



Pennsylvania Don Eichhorn Schools: Schools to Watch

Seneca Valley Middle School Middle



School Statistics

<http://paschoolperformance.org>

Community: Suburban
 Enrollment: 1167
 Grade Levels: 7, 8
 School Schedule: 8 period day with advisory/support and team planning

Student Demographics

American Indian/Alaskan Native	0
Asian	2.3
Black or African American	1.2
Hispanic	2.0
Multi-Racial	1.1
White	93.6

2012 AYP: Reading 91% Math 87%

2012-2013 School Performance Profile: 90.8

2013-2014 School Performance Profile: 91.5

Re-Designation(2) 2016

- Seneca Valley Middle School • Seneca Valley School District
- Principal Robert Ceh • Assistant Principal Rob Raso
- Butler County • Pennsylvania
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School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Our curriculum continues to be reviewed on a yearly basis and rewritten every 3rd year to account for necessary changes to bring about academic excellence.
- All curriculum has been aligned to the Common Core and is in the process of being reviewed to maintain relevancy to the students of 2016.

- Assessments continue to be developed and aligned to the Common Core and state testing, which provides our instructors with potential learning gaps that are then addressed through curriculum adjustment and/or instructional techniques.
- A continued focus within the district and in the Middle School has been to integrate and embed metacognition and thinking into our classrooms.
- Three instructional coaches work in our building to coach teachers on metacognitive strategies over a course of sixty visits.
- Implementation of focus questions, learning statements, and essential questions are additional attempts to emphasize higher order thinking and learning.
- The Lucy Calkins writing program has been adopted as a middle level writing program, and the implementation of this program has begun in both reading and English classes.
- Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) was a district wide initiative and a stretch goal from our last re-designation that encourages students to use their own devices (Smart phones, iPads, iPods, tablets) for learning and creation in the classroom has been successfully implemented.
- Formative assessments are being used more frequently as they have been tied back to the focus and essential questions that are being used.

Social Equity

- SVMS is driven by our mission statement which emphasizes the importance of developing responsible learners through a partnership with family and community, while providing our students with a positive, developmentally appropriate, and integrated educational experience in a safe, nurturing environment.
- We strive to create a safe and nurturing environment.
- Our Connections activities, the weekly meetings in which our students participate, incorporate a variety of bullying prevention topics, character- and esteem- building activities, and school community- building activities.
- Each staff member, including counselors and administration, have been assigned a group of students for the connection activities which make the groups smaller and more personal.
- To further personalize our students' experience, we have aligned our guidance philosophy with the National Model, which promotes more direct time and interaction with students.
- In 2015-16 we added the Highmark Caring Place grief and loss group to further meet students' needs.
- The school community continues to utilize the Sprigeo online reporting system to report bullying and safety concerns.
- Yearly, our students take the Olweus Bully Prevention Survey which provides valuable information about student comfort levels at school. The Olweus team reviews the data to develop a plan to further address students' needs. The plan includes activities that focus specifically on an identified need.
- We implemented an A.M. walking program and open gym program in 2015-16.
- After the school day, our students can participate in a variety of sports and extra-curricular activities, introduced to them through an activity fair. We are particularly proud of the number of students who participate in our performing arts opportunities.
- In 2015-16 we held our first all-school Olympic Day.
- The district's Diversity Committee develops activities that support the goals of increasing global awareness within the school community and providing diversity education.

- This past school year, our students participated in two committee endeavors -- the "I Am SV" project and the 7/8 diversity video.
- Academically, we provide programs and instruction to support all students' ability levels. These programs include special education, emotional support, and autistic support programs, our Life Skills classroom, advanced courses in English and math, and the SV Academy of Choice which offers performing arts and cyber enrichment/ remediation opportunities.
- BYOT is an embedded practice at SVMS. Devices are available to students who need them.
- Our social studies, science, and encore classes are grouped heterogeneously which allows students of all ability levels to interact with one another.
- We continue to incorporate effective practices to ensure that all students are receiving a meaningful education. A key component to the programs and instruction that we offer would be our teams. The teaming concept not only benefits the students academically but allows us to further personalize the relationships we want to cultivate.
- Through the use of a daily team plan, our teachers can address students' academic, behavioral, and social needs. Our teachers also use this time to utilize data to make academic and instructional decisions. Students are recognized for a variety of reasons at team meetings and are able to participate in many activities that not only benefit the students but the community as well. Annually we invite families to an Academic Recognition for our top achieving students.
- Initiatives such as Lead to Learn, Connected Math, and the Lucy Calkins writing program were implemented in our classrooms.
- Lead to Learn focuses on increasing rigorous thinking and utilizes formative assessment to focus on changing instruction. With essential questions and focus questions, we are challenging the staff to instruct around "learning" goals.
- The Connected Math program emphasizes practice that promotes inquiry, problem-solving, and perseverance with a given math task. The program was piloted in 2013-14, and the first year of implementation was 2014-15.
- The Lucy Calkins writing program was implemented to ensure that our students are getting the same writing experience and common terminology.
- Rules are clear, fair, and consistently applied at SVMS.
- Students receive a planner on the first day of school, which contains our school handbook.
- The administration meets with each team to welcome students and to review expectations.
- Expectations are posted in our classrooms.
- Discipline issues are addressed fairly and consistently, and students are treated with dignity. Consequences are assigned in a manner that encourages students to be reflective so there is less chance of a subsequent offense. The administration works cooperatively to ensure consistency.
- We promote family and community partnerships.
- We welcome our seventh-grade students and families to the building through a summer orientation/ visitation day. Open House allows us to make a positive connection with families. Parents can participate in the school through our many volunteer opportunities such as a chaperone, a guest speaker, or member of our SVIP group.
- Creating a positive, safe environment for students to learn and grow, striving to meet students' needs, and providing equitable opportunities continue to be our goals to ensure the success of our students.

Developmental Responsiveness

- As a building, our faculty and staff embrace the middle school platform as a way to educate our students. Part of this education is recognizing and responding to the developmental needs of our students, which in a building of this size, can be a challenge. We have built our master schedule, laid out our rooms, and developed processes that allow us to meet this challenge.
- In 2014, one of our stretch goals was to better implement our Rtl electronic database in order to track and recognize the needs of our students and our responses to those needs. This process has been improved and implemented school wide.
- Teachers are able to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their students academically, socially, and emotionally.
- For those students whose data indicates more than five "red flags", an action plan is created and then monitored.
- Educating new teachers and staff members creates an opportunity for the leadership to be renewed in the middle school mission, as well as mentor the new teachers about the middle school concept and how the philosophy impacts their instructional methods and approach.
- During "non-instructional" homeroom time, our faculty connects to our students as young people. They solve problems. They tutor. They motivate. They listen. They comfort. They guide all during a 20 minute homeroom period. These are all roles that need to be fulfilled to support the challenges of early adolescence and to allow the children the ability to grow socially and intellectually.
- Our student assistance program: otherwise known as Y.E.S.S.(Youth Education Support Services) identifies and pinpoints what we believe are the issues and provides a collaboration for providing solutions to issues.
- At the middle school, we have the ability to provide resources for outside counseling through the Centre for Community Resources, and we also have implemented a new team room. This is for students who have mental/anxiety issues that become barriers to learning and are not successful within the structure of our middle school. In the past, we may have outsourced that care to a mental health partial program. Now we are able to deliver those services, including therapy, on campus.
- Through our Connections program, we use each Tuesday morning to deliver a different message and connect with our students on topics that include anti bullying, goal setting, positive self esteem, health and wellness, positive interactions, etc. It is also a program that can be adapted quickly to meet the current needs of the students.
- Through our Pupil Personnel Team and Sprigeo on-line reporting system, we are able to spot trends and situations that are occurring more frequently. We are then able to quickly put together a lesson on that specific topic and address the entire school to guide better behavior and decision making.
- We realize that school is more than the three Rs, and we put forth a program that allows all students to express themselves and communicate their talents in different ways. Some may choose to sing it, play it, write it, act it, draw it, dance it, flip it, or build it. Regardless of the student's preference, we offer a range of classes where all of these are possible. We have added a strings class, a TV production class, and we accommodate gymnastic and dance students while continuing to offer a choice of world languages.
- In addition to our curricular offerings, we have several co-curricular ways for students to get involved. Through our student council and principals advisory group, students are afforded a voice that allows them to not only express their thoughts but also be listened to.
- As part of our teaming, several teams have service projects that include gift giving at the holidays, entertainment during the holidays, food and clothing collection, and candy for the troops.
- We also offer a variety of clubs that range from skiing, chess & checkers, game playing, Helping Hands, which helps multiple groups in multiple ways.
- We ask for the help of the parents and look to collaborate when possible.
- Through team meetings, email, and our portal system, parents are informed and have immediate access to their student information.
- On a larger level, we are able to use our school messenger system to inform the parents on upcoming events and information they may need to help us help children.

- We also involve our SVIP parents in our process of helping to support our students special situations as chaperones, guides, fund raisers, and classroom support help.

Organizational Structures

- As developmentally responsive middle school that prides itself on academic excellence, SVMS is specifically designed to meet the academic, social, and developmental needs of our students. We have a foundation in place that supports this mission. These organizational structures include students, staff, and community members who all work collaboratively toward common goals.
- The teaming concept begins with the SVMS administration – the principal, assistant principal, and the dean of students – who work collaboratively towards the common goal of meeting our students’ needs.
- We have team leaders for each of the ten core and three encore teams and department chairpersons for each subject area.
- Teachers also participate on the building data team and the Olweus team.
- Additional opportunities occur at the district level as our teachers can serve on curriculum committees, the diversity committee, and the strategic plan committee.
- Our new teachers participate in building-level induction cohorts in addition to the district induction program.
- Student leadership opportunities include student government and the principal’s advisory council.
- Students on the principal’s advisory council provide valuable input about district and building initiatives and the overall climate at SVMS.
- Additional student leadership opportunities for 2016-17 include participation in the student diversity committee and participation as homeroom leaders for our Connections activities.
- Because the middle school serves as a “bridge” from the elementary years to the high school years, transition remains a strong focus at SVMS.
- Transition for our incoming students begins the previous year. SVMS administration and counselors conduct an evening orientation program for incoming students and families.
- The administration and counselors meet with representatives from the two grade 5 and 6 Middle Schools to discuss the scheduling process for the upcoming school year.
- Additionally new students are able to tour the school during a summer visitation day. The Intermediate High School counselors will meet with our students during their eighth grade year to initiate the scheduling process.
- These activities strengthen our transition efforts, but transition continues once the school year begins with numerous building and team activities.
- Events such as Olympic Day, Finale Fun Day, the annual talent show, Pajama Rama, The Main Event, themed school dances, and multiple opportunities for service projects all support our efforts in creating a positive environment for our students.
- A vital component to transition is the communication from our school community including students and parents.
- Our website stresses the belief of parents as partners in education and states the importance of community input. This communication occurs in many ways. There is always follow-up to any input that comes our way.
- In October 2016, the district surveyed the community about its satisfaction with the district’s facilities, support of technology, and addressing its mission statement. SVMS was identified as one of the district schools that best supports the district’s mission statement.
- The Olweus survey that we have students complete provides relevant data about our students’ comfort level at SVSM.

- Results from standardized tests such as the PSSA, NWEA, and Keystone exams as well as results from subject-specific summative assessments guide the curricular, instructional, and individual student decisions that we must make.
- In response to Keystone exam results and with the goal of better meeting students' academic needs, Algebra 1 has been separated into two courses – Algebra 1A and Algebra 1B.
- We have added a third NWEA test. The use of Performance Tracker continues to provide for the review of student data and for the evaluation of existing strategies and for the implementation of new instructional strategies.
- Professional development opportunities that focus on district and building initiatives, instructional practices, and data analysis are provided throughout the year.
- Students who are struggling academically can attend Homework Hub, our after- school tutoring program.. Beginning in 2015-16, we permitted students to attend without being scheduled. In addition to the tutoring provided, we have many students who attend just to have a place to complete homework.
- Students can meet with teachers for assistance three days a week during homeroom.
- Math and English cohort classes have been developed to reinforce these important skills.
- Our core teachers continue to have a common plan and team plan in order to make instructional decisions and to meet students' needs.
- Our counselors meet daily with the teams to which they are assigned.
- We encourage our students to participate in the many extra-curricular opportunities that we offer. Our students participate in various team and school service projects that benefit the community and emphasize the importance of service.
- Our teachers incorporate other cultures as well as local history into their classes.
- Parental involvement at SVMS is encouraged. Parents can volunteer as chaperones for school events, participate as a guest speaker at a team event, or attend a student performance.
- Our SVIP group works closely with the administration in their efforts to support our students and teachers as they assist in a variety of team- and school-wide events such as Red Ribbon Week, the book fair, the Academic Award Banquet, and staff luncheons.
- The district hiring process continues to allow for the selection of the most qualified candidates, beginning with a screening interview so that we can meet each candidate.
- Through our partnerships with local universities we continue to have quality field and student teachers in our classrooms.
- We continue to refine the organizational structures and processes to support our students', the structures we have in place do benefit all students.
- The teaming concept that permeates SVMS is impactful because all school community members are included.