

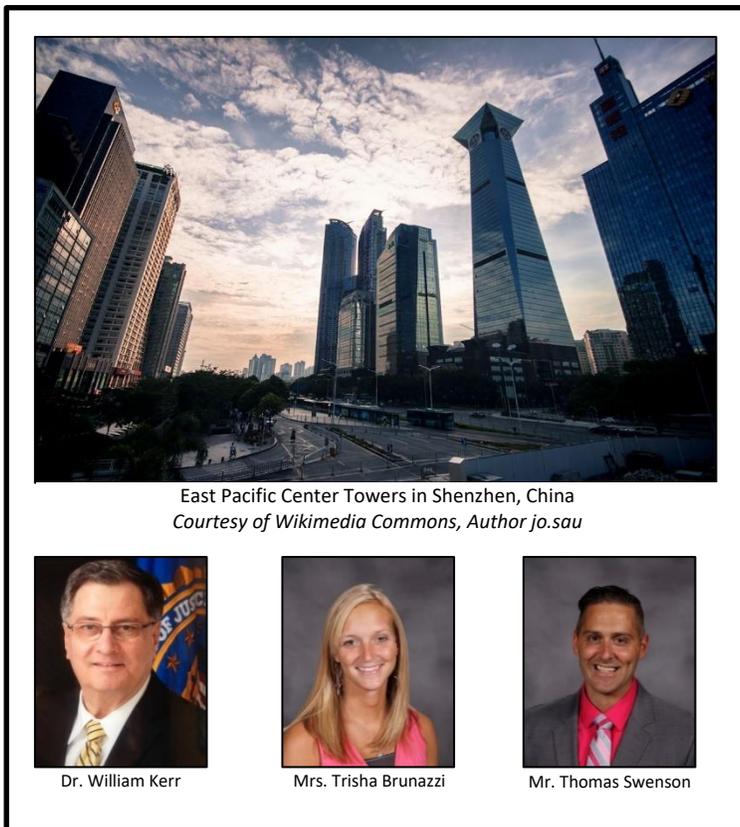
NORWIN EDUCATORS TO VISIT SHENZHEN, CHINA TO BUILD EXCHANGE PARTNERSHIP

NORTH HUNTINGDON, PA. — Three Norwin educators will travel to Shenzhen, China, in mid-September to promote teacher and student communications, educational and cultural exchanges, and collaboration to develop global awareness for teacher exchanges and study.

The five-day planned visit represents another step in the ongoing international partnership between Norwin School District and schools in the People’s Republic of China.

Dr. William Kerr, Superintendent of Schools — who has established a professional working relationship with the Chinese based on a previous visit of Chinese educators to Norwin — will lead the Norwin delegation of teachers. Joining Dr. Kerr will be Mrs. Trisha Brunazzi, Gifted/STEM Education Coordinator, Hillcrest Intermediate School; and Mr. Thomas Swenson, 5th-grade English Language Arts Teacher, Hillcrest Intermediate School. [Brief bios of each educator can be found here.](#)

Located north of Hong Kong, Shenzhen is a major city in China, with an estimated 12.9 million people. The city is a leading global technology innovation hub. Shenzhen aspires to become a sustainable innovation metropolis by 2035 and an innovation-oriented, leading global city with competitive influence by the middle of this century.



East Pacific Center Towers in Shenzhen, China
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons, Author jo.sau



Dr. William Kerr



Mrs. Trisha Brunazzi



Mr. Thomas Swenson

An organization called IFA-EDU CHINA, or the International Foundation Alliance, is paying for and organizing the trip. The Chinese company’s mission is to promote and support international education and cultural experiences for school-age students and educators through scholarships and shared experiences.

IFA-EDU CHINA invited Dr. Kerr and the teachers to showcase the quality educational programs and services of Norwin School District to foster an international Chinese-American program. In Shenzhen, the Norwin educators will tour two schools per day, and they will speak at a regional education conference to nearly 100 local public school principals, as well as business associates who are interested in building schools in America. They will share educator professional development, pedagogical and instructional best practices, and academic resource sharing with the principals. Leaders from the Chinese national government will be also attending. One day will also be set aside for cultural activities.

“As the Norwin educators prepare for the China excursion, our delegation looks forward to visiting the City of Shenzhen and its public schools, learning more about the school day and schedule, experiencing first-hand pedagogical instruction, and understanding China’s nationwide, standardized curriculum,” Dr. Kerr said. “Equally important, it is a great opportunity to showcase the Norwin School District and its educational programs with a PowerPoint and video presentation at a National Conference of Elementary and Secondary Principals in the People’s Republic of China.”

Mrs. Brunazzi recalled the Chinese delegation’s visit to her classroom in February to observe STEM activities that highlighted innovation and creativity in her classroom. She immediately knew she wanted to be part of the program to learn from them.

“I am honored to represent Norwin in such an amazing educational experience,” Mrs. Brunazzi said. “This will be such a positive step toward an important partnership to promote global education.”

Mr. Swenson said he anticipates that the visit will be “equally rewarding for all involved.”

“I am excited about the opportunity to share the great programs and teaching that take place every day in our School District, while learning and experiencing the teaching styles and environment of the Chinese education system,” Mr. Swenson said.

Chinese Students to Visit Norwin in October

Immediately after the Norwin educators’ trip, Norwin School District will host up to 40 students in Grades 5-8 from the Shenzhen Tianjian School in China. The Chinese students will visit Norwin beginning Sunday, September 30, 2018, through Saturday, October 20, 2018 for the opportunity of a global learning experience. Their trip includes educational tours of New York City, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C., but their stay in Norwin School District will be the focal point of their journey before returning to China.

The Chinese students will stay with Norwin host families and will participate in regular academic programs and daily schedules. Both Norwin teachers — Mrs. Brunazzi and Mr. Swenson — who are National Board Certified and considered to be master teachers, demonstrated an early interest in the Chinese Youth Ambassador Program and will be an integral part of the visitation of Chinese students and activities at Hillcrest Intermediate School and Norwin Middle School. IFA-EDU CHINA will provide a stipend to Norwin School District and homestay families for tuition fees, homestay fees, and associated program costs.



Chinese Principal Dr. Paul Huang greets the Norwin Air Force Junior ROTC cadets during a visit to Norwin High School in February 2018.

Second Trip to China Planned

In November, another cohort of three Norwin educators are scheduled to travel to China for additional educational and cultural exchanges. Led by Dr. Natalie McCracken, Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education, the second trip tentatively includes Dr. Heather Newell, principal of Sheridan Terrace Elementary School, and Ms. Angela Mazur, Norwin High School English Teacher.

Norwin School District’s partnerships with China have been foundation building. In February, a delegation of ten Chinese educators toured Norwin High School and Hahntown Elementary School to observe an innovative STEM education program in the United States. They discussed the Norwin STEM Innovation Program offerings with administrators, and learned about the structure of the American school day. The Chinese educators were fascinated with student and teacher engagement through project-based learning, advanced technologies, innovation and creativity in the Norwin schools.

Also, in recent months, the Norwin Board of Education — interested in establishing an international partnership with public and/or private schools in the People’s Republic of China — has approved a series of measures paving the way for a Chinese partnership. These include:

- Approving a Cooperation Agreement with IFA-EDU CHINA through June 30, 2023 to provide the Youth Ambassador Program, as well as an associated budget;
- Establishing an Office of International Relations and Studies to effectively manage the partnership including administration, communications, program coordination, and accounting of budget and financial matters;
- Creating a Homestay Coordinator position, currently held by Mr. Swenson, to oversee program logistics, with compensation from the Youth Ambassador Program Budget;
- Approving the travel of the three Norwin educators to go to China; and
- Authorizing the Administration to explore other partnership programs, such as an F-1 Visa Student Exchange and Visitor Diploma Program, and Summer STEM Institutes, which include education, cultural, and art exchanges; student and teacher collaboration; teacher exchange and professional development; and pedagogical and instructional best practices.