



SCHOOLS TO WATCH – ARKANSAS DIAMOND SCHOOL OLD HIGH MIDDLE SCHOOL PROFILE

Old High Middle School



Designated 2017

Old High Middle School - Bentonville Schools
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2016-2017 School Statistics

(Sources: 2016 ESEA Report)

Enrollment: 622
Grade Levels: 5-6
School Schedule:
 CORE/ENCORE/PE 4 LIFE

Student Demographics

- 7.7% Hispanic
- 85.2% White
- 3.1% African American
- 2.1% Asian
- 1.8% Native American
- 26% Free/Reduced Lunch
- 1.9% English Learners

School	Grade	English % Met	Math % Met	Science % Met	Reading % Met	Writing % Met
OHMS	05	90.10%	44.70%	55.9%	50.5%	10.3%
OHMS	06	82.2%	54.9%	75.1%	63.3%	59.6%

School	Grade	English % Met	Math % Met	Science % Met	Reading % Met	Writing % Met
OHMS		86.15%	49.80%	65.50%	56.90%	35%

**Schools to Watch – Arkansas Diamond School
 Old High Middle School – Bentonville, Arkansas**

Academic Excellence

Old High Middle School (OHMS) challenges all students to meet high academic standards. Academic excellence is expected of all students through a flexible yet systematic approach based on a faculty-created core belief statement. OHMS promotes lifelong learning through a culture of high expectations with purposeful and engaging instruction. This core belief is infused through curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention. The common belief that all students can learn and achieve is the foundation for relationships at OHMS while also guiding what happens each day in response to students' needs and learning goals. This belief is evident in our flexible master schedule, student-centered opportunities to explore interests and master

challenging content, consistent and engaging instruction and feedback, and support and relationships among teachers, administration, and staff.

OHMS has core content team that meet weekly. Each team works together to integrate curriculum by creating and implementing Project Based Learning (PBL) practices. Students research content-related subject, topics of interest, and develop community-based plans to improve the world around them. Community partners, such as Crystal Bridges, help students explore personal interests to drive their learning and create authentic engagement. OHMS uses a variety of instructional strategies to engage and challenge students. The teacher serves as a facilitator for all learners. Many teachers use the instructional tool of Socratic Circles to facilitate deeper analysis and to encourage students to listen and speak critically about content. OHMS faculty experienced this strategy first-hand through teacher-led professional development.

Teachers expect students to develop goals, work in cooperative groups, utilize research tools, listen and discuss learning concepts, evaluate information, and create projects and presentations. For example, a core team is helping students recognize real-world problems and encouraging students to identify a cause to address the problem. Another team is collaborating on a theme-based unit focused on exploration of the New World. Each teacher focuses on content that relates to this theme. Science addresses the cause/effect relationship with new species and diseases. Math students analyze statistical data about the time period. Core teachers are also integrating the use of an organizational writing method called C.E.R. that focuses on creating a claim, providing evidence, and reasoning that explains how the evidence points back to the claim. This tool is used in core subject areas across the disciplines.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are vertically and horizontally aligned subject area teachers. PLCs work alongside content facilitators to identify standards that will guide formative and summative assessments, and rubric development for standards based grading. Rubrics are designed by a team of content teachers, including special education and acceleration teachers (interventionists) with the support of academic facilitators. Rubrics provide clarity of the content and expectation of what it means to meet the standard. To ensure high expectations, content-specific rubrics include exemplars of each level of performance. Students practice comparing their work to the exemplars and analyze how they can meet the expectation on each component within the rubric. For example, students read samples of responses explaining that matter still exists even though it may not be seen. They use the rubric to evaluate the written response by giving constructive feedback. In literacy, students evaluate the effectiveness of a claim using the rubric. Teacher and peer feedback, along with the rubric, guide student learning and provide direction on how to meet or exceed learning expectations.

Developmental Responsiveness

Old High faculty has developed a set of Core Beliefs to keep the staff and students focused on the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence. These Core Beliefs guide the staff on a developmentally responsive commitment to young adolescents from the way our teams are structured to the unique opportunities offered at OHMS. In doing so, students and core teachers are grouped into small learning communities called teams. Having students on teams allows them to feel a sense of belonging within the larger learning community of Old High and allows the students to build authentic relationships with one another. OHMS consists of 6 cross-curricular teams with a maximum of 112 students on each team. Each cross-curricular team is split into four homerooms where the homeroom teacher serves as the primary advisor. As an advisor, the homeroom teacher is responsible for establishing a positive rapport with his/her students and families. The team meets weekly to not only discuss student academic needs, but also social and emotional needs. This time allows for the team to function as a cross-curricular Professional Learning Community (PLC). Teachers also benefit from being grouped in content-specific PLCs. This allows time for conversation to ensure developmentally appropriate instruction is being delivered so that students' intellectual needs are being met.

Ensuring that each student has a homeroom teacher who acts as a mentor/advisor is important to the Old High staff. The staff strives to offer opportunities for building relationships beyond the structure of the small learning community. Students have opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with many adults in the building. For other students, their true advisor comes through their fine art class. Still others form a strong relationship with the school counselors or administrators. All in all, the staff as a whole is committed to making sure every student has one or more advocates within the building.

Social Equity

OHMS supports social equity for each student in multiple ways to ensure an optimal educational experience. All students, including gifted students, students with special needs, and students who speak English as a second language are in heterogeneous general education classes with peers and share high academic and behavioral expectations. Teachers assess and differentiate based on student need, interest, and learning style, in order to give every student equal opportunity to comprehend the standards-based curriculum. Students utilize varied approaches to achieve competency and mastery of standards. A high emphasis is placed on interdisciplinary curriculum and project-based learning (PBL) as all students enhance teamwork and problem-solving skills. Students create essential questions based on passion, interest and voice. They set their own goals, choose materials, differentiate for themselves and guide their own learning. For example, a group of students, including one with an autism spectrum disorder, chose to research autism and to construct a brochure to create awareness.

All students have access to valuable knowledge and student choice in classes. All students utilize technology for valued learning. Each OHMS team has access to a technology cart (iPad, Chromebooks, laptops) to use for reading, researching, analyzing data, accessing Google Classroom, and solving mathematical problems. Additionally, every OHMS student has a Bentonville Public Library Tech Card, which provides access to online research opportunities and eBooks. Fifth graders are allowed choice between music and choir. Sixth graders are allowed choice of musical opportunities based on interest, including band, orchestra, choir, and music. Out of 622 total students at OHMS, 164 are in choir, 67 are in band, and 124 are in orchestra. Students involved in these activities include students who speak English as a Second Language, students with IEPs, students with 504 accommodation plans, and students who are identified as gifted. These groups perform for peers, parents, and the community providing a foundation for future opportunities in music and performance.

Old High offers a variety of clubs that are positive options to create a sense of belonging for all students. Clubs reach a diverse group of students seeking participation and association in social, physical, academic, and/or special interests groups based on like-mindedness. Clubs include: Knightly Gardeners, Tinkering Club, Tech Club, STEAM, Girls Club, Fitness Club, and Running Club, Girls on the Run, Book Clubs, and Odyssey of the Mind, Math Counts, Student Council, Recycled Art, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and the Giving Tree Club. The OHMS club schedule is strategically planned to utilize different times of the day in order to allow opportunities for all students. At this time, the weekly club attendance is at 437 students.

Organizational Structures

As a high performing middle school, Old High strives to establish norms, structures and organizational arrangements to support and sustain its trajectory toward excellence. OHMS began a journey several years ago of creating a document to highlight a shared vision that drives every decision made within the building: OHMS's Core Beliefs. The Core Beliefs are the result of extensive work by the faculty, and they are the guiding principles of every decision made for the students at OHMS. The beliefs are centered on: academics, arts, social, and emotional aspects of a middle school-aged child. The purpose is to ensure our students have a common vocabulary which supports the vision of the Bentonville School District and OHMS. The Core Beliefs are in both principals' offices and in classrooms. It is because of these established Core Beliefs that Old High is driven to seek constant improvement. Examples of the staff's eagerness to improve abound throughout the building: staff members participate in book studies; teachers participate in "open door" walk-throughs to hone their craft and improve instructional practice; counselors seek to bring in new programs such as the Mentor Matters program as a means to connect the school and community, while also improving methods in which OHMS supports the emotional, social, and academic needs of the students. The school is in a constant state of change and improvement. Much of this growth and forward momentum is due to a system of checks and balances through shared, distributed, and sustained leadership. The administration team is the perfect combination of a person who pushes the school in new directions combined with a person who supports that same forward energy, but also strives to preserve the institutional memory and purpose of what makes Old High special. This allows the building leaders to work together in a positive manner to establish a well laid plan and keep the school's vision and Core Beliefs at the central focus.

Relationships, prioritizing literacy in instruction, calculated risk-taking, and a growth mindset are all valued highly at OHMS. The establishment of relationships is imperative in all learning goals set for students. Relationships among teachers, staff, administration, parents, community members, and students are based on trust and common goals. Literacy is prioritized across the curriculum in many ways, including giving presentations and using C.E.R. (claims-evidence-reasoning) in math, science, and social studies. Teachers

and students are also encouraged to take calculated risks in various ways, such as through Genius Hour and interdisciplinary PBLs. Interdependent relationships developed among grade and content levels support a risk-taking and reflective instructional culture.

Using a variety of systematic communication efforts, including monthly faculty meetings, a weekly *Next Week @ OHMS* email, daily emails, electronic calendar, text messages, and administrative visibility. The driving force is getting information to the necessary stakeholders in an efficient and responsive manner. The key is thorough and precise communication through clear lines of leadership. Much of the success of OHMS can be attributed to the variety of communication tools utilized. There are nine teams (three-6th grade, three-5th grade, SPED, Encore, & PE4Life). Each team has a representative to voice concerns and act as a liaison between administration and staff. Additionally, team leader minutes are shared with staff through Google drive. Weekly team meetings and weekly PLC meetings provide opportunities for reflection and school improvement. Administrators attend team and PLC meetings regularly and provide clear feedback to the teachers regarding team and PLC discussions and notes.

Communication with students and families is vital. Communication methods include daily announcements for students, weekly Tuesday Folders, 5th and 6th grade information boards, a marquee at the entrance of the school, a monthly newsletter, the utilization of social media (via Twitter), Parent-Teacher conferences, and an active PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization). The hashtag #weareoldhigh is used on Twitter when communicating about student achievements, engaging activities, and school events. Additionally, when a student's data indicates a schedule change is needed, the first step is to directly involve the student's family, teachers, counselors, and administration. Families are informed about the school's goals for each student and progress in meeting those goals. The acceleration teachers send postcards home to parents with positive notes regarding student participation and progress throughout the year.

Feedback for accountability from all stakeholders is important. Through the counseling program, online surveys via Google Docs are available to all students. Students have access to surveys at the beginning of the year through the school counselors meeting with each homeroom class. Data is collected and counseling procedures are determined. Surveys are sent to parents electronically and in Tuesday Folders. The data collected from this survey guides the quarterly Parent Involvement meetings. The district conducts an online survey for parents. Ninety-eight percent of responders agreed/strongly agreed that they feel welcomed when visiting OHMS. While 97% of responders said they receive timely communication in many different ways.