

## GET TO KNOW

# Highview Sixth Grade Center

Part of Middletown City School District



Nicole Fisher  
School Leader

## TYPE OF SCHOOL

Suburban

## LOCATION

Middletown, OH  
(Cincinnati area)

## TOTAL STUDENTS

400-500 students  
in grade 6

## THE VISION

### Strengthening school community when there's limited time

At Highview Sixth Grade Center in Middletown, Ohio, school leader Nicole Fisher faces a unique challenge. Students attend Highview for just one year before moving on to their next middle school. Not only do teachers have to build relationships every school year with a new crop of sixth-grade students, but students are largely unfamiliar with each other because they arrive from one of seven different neighborhood elementary schools.

That's what was on Fisher's mind when she attended a recent ISTE education conference. While she didn't have a specific list of tools she wanted to research, when she stopped by Along's booth, she instantly became intrigued.

**"I went in and talked with someone and thought, Along could work for my school," said Fisher. "It sprung something within me. My kids come in and they don't know us at all, so we want to build relationships quickly."**

Fisher says that sixth graders in particular are trying to figure out who they are and need to feel connected to their teachers and school community. In addition to being a time of devel-

opment change, students at this age are also finding their friend groups and academic passions.

## THE STRATEGY

### 'Pride' time focuses on relationship building each week

Creating and maintaining strong teacher-student connections doesn't always come naturally, so Fisher brought Along to Highview's staff to offer a free solution to help. Since the beginning of the school year, Highview educators ask students a reflection question using Along every Monday during their daily homeroom period known as "Pride."

**"Some teachers can naturally have relationship-building conversations in class," shared Fisher. "But some people are just not built to do this. They may be earlier in their career or just don't know how to broach different topics with their students. Along gives them a bank of options to choose from to get to know their students."**

## THE IMPACT

### Faster understanding of student needs and interests

What Fisher likes about Along is that it allows her teachers to choose pre-vetted questions within the platform that will resonate with their specific classrooms. With some homerooms more boy- or girl-heavy, or some classrooms having different overall needs, Along provides a wealth of weekly questions to ask students.

**Throughout Pride classrooms, both students and teachers have shared that using Along is "easy." And, some teachers are even exploring how to use Along in their academic classrooms like an exit ticket.**

"Along is part of this shift at our school to build relationships every day, in each of our classrooms between teachers and students," Fisher said. "Each year can feel very different on our campus, depending on the group of kids who are here, and this gives us a way to see how these relationships are going."