



Pennsylvania Don Eichhorn Schools: Schools to Watch

Springton Lake Middle School



School Statistics

<http://paschoolperformance.org>

Community: Suburban
Enrollment: 864
Grade Levels: 6, 7, 8
School Schedule: 9 period day w/ 7-day cycle

Student Demographics

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | 0 |
| Asian | 6.94 |
| Black or African American | 4.28 |
| Hispanic | 2.66 |
| Multi-Racial | 2.20 |
| White | 83.80 |

2015-16 Growth Data

Reading 68.0% Math 60.5% Science 71%

2015-16 School Performance Profile: 72.0

Designation: 2016-17

- Springton Lake Middle School • Rose Tree Media School District
- Dr. Robert Salladino, Jr. , Principal
 - Mr. James M. Wigo, Sr. Superintendent
 - Mr. Donald DiPaulo & Mrs. Michelle Britton - Assistant Principals
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School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Springton Lake Middle School maintains high expectations and the pursuit of rigorous academic standards for all members of our school community. The drive for continuous improvement serves as an important element of our collective planning and work. Students immediately learn about Springton Lake's core values of Ready, Respectful, Responsible, and Resilient. The "4 Rs" provide an anchor for our school-wide positive behavior support plan. In teaching what it "looks like" and "sounds like" to be resilient, we establish the expectation that learning is often difficult and that students may initially be confronted by failure. Over the last three years, we have carefully examined our beliefs around assessment and grading. Through book studies, workshops, and professional conversations, our

teachers have begun to implement progressive grading practices. Students are routinely given the opportunity to re-do or to improve their work based upon feedback, re-teaching, and additional study.

The curriculum at Springton Lake Middle School is progressive, rigorous, and aligned with the Pennsylvania Core Standards. Our mathematics curriculum emphasizes a conceptual understanding of the subject. Over the last three years, we have worked to grow the number of students who have access to Algebra I during the middle years. During the 2015-2016 school year, we made Algebra I available to sixth grade students who demonstrated a readiness for the subject matter. In language arts, we utilize a readers and writers workshop approach. Using mentor texts and self-selected materials, students have access to books at their independent reading levels. Students are provided with regular opportunities to write about what they are reading and to enhance their writing based upon conferencing and feedback from teachers and peers.

Teachers at Springton Lake Middle School employ a wide range of instructional models to deliver the curriculum. Students are regularly engaged in cooperative learning and hands-on projects. In science, the curriculum maintains an inquiry-based, hands-on approach to teaching and learning. Students conduct laboratory investigations, collect data, and solve problems. During the prior school year, science teachers piloted new materials that provided students with an opportunity to explore the content through the lens of significant, real-world issues. For instance, eighth grade students spent several weeks exploring the question of how water quality impacts the ecology of an ecosystem. The question was particularly relevant in light of current events that were in the news at the time. Additional units of instruction within this program will be implemented in all grade levels during the upcoming school year. In all subject areas, students and teachers have access to technology to support the teaching and learning process. Carts of MacBooks and iPads are assigned to each interdisciplinary team for their exclusive use. Students and teachers utilize electronic tools such as Google Classroom to share materials and to foster online collaboration.

Teachers utilize a wide array of formal and informal assessments to monitor student learning and guide instruction. Benchmark data using MAP and CDT provide teachers with important information about student learning. Teachers utilize Performance Tracker to analyze data for individuals, classes, and teams of students. Teachers have access to Study Island as one tool to customize a remediation or enrichment plan based upon the data. A Child Study team comprised of administrators, guidance counselors, school psychologist, home & school visitor, nurse, teachers, and a Response to Instruction & Intervention (RtII) teacher meet on a weekly basis to review student performance and to design plans for students who need additional support.

Several structures to provide support, remediation, and re-teaching are included in the overall program at Springton Lake Middle School. Our Core Extension program provides each student with a daily period in his or her schedule to receive enrichment, remediation, and additional instruction tailored to individual needs. The main element of the period is time for reading and writing across the curriculum. Utilizing the content of the science and social studies curriculum, students hone their reading of non-fiction text and have an opportunity to develop argument and informational writing skills, with an emphasis on citing text evidence. Teachers of many different subject areas teach the reading and writing course as a way to reinforce the importance of these skills in all settings. Students who need additional assistance and re-teaching in mathematics or support with executive functioning skills receive this instruction during Core Extension. Finally, students identified as gifted participate in enrichment seminars during Core Extension. By imbedding all of these different services during Core Extension, we avoid the need for any pull-out during regular class time.

Every interdisciplinary team includes a special education teacher dedicated to the students on that team. This individual serves as the point-person for students with identified learning needs. In addition, he/she acts as a resource for the entire team. The special education teacher has several dedicated periods for scheduled co-teaching with regular education counterparts. Students receive support and accommodations in an inclusive setting. Students with significant reading needs receive instruction using the Read 180 program in a co-taught setting with a special education teacher and a reading specialist. All teachers are scheduled to be available for extra help after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Students can also choose to participate in a Homework Club that is staffed by two teachers twice per week. Opportunities for a “catch-up” period are strategically scheduled during the marking period. Using a modified bell schedule, students can sign-up to visit specific teachers for additional help or to complete work on a project or assignment.

The recognition and celebration of academic excellence remains a top priority at Springton Lake Middle School. Inducting students into our school’s chapter of the National Junior Honor Society is one way we are able to acknowledge their accomplishments. In addition to demonstrating a high degree of academic scholarship, students must also be involved in activities within the school and have a record of service to their school and community. A faculty panel is charged with reviewing the applications submitted from all interested and eligible students. The culmination of this process is an induction ceremony to which teachers, parents, and family members are invited. For the last two years, members of our high school’s chapter of the National Honor Society played an active role in the actual ceremony.

As a key element to our continuous improvement efforts, teachers work with colleagues in a highly collaborative fashion. Using the instructional rounds model, teachers routinely visit and observe in peers’ classrooms. Teachers then debrief and discuss effective instructional practices that they observed. Teachers also utilize available team meeting time to work collaboratively with team, grade level, and subject-area colleagues. All teachers new to Springton Lake, even those with prior experience in other schools, are provided with a mentor teacher. The mentor serves as a resource for curricular questions and operational items, but also helps to provide a supportive connection with a colleague.

Springton Lake Middle School uses a team-based approach to middle level education. The administrative team believes strongly in the benefits of the team structure. The schedule is carefully crafted, and in many cases students are hand scheduled to ensure that each student’s unique needs are addressed. Students are purely teamed without any cross teaming. Each team of teachers meets one period a day for team meeting and every teacher has a common preparation period with the entire grade level in order to be responsive to student needs and concerns. Even the physical environment was designed to meet the needs of the middle school concept. Social studies, science, mathematics, and language arts classes surround a team “center” which serves as the hub for the team. The teachers at Springton Lake Middle School work closely with their team members and often choose to share their preparation and lunch periods together. As an additional way to support the developmental needs of our students, guidance counselors loop with the same students for all three years of their middle school experience.

Springton Lake’s program is intended to address the needs of the whole child in order to promote physical, social, and emotional well-being. To promote the physical health of students, Springton Lake has a top-notch Health and Physical Education program. With six full-time physical education teachers, students are able to receive a full year of physical education. The curriculum includes, but is not limited to, innovative activities such as swimming, roller blading, mountain biking, rock climbing, and weight lifting. Springton Lake also has a comprehensive health curriculum at each grade level.

Students receive health during a quarterly special area class that does not take away from their physical education course.

The guidance counselors and school psychologist run weekly groups to meet the needs of all students. In the past, groups have been focused on social skills, leadership, coping, mindfulness and grief. The guidance counselors develop their groups based on the needs of the students. Guidance counselors push into social studies classes for a “Guidance Lesson” at least one time per marking period. Topics are designed by the guidance counselors and focus primarily on career exploration and goal setting. Classroom meetings are held on Day 7, and lessons are developed by the guidance counselor to focus on the 4R’s. The guidance counselors work together to ensure consistent lessons are being taught across grade levels. This past school year, the guidance counselors and administrative team created a student reporting form that is part of a successful reporting procedure. This form is used by students to report any concern that occurs at school and requires assistance from an adult. Student feedback has been very positive since the implementation of the new form. Students report that they feel very comfortable reporting concerns to adults in the building and know that it will be kept confidential.

Teachers, administrators, students, and parents are dedicated to continuous improvement at Springton Lake Middle School. Regular collaboration and ongoing dialogue occur through team meetings, classroom meetings, student council meetings, department meetings, PTG meetings, and principal advisory board meetings in order to be responsive to the needs, concerns, and suggestions of the school community. Parent and student feedback is highly valued at Springton Lake Middle School. This past school year, administration issued a survey for parents to complete anonymously online. Several staff development meetings were dedicated to the review and action planning from the feedback received.

Over the last two years, school leadership teams collaborated to develop and implement a school-wide positive behavior support plan that builds on the values instilled at the four elementary schools in the district. At the elementary level, students learn to be “Ready, Respectful, and Responsible.” To these three characteristics, Springton Lake added “Resilient” to encourage a growth mindset. These four core values are reinforced through activities and guidance lessons geared toward teaching positive behaviors to all students. In hallways, classrooms, and in the cafeteria signs remind students of the “Four R’s.” To reward and reinforce extraordinary demonstrations of these characteristics, teachers and staff members give out Silver Spartan cards to students.

Springton Lake Middle School recognizes the importance of connecting school to work as increasingly vital in the 21st Century. This includes developing character traits such as leadership, collaboration with peers, and citizenship. The importance of service to the local and global community is embedded throughout the curriculum and through various student and faculty sponsored events with proceeds going to local and national charities. Springton Lake Middle School has been celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King Day for several years on the holiday. This past year, the committee decided to try a new approach that was extremely successful. Every student was involved and had the opportunity to experience the positive feeling that comes from helping others. Springton Lake also supports two schools in Uganda, Africa with proceeds from the annual Hoops for Hope basketball game.

This past school year, Springton Lake staff worked with a neighboring middle school to create “The Providence Cup”. The “Providence Cup” is a friendly competition between two neighboring middle schools with the goal of increasing school spirit and unity while also raising money for a student-

selected charity. The Providence Cup served as a positive unifying force within our school and provided for an exciting conclusion to the school year.

Springton Lake Middle School recognizes that middle school is a time of great transition. A significant emphasis is placed on the transition from 5th to 6th and from 8th to 9th. The 5th to 6th grade transition begins in the Spring with the principal visiting each elementary school with the grade level counselor. Students later have an opportunity to spend the morning touring the building and eating lunch in the Springton Lake cafeteria. At the end of the school year, the parent teacher groups join forces at each elementary building to host a "Fun Day". The purpose of the "Fun Day" is to provide students time to socialize with all 5th grade students from across the district in preparation for 6th grade. During the summer, the administration hosts two transition camps. Transition Camp is an activity designed to promote a positive feeling about the start of middle school. Students have the opportunity to meet and interact with administrators and staff as they participate in fun and helpful activities. Student volunteers help answer questions, assist with opening lockers, and assist the new middle school students with reading their schedules. The morning ends with a BBQ lunch prepared by the administration and teacher volunteers. The transition from 8th to 9th grade is equally robust. Penncrest High School teachers begin visiting with the 8th grade students in February of their 8th grade year to explain scheduling options and to provide an overview of the high school schedule. In the Spring, 8th grade students have the chance to visit Penncrest High School to interact with high school students and to learn more about the overall high school experience. In addition to the entire grade level transition activities, Springton Lake and Penncrest High School have worked together to create specific transition programs for students in need of a more personal connection. An 8th to 9th grade mentoring program for minority students has been extremely successful the last few years. The students spend two days in the Spring getting to know each other through team building activities. Once the students enter high school, they maintain the connection with their mentors through and beyond freshmen year.

At Springton Lake Middle School, social equity is emphasized in all academic areas. Classes are primarily heterogeneously grouped, unless students require additional remediation beyond differentiation and in-class support. Utilizing a co-teaching model, assistance is offered in various classes for students who may require extra in-class support within the regular education setting. Supported classes and curriculum differentiation provide the opportunity for all students to be included in academic, special area classes, and extracurricular activities.

Communication plays a vital role at Springton Lake Middle School. The principal writes a detailed weekly update to parents that is sent via e-mail. The administration and teachers actively utilize Twitter to share information and good news about our school. The *Home Access Center* allows parents and students access to grades, assignments, and student progress. Teachers and staff provide parents with information and academic examples to support their children at home. In addition to school wide communication and access, all three administrators attend monthly PTG meetings and Principal Advisory meetings. The administration will often bring topics to the table and ask for feedback from parents.

Springton Lake Middle School is committed to providing individualized support to meet students' diverse and changing needs. Teachers attend team meetings daily to discuss student concerns and progress. Through ongoing dialogue and planning, the team proactively addresses students' emotional, social, and academic needs. Grade level guidance counselors and the school psychologist offer various groups during the Core Extension period. Since the school schedule operates on a seven day cycle, every student attends a team day to encourage student and teacher relationships and to implement team building activities to foster unity and team spirit. Classroom meetings, an

important element of our schoolwide positive behavior support plan and our school's anti-bullying efforts, are also incorporated within the Core Extension time.

The school calendar is packed with after school events to make all students feel included in the Springton Lake family. In the Fall, students participate in many activities for Red Ribbon Week and have the opportunity to participate in the annual Turkey Trot. In the winter, many of the 7th and 8th grade students attend a winter semi-formal and participate in the Hoops for Hope fundraiser. In early Spring, students form teams with friends to compete against teachers in the annual DVD-a-thon. This past year, students developed two new events that the student council advisor and administration supported and helped organize. The one event that was completely student run and open to all students in the school district was the Rubik's Cube speedcubing competition.

Springton Lake has various clubs that are open to all students. In addition to the more traditional club offerings, Springton Lake also offers specialized clubs to meet the individual interests of students. For example, the multicultural student union club looks to promote cultural awareness within the school community through a variety of activities. The Donuts and Devos Club meets before school to share joys and concerns, discuss spiritual topics, and spend time together in meditation. An annual club fair is held early in the school year for students to explore all club options. This past school year, Springton Lake had 26 different clubs on display.

Students are appreciated, respected and honored at Springton Lake Middle School. Every month each team chooses two students for Student of the Month honors. The team works together to write a sincere paragraph about the student's many strengths and a presentation is held with their families at a monthly breakfast. The wall in the main lobby of the school is dedicated to honoring the Students of the Month. The teams also send "Good News" postcards to individual students on their team. Each postcard is handwritten and highlights their individual accomplishments. Through this process, teams strive to recognize every student in some way at least one time per year.

As part of the school-wide positive behavior support plan, Springton Lake endorses a restorative approach when students demonstrate poor behavior that requires discipline. The primary objective of this approach to student discipline is to preserve the relationship between the student and his or her school, preventing the student from feeling alienated or disenfranchised, in addition to effectively modifying long-term behavior. The restorative approach is particularly important at the middle level, where student behavior is often triggered by a still-developing sense of personal identity. Otherwise good students make poor choices, as they try on different roles and seek the attention they need to feel peer acceptance.

The team concept is first and foremost at Springton Lake Middle School. There are three teams per grade level and each team is made up of four core content area teachers and a special education teacher. The purpose of the team structure is to create smaller learning communities within the larger population of the Springton Lake family. This allows students to develop meaningful relationships with a smaller group of grade level peers and teachers. Team teachers enjoy daily common planning time and a daily team meeting. Each team is led by a team leader who serves as a liaison to the administrative team and plays an active role in shared decision making through monthly team leader meetings. Although the school district has a strong new teacher mentoring program, the structure of the team provides tremendous support for teachers new to our school.

The organizational structure at Springton Lake Middle School provides a strong foundation for continuous school improvement, strategic planning, and communication. The building is led by a principal and two assistant principals, all of whom have spent their entire careers working at the

middle level. A guidance counselor is assigned to a grade level in sixth grade and follows the class throughout middle school. Administrators are visible and accessible throughout the school day and the assistant principals are in every lunch period. This structure provides an opportunity to develop personal relationships with students. Each grade level administrator develops an in-depth knowledge of the students' individual academic and social needs.

The master schedule has a core extension period designed to optimize student achievement. Teachers are often available for after school help and some teachers choose to come to school early to provide additional support. Several clubs and extracurricular activities are available to Springton Lake students. In addition to after school activities, approximately 63% of the student population participate in the music program. Students receive their music instruction as part of a seven-day special area cycle with a larger group rehearsal taking place on Day 7 of the cycle. This schedule minimizes interruptions to instruction during the day and provides students with opportunities to participate in additional activities and clubs after school.

Professional development for staff is ongoing throughout the school year. In addition to planned in-service days that are designed collaboratively with teacher input, the administrative team routinely shares professional materials for teachers to review. During the 2015-2016 school year, as an extension of an activity from an in-service day, interested teachers and administrators joined together in a book study of Cathy Vatterott's text, "*Rethinking Grading*." The discussion sessions yielded excellent professional conversation, as well as the creation of a draft statement to reform schoolwide practices around assessment and grading. The staff will continue to study this topic during the upcoming school year.

Technology supports the teaching and learning process at Springton Lake Middle School. All teachers have access to a personal MacBook and iPad for their planning and lesson development. Classrooms are outfitted with Apple TV and interactive projection systems. The infrastructure of the building supports wireless access to technology in all locations. The number of standalone computer labs has been reduced in favor of increased access to technology at the point of instruction. All teams are assigned a cart of MacBooks and iPads for their exclusive use.

Springton Lake Middle School maintains ongoing partnerships with local colleges and universities in order to support the training and development of a new generation of middle level educators. Teachers routinely open their classrooms to students in need of field experience and student teaching opportunities. New for the 2016-2017 school year, our school has forged a relationship with St. Joseph's University to host junior level students enrolled in the middle years certification program. Students will spend the school year working with Springton Lake teachers with the goal of securing placement for student teaching during the subsequent school year.

The administration, faculty, and staff of Springton Lake Middle School is proud of the overall program that we provide for our students. Over the course of the last three school years, student achievement in science has improved. In addition to increasing the overall percentage of students who achieved proficient or better, the percentage of students who scored advanced also grew. The Algebra I Keystone Examination was administered for the first time at Springton Lake during the 2014-2015 school year. Students performed incredibly well, with 134 out of 137 assessed students scoring in the proficient or advanced range. For the 2015-2016 school year, 196 out of 201 students taking the assessment scored in the proficient or advanced range. The percentage of students scoring in the advanced range increased from nearly 69% in 2014-2015 to nearly 77% in 2015-2016.

On the PSSA, scores from 2013 to 2014 increased in nearly all areas. Our school's School Performance Profile also increased during that time. Test scores during the last two school years have been lower with the introduction of the new, PA Core-aligned assessments. While our scores from 2015 compared well with our peer schools and state averages, our scores were much lower as compared with our recent history. While our English Language Arts scores remain very strong and positively reflect our school's focus on writing, progress in mathematics remains a challenge. Our school implemented a new mathematics program during the 2015-2016 school year in order to ensure alignment with the Common Core. While our teachers worked diligently to learn and utilize the new program, not surprisingly there was no initial impact on student achievement. Achievement on the mathematics assessment remained relatively stable. While we are confident that the second year of program implementation will begin to support improved learning, we are anxiously awaiting our entire data profile to begin analysis and planning. We also plan to expand our use of the Classroom Diagnostic Tool (CDT) in order to evaluate and track student learning.