

# Shurtleff Takes Over as WASD's New Career Coach

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—BY WARREN HOWELER—



Samantha Shurtleff, a 2022 graduate of Penn State, has taken over as the new career coach for the Wyalusing Area School District. Her office is located in the career and conference center at Wyalusing Valley High School. Photo by Warren Howeler

A new face has been walking the halls of the school buildings on Wyalusing's Max P. Gannon Campus.

Samantha Shurtleff, a 2022 graduate of Penn State, recently joined the Wyalusing district as its new career coach through the Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission (NTRPDC).

Samantha's travels to become the district's career coach began this spring when she was completing an internship in the Lackawanna Trail School District.

"While I was there, I went to the NEIU (Northeastern Educational Intermediate Unit) and I met the guidance counselor for the (Susquehanna County Career and Technology Center)," she said.

Through that conversation, the counselor raised the idea of Samantha taking over as the career coach at that facility.

"It sounded wonderful because I really like the part of helping students figure out who they are and what they want to be," she said.

She applied for the position through the NTRPDC and was hired, taking over that post for the remainder of the last school year.

"Over the summer, I was exploring more opportunities and I wanted more hours and more possibilities," she said. "So, they (NTRPDC) offered me this position."

Samantha jumped at the opportunity and actually ended up switching places with Karen Long, who has served as Wyalusing's career coach since 2019.

"I have liked it a lot," she said of her tenure thus far in Wyalusing. "This is my first post-college experience. I really enjoy it, especially when I get to work with the students."

As the district's career coach, Samantha's duties include providing career counseling, guidance and activities for students to increase awareness of local and regional career opportunities, as well as assist students in understanding real workplace expectations and skill requirements.

Since joining the district, Samantha has put together a college fair and is planning another such event for next month.

"We are doing a lot of college stuff because, right now, is when the seniors are going to want to pick a college if they are going there or at least apply," she said.

She is also working with all the teachers on an interest survey that will be sent to all students in seventh through 12th grade at the high school.

The information garnered from those surveys will help Samantha tailor some of the visits that she coordinates at the school.

"If we have 10 students who are interested in criminal justice, let me bring in a state trooper (or) let me bring in someone from the correctional facility," she said.

She is also planning a career day event at the elementary school in the spring.

Another aspect that Samantha is working on is an initiative that is being spearheaded by Wyalusing School Superintendent Dr. Jason Bottiglieri called "Diploma-Plus."

"That is his idea of wanting every student in Wyalusing to leave with not just a diploma," she said. "He wants them to have some sort of training or certification or just something extra."

Part of that will be focusing on employers, with Samantha working to put together small-group discussions between students and local businesses.

"I can help students with their resumes, cover letters, applying to colleges (and) applying for jobs," she said.

Samantha said her role in Wyalusing essentially focuses on getting the students ready for their post-high school life.

"I want to help them get ready for whatever their next step is, whether that is going right into the work force, going into a trade school, doing a certification online or going to college," she said.

As Wyalusing's career coach, Samantha is encouraging students— and their parents—to reach out to her to discuss any topic they may have pertaining to their next steps in life.

"I am here every day Monday through Friday," she said. "I'm always checking my email. I am available. I really enjoy helping students figure out their path."

