



## Pennsylvania Don Eichhorn Schools: Schools to Watch

### Sharpsville Middle School



### School Statistics

<http://paschoolperformance.org>

Community: Rural  
 Enrollment: 313  
 Grade Levels: 6, 7, 8  
 School Schedule: 8 period day including  
 homeroom/advisory

#### Student Demographics

American Indian/Alaskan Native	0
Asian	0.64
Black or African American	2.56
Hispanic	1.60
Multi-Racial	1.26
White	93.61

#### 2015-16 Growth Data

Reading 96.27% Math 100% Science 100%

2015-16 School Performance Profile: 87.1

### Designation: 2016-17

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## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

### Academic Excellence

- Many ELA students have the opportunity to participate in the Young Playwrights program run by City Theatre of Pittsburgh and 3 students have won the competition in the past 5 years.
- Our students interact with adolescent peers in Israel via the International Shared Reading Project, becoming part of a global community of learners.

- Each year, students attend the YSU English Festival, and many earn recognition for their essays, illustrations, and creative writing.
- Every year, every student receives a novel that is the current selection for the Sharpsville Middle School Reads project, and a month of extension activities culminates with a visit from the author.
- All 7<sup>th</sup> graders complete a science fair project and many move on to state and regional levels of competition.
- Students participated in the K'Nex Stem Challenge at Grove City College and took first place in the "Best Blueprint" category.
- A student team exhibited and demonstrated use of their handmade guitars at the Maker Faire Pittsburgh.
- We were awarded a loan of Finch robots from Carnegie Mellon's Birdbrain Technologies, and have purchased 30 Finches of our own, to allow students to explore robotics and coding.
- We sent a team of students to the National History Day competition at Grove City College; one student won first place overall in the regional competition and is competing at the state level in May.
- Students have access to Chromebooks throughout the day to facilitate research and technology-based learning applications.
- Students compete in Academic Games, such as Linguishtiks.
- Nearly 25% of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students qualify for National Junior Honor Society.
- 6<sup>th</sup> graders take a course called Writing Lab to jump-start their communication skills and confidence as they enter the middle school.
- Customized learning opportunities are part of the middle school experience for many students, as Emotional Support students take interest-based field trips and accelerated students participate in high school classes.
- Students use the information from their learning style inventory to develop efficient and effective study skills.
- Teachers use a shared online database to continually update information regarding individual academic needs of students.
- Inclusion support is provided by co-teaching in ELA and Math in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades.
- During Academic Coaching periods, students take yoga, exercise in the gym, participate in chess club, attend tutoring, or utilize the library for independent reading or research.

## Developmental Responsiveness

- Sixth grade social studies instruction is characterized by simulations and project-based learning and culminates with a medieval feast.
- Sixth grade ELA students research their cultural heritage and work in teams to create a sophisticated project that is presented to the community on Heritage Night.
- Our four "Houses", which create smaller communities of learners within the context of the larger community, enjoy many team-building activities, including House Fun Fridays.
- Middle school traditions include the schoolwide holiday dodgeball and spring volleyball tournaments.
- The district 339 plan is carefully designed to support student-led conferences and social/emotional and academic growth. Digital portfolios house student surveys, writing samples, and goal statements.
- Our guidance team routinely facilitates presentations and other opportunities for students to learn about topics such as bullying, suicide prevention, substance abuse, sexuality, body image, and social media.
- "Middle School Declassified" takes place during advisory period; high school mentors assist middle school students with organization, keeping a planner, navigating social situations, and communicating with teachers and parents.
- Each grade level takes a curricular-based field trip. Sixth graders see a symphony performance at Heinz Hall in Pittsburgh; seventh graders take a history-based walking tour of downtown Sharpsville. Eighth graders travel to Gettysburg, PA, a culmination of their year in American history.

- Student Council members conduct service projects throughout the year, and their fundraisers help to create a spirit of camaraderie in the school.
- Students are invited to volunteer for community events, like Christmas card delivery at local nursing homes and helping with an Easter egg hunt.
- Teachers provide opportunities for active learning within their classrooms. Students have access to standing desks, pedal desks, balance ball chairs, and fidget cubes.
- For students struggling with executive function skills, teachers offer individual assistance with keeping track of assignments and due dates.
- Students struggling with hygiene issues are provided with clothing, shoes, hygiene products, and the opportunity to do laundry at school.
- All students were polled to find out if they have connected with an adult they trust at school; this allowed the guidance team to reach out to students who may feel disconnected from the school community.
- Our SAP team is dedicated to providing comprehensive support to at-risk students.
- Open House and Orientation build communication with parents and caregivers.
- Our plans to incorporate Makerspaces into the school will facilitate problem solving, creative thinking, and cooperation.

## Social Equity

- The SMS House System sorts students into one of four houses to foster a sense of belonging.
- Big Brothers and Sisters within the houses help build lasting relationships and leadership skills.
- House points are earned through notable achievement or citizenship, and are redeemable for time during the school day to spend relaxing with friends.
- Fall and spring House Picnics celebrate unity and build strong bonds between members, offering much needed days to indulge in laughter and fun.
- Students collaborate to organize contests, fundraisers, charity drives, and social events.
- We offer a Youth Court system to emphasize restorative, as opposed to punitive, justice.
- Students participate in a wide variety of sports, concert and show choirs, concert and marching band, the annual musical, and numerous clubs and organizations.
- The annual Sharpsville Art Festival, a community tradition for over a decade, allows all students to create art, watch demonstrations by professional artists, and stroll through a gallery of student work.
- We are currently working with an artist from Erie Arts and Culture to provide our eighth grade and life skills students the opportunity to explore creative dance.
- Autism Awareness activities encourage students to accept and honor the differences between members of our learning community.
- Students are grouped heterogeneously for classes, while still allowing opportunities for acceleration in all content areas.
- Teachers, guidance counselors, and the administrator meet weekly to discuss the varying and evolving needs of our students.
- All students have the opportunity to participate in minor rotation courses and electives, such as band, choir, robotics, general music, art, industrial art, family and consumer science, and yoga.
- Seventh graders team with members of the Sharpsville Historical Society to learn about community history on a walking tour. They follow this field trip with a curricular-based project called “Why Sharpsville?” that allows them to work in groups to create a brochure and a video that showcases their community.
- All parents and guardians have access to our online grading program, as well as teacher websites that are continually updated to provide accurate information regarding academic progress.

- Teachers select students of the month each month to recognize citizenship, based on our district “Pillars of Character”.
- Many special needs students are provided with assistive technology to help with academic and executive function skills.

## Organizational Structures

- Our vision statement reflects our focus on meeting the academic, social, emotional, and developmental needs of adolescent learners.
- Teachers are provided with daily collaborative planning time to facilitate reflective practice, improved student achievement, and early academic interventions.
- Teachers are encouraged to schedule peer observations, trade classes, and attend workshops; the Schools to Watch team attended the PAMLE conference as well as the national conference.
- Advanced students have the opportunity to participate in accelerated courses and various enrichment programs.
- Co-taught inclusion support classes provide differentiated instruction for students who may struggle.
- The middle school autistic support classroom and sensory room are state-of-the-art, and draw students from neighboring districts.
- Our new testing referral process was developed collaboratively and relies on communication and cooperation between staff members.
- Curricular integration is a renewed area of focus; our Writing Lab course integrates technology and art with research and ELA.
- We coordinate efforts within our district to fully utilize available resources. For example, the high school greenhouse is used by students K-12 for project-based learning opportunities.
- Field trips to explore the larger community are also frequently shared between buildings and provide a sense of academic continuity. K-12 students can travel together to destinations such as Jennings Environmental Center and the Carnegie Science Center.
- The administrative team has received training on grant-writing and is encouraged to apply for grants to fund initiatives. The middle school has recently received grants from the Grable Foundation, PASR, Give Back Yoga, and Highmark.
- We work routinely with local colleges and universities to support the growth of pre-service teachers through student teaching and field experiences.
- Parent Council is an active, thriving organization that enables parents to fully participate in the educational process by seeking feedback and encouraging open communication.
- Student-led conferences require students to set goals and reflect on their learning.
- Programs like Backpacks and our school food pantry, housed in the nurse’s office, provide food for families in need.
- Students transition into the middle school with support ranging from individual and small-group orientation programs to grade-level and schoolwide assemblies.
- The transition from middle to high school is structured with extensive support, and the guidance team continues to build relationships with students throughout their entire middle/high school experience.
- Building upgrades are planned to take place over the next two years, focusing on security, accessibility, and appearance.