



# SCHOOLS TO WATCH - Virginia

## MODEL SCHOOL – VISITOR’S GUIDE



### Marsteller Middle School



**Re-Designated in 2017**

Marsteller Middle School  
Prince William County Public School  
Bristow, Virginia

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### 2016 – 2017 School Statistics

Community: Suburban Washington DC  
Enrollment: 1331  
Grade Levels: 6 - 8  
School Schedule: 6 class day (6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders)  
7 class day (8<sup>th</sup> graders)

#### Student Demographics (as of September 30, 2016)

- 16.2% Hispanic of any race
- 0.5% American Indian/Alaskan
- 10.7% Asian
- 11.0% Black/African-American
- 0.1% Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 54.1% White
- 7.5% Multi-Racial
- 4.4% Economically Disadvantaged
- 13.2% English Language Learners

#### Fully Accredited by VDOE

English Pass Rate	≥89%
History Pass Rate	≥92%
Math Pass Rate	≥85%
Science Pass Rate	=92%
Writing Pass Rate	≥84%

## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

### Academic Excellence

Marsteller Middle School continues to function as a professional learning community where teams of teachers work collaboratively on behalf of our students. Our collaborative learning teams clarify their vision for student success, examine the current situation, develop a plan for improvement, and continuously monitor and evaluate meaningful achievement data to assess progress. Together they develop learning targets, language goals, and differentiated instruction to ensure that students are challenged and supported.

At Marsteller, we believe in job-embedded professional learning and have, as a faculty, participated in multiple sessions that focus on quality instructional strategies and techniques to meet the needs of diverse learners. The learning is followed by in-depth conversations and implemented practice to fully incorporate the methodology into instruction. Attending professional learning as a faculty builds shared understanding of our collective responsibility to our students.

Our conversations in our collaborative learning teams surround the importance of quality first instruction including the development of a thorough and shared understanding of the Standards of Learning and identification of the learning targets that are essential for students to access the curriculum in a meaningful way. Additionally, we discuss the strategies and techniques from our professional learning opportunities to transfer these ideas into our classroom instruction to meet the diverse needs of students in a systematic manner. The alignment we seek is ultimately present in our assessment practices to ensure a standards-based

progression from planning and instruction through assessment, returning to re-teach and re-assess as necessary, to confirm all students are mastering important skills and knowledge.

Marsteller Middle School is a *Project Lead the Way* certified school and as such, leads the way for middle school implementation of *Project Lead the Way* across the school division. Our Technology and Engineering instructors help prepare students for future study in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math and share their expertise with colleagues across the state of Virginia. Marsteller Middle School is one of three middle schools designated a Math/Science Specialty School. The Marsteller Middle School Math/Science Specialty Program is interest-based and is designed for students who have enthusiasm and preference for math and science in middle school, and who would like to explore mathematical and scientific concepts and principles in a much more intensive program of study. MSSP participants are grouped together with other program students for daily science classes where students may benefit from a singular focus on common interests.

## Developmental Responsiveness

Marsteller educators strive to provide a positive and invigorating learning environment for students, and it is evident in the classrooms and the halls of our school. The phrase *developmental responsiveness* portrays an apt description of how caring adults in a middle school work successfully with students. Our teams work closely with parents and students to ensure a partnership among all stakeholders. The team configuration process requires careful consideration in its development. The personalities and teaching styles of each teacher bring a wealth of experiential and knowledge-based instructional competence, while the caring and responsive nature of each teacher supports all students on the team.

In the sixth and seventh grades, professional educators and students are grouped into teams that include all students at all levels. Each interdisciplinary team houses sheltered instruction classes and/or inclusion classes, extended classes, and Math/Science classes. Purposeful and in-depth planning has resulted in a schedule that offers 25 minutes of Team Time each day, which allows students to participate in individualized instruction or extended instruction to meet each student's academic needs. Our professional educators interact frequently with parents to ensure consistent and consequential communication. This collaborative approach extends to include school counselors and administrators who may join the team to work together with parents in support of student success. This responsive methodology illustrates the value and importance we place on our relationships with our students and families.

Our school counseling office plays an integral role at Marsteller Middle School. Our counselors and staff are available and responsive to students and families to guide and advocate. Our school counselors have developed key transitional opportunities for parents who have students entering Marsteller as sixth graders. Our spring session entitled *Help! My Baby's Going to Middle School!* has been well received and has prompted a similar session for parents of students leaving us and entering high school. This fall parent session is entitled *Movin' on Up!* Parents have the chance to ask questions and share experiences in an informal format with fellow parents. The feedback from these sessions has proven to be positive and has increased the comfort level of our parents as their children transition from one level to another.

At Marsteller Middle School we pay tribute to our Bulldog P.R.I.D.E. Within this framework our students build **Partnerships**, show **Respect**, embrace **Innovation**, celebrate **Diversity**, and demonstrate **Excellence**. Students and faculty exhibiting the P.R.I.D.E. characteristics are honored each month as *Bulldogs of the Month*.

## Social Equity

Marsteller Middle School focuses on quality and effective instruction that includes a commitment to professional learning which allows us to provide a quality instructional program. Marsteller utilizes a team approach and continuously adapts and adjusts to meet the diverse needs of students. We are systematic and data-driven as we analyze trend data and background information to focus our opportunities for intervention, remediation, or extension. These data collections provide foundational information for collaborative learning teams as we discuss strategies, techniques, resources, and professional development to respond to all students (gifted, EL, special education, general education). We feel that having a common context is imperative when unpacking standards and planning lessons that are aligned to support our students. Professional educators at Marsteller Middle School build a personalized depiction of student academic progress and consistently communicate this information with parents, students, and colleagues.

Our B.A.R.K. program (**B**ehavior **A**ttitude **R**esponsibility & **K**indness) provides a framework that promotes good citizenship and a considerate learning environment for students. The combination of professional educators and educational leaders supporting the positive behavior of our students is powerful and effective. This program develops student leaders and encourages a learning culture that builds compassion and confidence. Students are commended for their positive impact on the school community and receive B.A.R.K.

cards for exhibiting kindness and personal responsibility throughout the school day. The outreach from school to families surrounding the great things students are doing at Marsteller benefits the partnerships we have with our students and families and supports our efforts to ensure the school rules are understood by all and consistently and equitably applied.

Marsteller is a unique and inviting school. We firmly believe in the tenets of a *School to Watch*, which provide the foundation for our shared decision-making and commitment to continuous improvement. Along with our formalized programs, which are appropriate and responsive to the middle level student and that support and recognize their efforts, we spend quality time with our students each day to celebrate their victories and reflect on their accomplishments. We value our work in the middle and consider a quality middle level education to be vital to the future success of students. Each morning we recite with our students a statement which affirms our shared belief in all we can do and be:

*We are Marsteller. We are a community whose members know they are valued and respected. We choose each day to strive for excellence: in our school, in our friendships, and most importantly in ourselves.*

## **Organizational Structures**

Marsteller Middle School is a professional learning community and we share a commitment to continuous improvement and dedication to our students and families. We recognize and appreciate the work of our faculty and staff and all they do to engage their students in rigorous, interesting, and learner-centered instruction. We are diligent in developing a culture of collaboration and shared decision-making with a focus on learning for all students. It is important that we work together to cultivate an atmosphere of mutual respect, trust, and professionalism. Our *Strategic Planning Committee* is one of our organizational structures that provides the framework for our work in this area. The committee has professional educator representation from each grade level, our classified staff, and administration and works together to analyze pertinent data and feedback (both qualitative and quantitative) and, utilizing quality tools, identify any issues that need our attention. This process allows us to gather input from our faculty and staff, ensuring all have a voice in the decision-making process to achieve our collective goals. This collaborative process serves as an opportunity for reflection for our team.

The faculty and staff of Marsteller Middle school believe in the importance of collaborative leadership to sustain a culture of cooperation, where all voices are heard. Our Advisory Council welcomes stakeholder participation in school governance as our journey as a high-performing middle school continues. Together we positively influence school culture and advance the vision and mission of Marsteller Middle School. Our advisory council vision statement represents the guiding beliefs that all stakeholders share:

*Marsteller Middle School is a safe learning environment that encourages academic excellence and good citizenship. Marsteller Middle School students have confidence and personal responsibility as they become productive individuals of their community, nation, and world. They possess social awareness and the ability to be proficient critical thinkers.*

The Marsteller Collaborative Mentor Program uses a research-based collaborative mentoring model designed to give a team of support to our new teachers. Our model has an Educator Support Team, which includes the lead mentor, mentors, and an administrator. The team meets quarterly, and more frequently as needed, to assess the needs of new teachers and to plan meaningful sessions and professional learning accordingly. This mentoring model also includes educator support sessions to address the needs of our new educators. These sessions are regularly offered to all new staff members, 2<sup>nd</sup> year teachers, and 3<sup>rd</sup> year teachers. Resource mentors throughout the building are invited to share their expertise in a variety of training sessions during the school year.

Our new teachers are paired with a designated mentor for the entire school year. Their interactions include weekly meetings and peer observations. Mentor teams have a continued focus on planning quality instructional units that are aligned with curriculum standards, objectives, and learning targets while using best practice strategies and techniques to optimize student learning. *Collaborative Mentoring* and *Cognitive Coaching* are key principles in teacher retention. Marsteller mentors realize the importance of these organizational structures and the impact they have on the academic success of our students.