz said.

Student achievement has exceeded expectations as well. Students in HS<sup>2</sup> took the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Develop-

ment) assessment that is aligned with the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) and is used to compare student achievement around the world. The latest OECD results placed HS<sup>2</sup> students alongside high-achieving countries such as Singapore.

Deklotz said students are achieving because they are leading their learning. They are engaged in topics and classes that interest them.

“We are looking very hard at what it is that we can do in schools to drive engagement,” Deklotz said. “We believe very strongly that when students are engaged, it's because the learning is relevant and once it's relevant, it becomes rigorous. We're not driving the work, the students

are. And it's their passions that really bring that deeper understanding.”

This year, the first class of seniors, including Scherwinski, will graduate from HS<sup>2</sup>. Many of them have college credit, others already have professional accreditation like CNA certificates. Most importantly, Plum said that all students who will graduate have a plan for what's after high school.

“We have students who want to be doctors but we also have students that have different plans,” Plum said. “All of our students have a direction.” ■

*Shelby Anderson is editor of Wisconsin School News.*



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