School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

**Academic Excellence**

- Students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades are offered a full continuum of academic courses from which to choose. In each core area, students may choose from regular level courses or Pre-AP courses. Pre-AP courses are designed to develop skills necessary for success in advanced AP courses in high school and to set the ground work for college level courses.
- The mathematics curriculum includes the option for qualified students to participate in an accelerated mathematics sequence of courses that allows
them to take algebra in seventh grade and geometry in eighth grade. This program permits more options for advanced mathematics study in high school.

- Science classes engage students in scientific inquiry through experiments and hands on exploration of topics covered in class. Pre-AP students complete science fair projects and Rube Goldberg inventions.
- Seventh grade science students participate in the Trout-in-the-Classroom project which enables students to raise trout in the classroom and then take a field trip to release the trout in area streams.

- Hidden Valley Middle School students design and build learning stations to teach younger students a variety of science principles.
- Remediation is an ongoing effort throughout the school year at HVMS. Every nine weeks, three retired English teachers return to HVMS to remediate students that need added help with specific skills and concepts. Teachers and remediation specialists meet and plan the activities that will be targeted during the remediation sessions. Remediation in mathematics is available weekly to re-teach and practice math skills with students that need added instruction.
- High standards for academic work are maintained through grading rubrics and modeling work that requires meeting high expectations. Student work is frequently displayed in classrooms and hallways allowing students to learn from each other and appreciate each others’ creativity and hard work.
- The student body at Hidden Valley Middle School is encouraged to participate in a variety of academic competitions. Throughout the past several years, students have participated in Math Counts, PTA Reflections, National Geographic Bee, Scribner’s Spelling Bee, Destination Imagination, and several local writing competitions.
- During the past year, one of the Pre-AP eighth grade English classes was involved in a pen-pal project with a class from Brazil. HVMS students used “Skype” with the Brazilian students several times during the year and participated in writing projects. Interdisciplinary learning is also promoted through grade level projects such as an Ellis Island simulation, a mock trial for eighth grade civics students that is held in an actual court room with a judge and attorneys, and grade level field trips that enhanced SOLs.

Developmental Responsiveness
- The transition process begins in the winter as we welcome all new students with orientation programs for both students and parents. Orientation continues in the fall with programs for all new students and their families. Our guidance counselors coordinate these efforts with the support of teachers and, thanks to their efforts, the transition has been smooth. In addition to the New Student Orientation, we are moved the traditional Back to School night held in late September for all students and their parents to August 16, the week prior to the start of school.
- As middle school students test boundaries, clear expectations for behavior are critical. Grade level team meetings are held at the beginning of the year to establish parameters and follow-up meetings sustain this focus.
- School staff from middle and elementary schools articulate academic and social needs each year in order to support the transition from one level to the next.
• Grade level teams and data teams work with our guidance department to recognize when students are undergoing challenging social and family situations and identify needed resources.
• Each year, students at Hidden Valley collectively invest over 2500 hours in volunteer activities. This is done through a required community involvement project through 8th grade civics class and recognition as a “Hidden Hero” of any student who spends 30 hours or more volunteering.
• Students are also actively engaged in a variety of clubs and organizations.
  ○ Student Ambassadors provide leadership by assisting the Guidance Department as buddies for new students, teaching refusal skills in 6th grade English classes, and acting as mentors and cheerleaders for Special Olympics.
  ○ Prevention Club is sponsored by our School Resource Officer and promotes the message of making good choices. Our Red Ribbon Week activities focus on drugs and alcohol awareness and prevention. Builders Club involves students in multiple service projects. The club also does activities such as Seat Belt Awareness focusing on motor vehicle safety.
  ○ First Priority is a student-led devotional group which meets weekly before school.
  ○ Peer Tutoring Club provides extra academic assistance twice a week after school.
  ○ The Technology Student Association members take their study of STEM beyond the classroom. It gives students the chance to pursue academic challenges with friends with similar interests and goals. The diversity of TSA makes it a positive experience for many students.
  ○ Math Counts is a coaching and competitive mathematics program that promotes achievement through “bee” style contests.
  ○ Our Drama Club offers an outlet for theatrically minded students.
  ○ The Harry Potter Club is the place for students interested in all things Harry Potter: reading, magic, and drama.
  ○ We are encouraging kindness through the various activities promoted by our Random Acts of Kindness Club. One week this spring was dedicated to bring these ideas to the forefront. Students wrote notes to others that were made into Sunshine Bulletin Boards throughout the school, they wrote on the windows looking into the cafeteria random kind words, and we circled our school as students held hands in a chain of kindness.
  ○ Students interested in various games came together after school to enjoy friendly competitive games.
  ○ The Yearbook staff did an amazing job capturing 2017 at HVMS. The student and staff interviews were authentic captions for the wonderful pictures.
  ○ Students practiced leadership skills throughout the year as members of the SCA.
• The Student Assistance Program, coordinated by the SAP counselor, focuses on running weekly counseling and education groups to assist students in learning new skills. The goal is to better equip them to deal with the pressure encountered in middle school and to avoid harmful risk-taking behaviors.
• Science and Social Studies are taught as semester classes so the students have only three core classes to juggle as they learn to manage and organize their time.

Social Equity
DEAR time is an important component in English classes; we also incorporate a one of one conferencing time with students to discuss their comprehension strengths and weaknesses through casual conversations.

Incorporating speaking, writing, individual and guided reading, word study, work on comprehension and strategy instruction in all English classes.

Virginia Tech T-TAC partnership continues with much success

Math remediation is made available during the student’s math block. This allows all students access to extra help regardless of transportation issues. It also allows us to protect the integrity of our elective programs.

Other social equity highlights would include:
- Multiple afterschool functions that promote social interaction among our students.
- Numerous clubs that address academic, social and societal issues with the goal being to make our students more aware and tolerant of differences.
- High School leveled courses in technology, business, math, and foreign languages.
- A full continuum of courses (Pre-AP, co-taught, and self-contained) are offered to better serve our student’s academic needs.
- Students, with guidance of teachers, counselors, and parents, select the level of challenging courses that corresponds to their ability. Students are able to adjust the level of challenge to match individual strengths and weaknesses. For example, a student may choose regular science and math but pre-AP English and history.
- Experienced, effective teachers teach all levels of students.
- A goal is to reinstitute intermural sports for students not eligible to participate in VHSL sanctioned sports.
- Guidance counselors work with the same group of students throughout their middle school career.
- A full continuum of special education, gifted, and ELL services are provided.

**Organizational Support**

- Grade Levels and Departments meet once per month. Grade levels are given an opportunity to collaborate on grade level needs such as field trips, simulations, integrated instruction, and PBLs. Academic departments meet once per month to coordinate needs, provide professional development on content and research-based practices, discuss curriculum alignments vertical and horizontal, and share information gained from workshops and conferences.
- The Leadership Council consists of one teacher from each grade-level, a school counselor, one teacher from each core instructional area (Math, Science, English, and Social Studies), an Instructional Coach, on-site Special Education Coordinator, Media Specialist, an Elective teacher representative, and the Vice Principals and Principal.
- The C-Change team is an instructional team made up of teachers from the following content areas: Math, Science, Social Studies, and English. The C-Change team oversees the professional development needs and goals for the staff at Hidden Valley Middle School. In addition, collaborative conversations focusing on student learning with an emphasis on the 5Cs, as implemented by the District, have increased as well.
• Hidden Valley Middle utilizes a Data Team that is composed of the Instructional Coach, Principal, and classroom teachers. This team meets once a month with Math and English content teachers. Meetings focus on student performance through data analysis to create an action plan to support each student’s academic success. Remediation support staff is hired to support teachers and students in both Math and English.
• The PTA helps with registration and new student orientation. Parents provide support and ideas through school improvement surveys. Parents also help to support student achievement by attending activities such our Hidden Valley Middle School Expo Night.
• Hidden Valley Middle School has just finished the sixth year with a modified block schedule. This schedule provides ninety minutes of instruction for Math and English classes daily. History and Science courses are also ninety minutes in length but are completed in one semester. Elective and Physical Education rotate on A/B day schedule.
• Hidden Valley Middle partners with numerous business and community organizations to benefit the students and their educational experience.