



SCHOOLS TO WATCH – VIRGINIA

NORTHSIDE MIDDLE SCHOOL – VISITOR’S GUIDE



Northside Middle School

2016-2017 School Statistics

(Sources: The current VDOE school report card)
 Community: Suburban
 Enrollment: 676
 Grade Levels: 6-8
 School Schedule: 4X4 Modified A/B Day

Student Demographics

- 69% White
- 6% Hispanic
- 13% African American
- 6% Asian
- 6% Multi-Racial
- <1% Native American
- 42% Economically Disadvantaged
- 18% Special Education
- 9% English Language Learners

Fully Accredited by VDOE:	2014, 2015, 2016
Math Pass Rate	89%: 2016
English Pass Rate	82%: 2016
Science Pass Rate	82%: 2016
Writing Pass Rate	73%: 2016
History Pass Rate	90%: 2016



Re-Designated in 2016

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School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Our band students continue to rise to the challenge to meet high academic standards by working to participate in all-district and all-region band events.
- Our staff has worked to move from teacher-directed to student centered classrooms by incorporating project based learning activities involving the use of Maker Space, green screens, 3-D printers, and the integration of laptops in 8th grade in 2015, and now in 7th grade as well, beginning this school year.

- The curriculum, instructional, and classroom assessments remain rigorous. Teachers consistently teach using station teaching and parallel teaching, often utilizing space in creative ways.
- History teachers use performance-based assessments in order to assist students in raising scores on SOL tests.
- Students develop their own plans to “Be the boss one day,” encouraging deeper understanding of concepts in economics and trade.
- In English classes, teachers build writing skills, with an emphasis on the 8th grade SOL test, by offering assignments in creative ways, such as the beginning of the year projects for pre-AP students, as well as teaching grammar through fashion shows in 6th grade; one simply cannot sell a piece of clothing without the amazing use of adjectives!
- Teachers use a variety of methods to assess student performance such as SRI. The program began in 2015, with the incoming 6th graders. This year, all students will be assessed three times throughout the year, and teachers are, as we type these words, developing a digital portfolio system for student writing samples and SRI scores.

Developmental Responsiveness

- Our incoming 6th graders are given several weeks to adapt to the rigor of middle school. In grade-level meetings, prior to the start of the year, teachers discuss how to assist students with their lockers, how to write lunch numbers, locker number combinations, and even bus numbers in the front of their planners to avoid the panic of forgotten information. The principal expects every teacher, custodian, counselor, and administrator to be visible in the 6th grade hall the first two weeks in order to assist students opening lockers and finding classrooms. 6th graders are given more hall passes than 8th graders. 7th and 8th graders have laptops and are able to carry backpacks throughout the building. 8th graders visit Arnold R. Burton, our vocational school, at the beginning of their 8th grade year in order to begin preparing for high school options.
- NMS provides all students and parents with service options in order to foster healthy physical, emotional and intellectual development. Our guidance staff has developed, and updates packets of information for parents on the best counselors in the valley, including name, phone number, and addresses. This list includes counselors who the most up-to date work on a sliding pay scale so that every parent who needs assistance can access help. Our Student Assistance Program coordinator, who works part-time at NMS, works with students and families, in group sessions, on such topics as anger management, changing families, and dealing with loss. Parents are able to log in to Synergy, ParentVue, and Blackboard in order to quickly and easily see and address academic progress. Parents are now also able to leave voicemails, instead of leaving messages with the front office staff, with individual teachers. Any parent who does not have a computer or internet access may utilize computers in our library to complete back-to-school forms, during our business day in August. NMS also offers a homework lab every morning as well as after-school bridge every afternoon for any student who needs to use the internet to complete assignments. Both programs are staffed with faculty members.
- The curriculum at NMS is both socially significant and relevant to personal and career interests of adolescents. The bulletin board in the 6th grade hallway says it all. The theme of the bulletin board is “I Dream.” On the first day of school, students complete that sentence and their answers are posted. “I dream of being a professional basketball player,” “I dream of being a veterinarian,” And, “I dream of being a good dad,” are just a few of the responses this year. The 8th grade hall sports a similar bulletin board. “I Hope...”. However, the responses are very similar. Every student plans to be successful. At NMS, we work to make those plans happen. Departments offer clubs that meet after school in order to foster more specific interests: the cupcake club, the chess club, the robotics club, and Youth Against

Drugs and Alcohol club are examples of showing students that the skills they are learning in family consumer sciences, math, and technology are valuable. Our science department led an initiative last school year, which remains a focus this year, to provide a safe and supportive environment for bats. Students were asked to submit landscaping plans for a garden area to support the bats' feeding habits after learning about bats. They presented their plans, in written format as well as models, to a panel of outside judges. Any student interested in architecture, zoology, landscaping, and/or planning and commissions, had opportunities.

- The entire bat project, which is ongoing, provides students with an opportunity to explore multiple topics and determine their own strengths. *Help Save The Next Girl*, is another club in our building that fosters such opportunity. Students learn and discuss how to build and maintain a community of caring individuals who look out for others in school, in college, and in the world. The yearbook staff, who meets before school, offers a time for students to explore creative layouts, picture taking, and writing print. The economics classes complete an entire project based on the barter system. Students begin with several resources but lack something that another group has. Learning to work together in this vast world is invaluable to our students, many of whom come to us from different countries. One of our biggest events of the year is our Norsemen Resource Fair, organized by our SAP coordinator. This is a time, prior to our Back-To-School-Night, where parents and students can explore some of the options we have for students. They can meet and talk to club sponsors and club members. Local agencies are also represented, such as the Roanoke County Police and rescue squad. Our local chapter of Young Sea Cadets are available to answer questions as well.
- Our school would not be successful if we didn't allow our students to voice their own opinions and invest in them as integral parts of our decision making process. We are in our sixth year of a positive behavior program, the Norsemen Code. We have formed a Norsemen Jr. committee to assist in making decisions about the Norsemen Code. A Book Club emerged from a grassroots effort. One young lady kept pushing, found a sponsor, and now runs the club, which meets on Wednesday afternoons. One of the assistant principals has even become a member of the book club. Our SCA is integral to our students and staff. The SCA members collect money for various organizations on their own: Relay for Life, March of Dimes, and new this year, Habitat for Humanity. Our students know that their voice is valuable. One young lady, after a string of bomb threats in RCPS, wrote a letter to our superintendent about making better friendships so that students felt more of a sense of community. Our superintendent and our school board representative came and met with this young lady to validate and discuss her letter. Our gifted program is growing, as well as our Outreach program.
- Our staff relies heavily upon the resources our community provides. Many of our parents are integral in the support of our students' overall well-being. Parent volunteers steer both the Young Sea Cadets program as well as *Help Save the Next Girl*. Local attorneys and judges volunteer their time to speak to our 8th graders during the Rule-of-Law day in October. Representatives from The Clean Valley Council come to speak, regularly, to our 7th grade science classes. Our FACES teacher has made connections with local ministries in order to get gym space donated for special needs basketball programs that simply could not exist without the support of her and the instructional assistants in her classroom, who volunteer their time in the evenings, and her parent volunteers. Our administration continues to follow the same process with grade levels as one will follow students, making personal connections with families all three years as Norsemen.
- Students learn civic duty at all levels. All grade levels are represented as tour guides for incoming 6th graders when they visit in the spring. Every 8th grader must volunteer a certain number of hours before completing Civics class. Our science teachers steer a recycling program, in which our students in our FACES program learn to collect recycling from classrooms, interacting with other students and adults in various ways. Our teachers build authentic, real-world lessons, based on community

happenings. Lessons on proper use of social media arose after a terrible ending for a young middle schooler from a nearby community was lured by an online predator. Lessons on digital footprints are becoming more and more commonplace for our teachers.

- NMS provides students, at each grade-level, appropriate cross-curricular activities, which foster both social skills and good character traits. Each grade level chose a concept and covered it in each discipline area. For example the 6th graders all read *Hatchet*. In math class they learned how to build a shelter, taking the proper measurements. Science classes researched edible plants and social studies classes delved deeper into longitude and latitude coordinates.
- Citizenship skills are integrated in daily lessons by our staff. After a young lady, from a neighboring community, was lured by an online predator, the English department found articles on appropriate uses of social media and created lessons. Other classes teach about digital footprints and how actions today can affect one later in life. Students are constantly reminded to stand up to bullying and invited to join Friends of Rachel.
- Fostering social skills and helping to mold students of good character are important in and out of the classroom. IMPACT, which is a Christian organization, meets Friday mornings, led by teacher and parent volunteers. We have begun to showcase the arts after PTA meetings, and this year, we hope to have an entire evening devoted to the arts, in which we will have an art show, a food showcase, and a music festival going on at one time in our building.

Social Equity

- Our master schedule is built with all students in mind. All of our classes are made available to any student in the building who wants to take those classes. Our FACES teacher comes in, during the summer, on her own time, to consult with our DBA, in order to hand select her students' classes. In fact, just last week, our DBA, the FACES teacher, and our PE chair met in order to review some of the special needs necessary in the regular PE classes so that our special needs students could be successful. Our goal is to ensure that each and every class at NMS is accessible to each and every student. We also house the only middle school Positive Behavior Support Program in Roanoke County. Students from around the district enroll in this program in which one teacher and two instructional assistants work, in a very different environment, with four students who struggle with behaviors. However, no matter the environment where they spend the bulk of their time, we remain staunch in our values, every student has access to every class. Instructional assistants attend classes with the PBS students and monitor behaviors in order to make certain that students can be in band, choir, art, or foreign language classes or be safely escorted to their safe environment in their PBS classroom when situations become difficult. Our ESL students work with an ESL teacher during specific times during the day, but those times never interfere with their class schedule. We are also very unique because we have several native Spanish speakers who are able to, immediately when a non-English speaking parent calls, communicate any information.
- The overall vision of 21st Century skills have allowed our students many more opportunities to demonstrate mastery of skills. While each teacher relies upon data gathered from formative assessments, they also rely heavily on PBLs, Project Based Learning activities, which have now taken the place of final exams in Roanoke County. No longer do we rely on the written exam; rather, we rely on various methods. Some teachers have students create differentiated projects to show mastery; other teachers have students present oral projects during the last days of school, and others have students compile and submit portfolios within a specific time frame. . However, we are getting to mastery, it is working. Our SOL scores continue to fall in line with other high performing middle

schools in Virginia, our retention rate is very low, and our students are proud of the work they submit at Northside Middle School.

- On a regular basis, our teachers step back and re-evaluate. If a teacher needs more time in the library or using a piece of technology, he or she can quickly email the staff, and support is put in place to assist. Our faculty is willing to adapt to make re-evaluation the norm. We adapt schedules after the school year begins for both students and teachers, if necessary. Often, we find that extra support is needed in a classroom, and our DBA works to find that support. Teachers and administrators meet to brainstorm ideas to meet the needs of each student. Based on formative assessment data, teachers reteach concepts or change lesson plans altogether. Because teachers meet, by grade levels, to discuss data, many ideas are formulated, and the needs of students' are re-evaluated regularly.
- As long as you are enrolled as a student at Northside Middle School, you are eligible to participate as a manager, a team member, or a club member of any of our activities. While particular teams may have zero managers one year, based on no interest, each coach also is open to taking one or more managers if there is interest. In fact, our cheer coach just opened up the application process for cheer managers because of an interest in the last two weeks; we have no deadlines, no cut-off periods-if a kid wants to participate, our coaches and teachers make that happen. Blackboard offers multiple opportunities for students to gain tutoring through the Khan Academy; Virtual Virginia allows students to take classes not offered in-house at Northside Middle School and having computers in two grade levels allows teachers to teach virtually 24 hours a day. No longer do students get behind if they are on vacation or absent.
- Our ESL program has opened the door for cultural learning at NMS. Students, in recent years, have begun sharing food with faculty and staff. We are hoping to include a sharing of world foods at our Arts Night later this year. Parents of ESL students are very comfortable communicating with our staff because we stretch to meet their needs with translation. Our English department subscribes to Scholastic Magazine, which offers a wealth of cultural articles that accompany literature that is studied. Through SSR, students are opened to new worlds through reading. Our librarian takes great care to order engaging books and create a window, much like a storefront, full of engaging props to celebrate a new book series of an exciting current topic. Our band and choir, as well as each grade level, offers several field trips throughout the year to enhance students' experiences: zoos, theme parks, operas, and professional baseball games are just a few of the amazing opportunities that we make available to each student. If a student cannot afford the cost, we have teachers and staff pitch in so that any kid is able to attend any event he or she wants. Special arrangements are made for any student with special needs who wants to attend a trip.
- When the guidance coordinator knows 80 percent of the NEW 6th graders by name by the end of the third week of school, and the administrators know many parent phone numbers by heart, it is safe to say that our students are known. Many of our teachers coach, sponsor clubs, and work remediation before and after school. If a student is put in our discipline room, many of the teachers, whose duty it is to supervise the discipline room, make personal connections with kids and will seek them out in the halls to check on them. Teachers make connections with students through reading; discussing classroom libraries with students is a wonderful way to get to know students' likes and dislikes. We have two teachers who, on a regular basis, eat in our lunchroom with various students, just to chat. Making personal connections with students is a priority for the administration, the faculty, and our staff and it is what often separates great schools from good schools.
- The PTA at NMS is involved and supported. This year, the expectation is that the faculty will have 100 percent participation, and we are well on the way to achieving that goal. Our PTA sponsors four dances throughout the year, a Reflections contest, and they provide a planner for each student at NMS at no cost to the family! Whenever we, as a faculty, have asked for monetary support to purchase

prizes for events, we have had overwhelming response from the PTA. Last year, as in years past, the PTA sponsored an 8th grade breakfast at the end of the year. So much food was donated that students were able to feed themselves and the entire faculty. The support we have from our families is heartwarming.

- The Norsemen Code is the most valuable system that we have instituted at NMS. Basing rewards on positive behaviors is the absolute way to encourage good behaviors. In the six years the Norsemen Code has been in place, many changes have occurred. The faculty and students, not the administration, determine what changes need to be made. In fact, this year, we are working to build a school theme with the Code that centers around the ideas in baseball games-getting base hits, hitting homeruns, scoring, etc. We even have hopes of instituting a “Norsemen Dugout” where we can “sell” items using school money that is earned for good behavior. Any good program must continue to grow and adapt in order to be successful. It is also imperative that the faculty believes in the program and supports its values. Our staff, over the last six years, has seen how discipline referrals have dropped drastically; they appreciate and value the autonomy to handle situations in the classroom rather than getting the administration involved. Students take pride in being good! They love, especially as 7th and 8th graders, not getting tickets and being able to attend events that are tied to the Norsemen Code. All of the PTA-sponsored dances, and most of the field trips, are based on behaviors, and students quickly realize that if they want to NOT stand out at NMS, they should learn acceptable behaviors. Students have the opportunity to correct behaviors and make changes that will open doors for them. They realize that they are in charge of their path at NMS.
- The SAP coordinator and our guidance staff, along with the nurse and the administration, make up The Core Team at NMS. Each RCPS has a Core Team. This team is devoted to assisting students and families in crisis. Depending on the families’ needs, the team determines what resources we, as a school, need to offer and put in to place to assist any family struggling. Elijah’s Backpack feeds students, holiday gifts among staff have long been replaced by making donations to area organizations that directly affect our student population. Students’ diversity is celebrated. Faculty and staff honor religious differences and welcome new ideas and concepts in the classroom. Our Parent Advisory Committee weighs in on activities at NMS, and our teachers respond to needs through Grade Level meetings. And, again, the guidance staff has a wonderful packet of resources to give to parents who are struggling to help their children. We are a family at NMS.
- The school rules are a reflection of Roanoke County Public Schools. All rules are created by a committee that includes school personnel, parents, and students. This year, the students were able to get the dress code amended, and the cell phone police has greatly changed over the last few years. No school specific rules exist. At NMS, we rely heavily upon the Norsemen Code, and it works. We demonstrate kindness to our students and families and ask for the same in return. All faculty and staff in our building believe in the value of a positive behavior program and follow it. It may seem like a simplistic answer, but we have few rules so that our students and staff can get down to the business of learning. We are Northside Middle School; we are the Norsemen.

Organizational Structures and Processes

- Because we believe in the value of the 21st Century learner, we have committed many resources to assist teachers and students. We have a full-time Technology Resource Teacher, who works with teachers to create meaningful lessons using various modes of technology. NMS has invested in building a Maker Space for all students to use. One Drive and Class Flow are used in 7th and 8th grade classrooms since all 7th and 8th graders have laptops provided by RCPS. Our professional learning communities are placing value on meaningful use of technology and investing inservice time to

learning more about Maker Space, the green screen, etc. The value of meaningful technology has flowed over to the parental side as well. As mentioned earlier, we now focus on communicating with parents in various modes: Blackboard, ParentVue, Synergy, and Cisco Jabber, the voicemail system for teachers. All these online services allow parents to access grades and lesson plans in a timely fashion, but on their own time, as many of our parents work hours that are not conducive to our school hours.

- Our building level principal, Dr. Paul Lineburg, takes full responsibility for each and every process that goes on in our building. He is steering the professional learning community; he is shouting, whenever he can, the value of making connections, building relationships with students; he is creating our school goals and ensuring that those goals are met by meeting with his assistants to create meaningful SMART goals with all our staff members. He is committed to making NMS a better school than it already is. He has encouraged the new schedule where English and math departmental meetings will take place for longer periods of time, fewer times each month. He values the grade level leaders who lead each grade level meeting. All three principals assist with remediation as needed. Teachers are integral parts of all committees and often lead meetings, fostering a more PLC valued community, especially through the Principal's Advisory Committee.
- Our school is absolutely a place for practice. Our teachers are encouraged to try new things; create new lessons; build new interest through clubs. All departments are asked to reflect, individually and in grade levels, using data from formative assessment test results. All teachers in the building are asked to develop and reflect upon one to two SMART goals throughout the year. Our teachers are asked to keep it "REAL": reflect, evaluate, adjust, and launch each lesson, each assessment, and each SMART goal. The administration is striving to create and maintain an environment where teachers feel as though they can re-plan, recreate and rewrite.
- Our staff, including the administration, is constantly "tag teaming", meaning that they are revolving in and out of the building, taking advantage of professional learning opportunities. Our principal values such opportunities and will work to ensure that teachers and administrators have time to learn. While we are offered many opportunities to learn more about district initiatives, we are also given a lot of freedom to develop in services that are specific to our school needs. Our Technology Resource Teacher, TRT, offers "Technology Tuesdays," where she offers the same mini courses throughout the day so teachers can pop in during their planning to pick up new technology tips. Our principal set aside an entire afternoon, during the teacher workweek, to offer technology training to any teacher interested, especially our 7th grade teachers, who are working with student laptops for the very first year.
- We are very proud to speak about the community members that we partner with in order to provide our staff and students with as many opportunities as we can. Our IMPACT club, a Christian organization, is led, partially, by community members; our Trails to Classroom program is led by a group from the Appalachian Trails group, of which one of our assistant principals is a member of; the Roanoke County police department partners with our science teachers to deconstruct a crash scene; our choir classes Facetime with area middle schools to critique performances; we have a Leadership Team at NMS, made up of faculty members, who lead learning opportunities for our staff; our guidance department teams with area ministries to feed our students, and they gather donations for "Elijah's Backpack." And, again, our resource fair, held at the beginning of the school year, invites community stakeholders in to share all that the greater Roanoke Valley has to offer students and families. We are, in fact, the only school in Roanoke County to hold such a fair, and we are very proud of this fact!
- Our staff absolutely holds itself accountable for student success as well as hardships. Often, before the lights even come on in the building or well after the lights are turned out, you will find teachers preparing lessons for students and students meeting with teachers to review skills. Our SMART goals

are directly linked to student success, so much so that 20% of a teacher's evaluation is based upon student success through set SMART goals. Teachers take individual accountability when students do not meet a passing score on their SOL tests by helping them during school hours, lunches, and afternoons. All teachers support and encourage the SSR program and allow students to read when they finish their work in class. Our custodial staff makes personal connections with students, so much so, that we have had several students only respond positively to our custodial staff when no other adults were making real connections.

- Roanoke County supervisors, as well as staff at NMS, take personal time with students. When a teacher or administrator is friends with a parent, from high school, church, or neighborhoods, students are treated as family – forgotten lunch money is no problem; fees for struggling parents are paid without question. Your child becomes our child at NMS. Often you will see teachers attending off-campus events because students have invited them. Instructional assistants work extra hours to meet the needs of students without questioning their paycheck. NMS is a school where we take personal pride in loving each and every student. Hugs are given out, high fives with our resource officer are a norm, and students know, without a doubt, that they are cared for here. Come visit us; you will see.
- NMS, along with other schools, partner with AR Burton, which, in turn, partners with universities to enhance learning in the “Teachers For Tomorrow” program. Many of our teachers welcome and encourage student teachers in their classrooms. Social Studies teachers bring in guest speakers on World War II, immigration and civil rights. Our SAP coordinator works with members of Virginia Tech to complete the Youth Risk Survey as well as the Delta Academy, who runs the Rhoer Club. Our choir teacher partners with Hollins University, and our YADAPP group works with various agencies. The science department invites Clean Valley Council, the Resource Authority, and 4H representatives, on a regular basis to enhance class lessons as well.
- Incoming 6th grade parents are “warned” that they will see 540 561-8145 appear on their caller ID a lot. That is the main telephone number at NMS. We tell parents that most phone calls are not bad; they are meant to open the door of communication. The principals choose to be proactive rather than reactive to situations. If a student has a bad day, loses his or her glasses, or misses the bus, parents usually hear from the principal before the student gets home. Our guidance staff communicates privately when necessary, and our teachers call home and keep records on Synergy for other teachers to see...just in case patterns begin that need to be addressed. Administrators strive to return phone calls the same day, if not, then within 24 hours. We take pride in knowing and being known on a first name basis. We are working together to ensure that each student is successful in his own way.