



# SCHOOLS TO WATCH – VIRGINIA

## HERBERT J. SAUNDERS MIDDLE SCHOOL

### VISITOR'S GUIDE



## Saunders Middle School



### 2014-2015 School Statistics

*(Sources: Student enrollment as of March 25, 2015 compiled from StarWeb and the current VDOE school report card)*

Community: Prince William County  
 Enrollment: 1100  
 Grade Levels: 6-8  
 School Schedule: Alternating Block

#### Student Demographics

- 34% White
- 24% Hispanic
- 27% African American
- 8% Asian
- <1% Native American
- 30% Economically Disadvantaged
- 11% Special Education
- 9% English Language Learners

### Re-Designated III in 2015

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## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

### Academic Excellence

- As a Baldrige in Education School, students participate in the development of mission statements and vision statements not only for each of their classes but also for themselves.
- Students keep data notebooks and create plans to achieve goals for both formative and summative assessments.
- Teachers continuously meet with their grade level/content Professional Learning Communities to create instructional calendars, discuss students who are not meeting with success, develop a plan with these students and coordinate after school tutoring responsibilities.
- Staff members eagerly seek opportunities to extend their own learning of their own subject matter by attending professional conferences and workshops.
- Collaboration is key at Saunders Middle School. Faculty meetings have become less “sit and get” and more participatory for all faculty members. Reading, Gifted, ELL and Special Education teachers take ownership and share strategies at Faculty Work Sessions. All audience members are considered and whether music, math or library, all staff walk away with practical applications for their respective contents.
- Partnerships with local universities (George Mason) to integrate technology in the science contents for students with disabilities.
- Members of the Curriculum Assessment for Student Learning team have turn –keyed training on targets and assessments to ensure Saunders Middle School has a plan for a 5 year staff development plan.
- In Social Studies classrooms students examine primary source documents and engage in projects that make history come to life.

- All curriculums work to develop both content objectives and language objectives so ELL learners have a plan for success and cognizant awareness of staff allows for all levels to be reached.
- An intensive after school remediation program using Algebra readiness Diagnostic Test is utilized by highly qualified mathematics teachers to identify specific areas of weakness, create an individual instructional plan for each student, and then reassess using specific strand targets to check for mastery.

## **Developmental Responsiveness**

- The Olweus program provides students with valuable information and strategies to prevent bullying, henceforth, the students are better prepared to make better ethical decisions and interact appropriately with their peers and adults in formal and social settings.
- Students entering Saunders Middle are invited to attend Spartan Spotlight prior to school. Expectations, rules, procedures are thoroughly embedded in the orientation activities in order to acclimate students to their new physical and academic environment. 8<sup>th</sup> graders are the facilitators and develop team building activities so students are familiar with each other and staff prior to starting school.
- SPARTAN PRIDE days are held once a quarter. Teachers recognize 2 students per class and write specifically what they are proud of on the student's SPARTAN PRIDE card. Over 700 students are recognized. The PTSO graciously donates snacks and drinks so students can come down and show off their pride cards.
- Continued implementation of Interdisciplinary teams provides students with support from a core groups of teachers by providing continuity and connections across several different content areas.
- A yearly Career Day is held in the spring and is organized by our counseling department which exposes students to different professions across a wide array of interests representing over 75 different professions.
- Each marking period students are recognized by staff for exemplifying any of the six pillars of character education. The program rewards students for their outstanding character choices. Students may nominate other students and the staff is also recognized.
- Our pledge every morning reads: "Be responsible, response-able, respectful and make yourself proud!"
- "It's a WE thing" at Saunders Middle School.

## **Social Equity**

- Teachers participate in Baldrige training where they identify their own using the Myers-Briggs Personality Inventory. This provides valuable insight into oneself, the system teachers have created, and also into issues that arise between teachers and students. Once teachers understand their primary color, they begin to understand how the students within their systems in the classroom are created by them.
- For the first two days of school, teachers are not allowed to teach curriculum. They may only design activities to get to know their students and of course, if the activities incorporate curriculum, even better.
- Students are also inventories on their own learning styles and personalities. Through this Baldrige approach, staff develop rapport with students so they may reach them throughout the year.
- 8<sup>th</sup> graders are offered the opportunity to attend the local high school in order to take geometry and over 5 different level one world language classes including Russian.
- The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol is implemented throughout the school to facilitate meaningful instruction for our ELL students.
- Students in both the autism program and the intellectual disabilities program are integrated into music, drama, art, FACS, TECH ED and P.E. with their grade-level peers. Saunders is an inclusive environment for all!
- Teachers' classrooms are adorned with a variety of materials reflecting the cultural backgrounds of students. Staff use Google Translators in order to make printed materials to include any language needed for students to build their own learning backgrounds and have the opportunity to be successful.
- Through Saunders Positive Behavioral Support team, staff are constantly looking for ways to allow for students to reflect and make plans to be successful. Tiered interventions are used when students make poor choices with behaviour. New approaches to both teacher and administrative referrals were used to decrease student discipline reports more than 40%.

## **Organizational Support**

- Our Vision: Saunders is a professional community dedicated to working collaboratively in a productive and reflective manner to ensure student success.
- Our Mission: in order to inspire student success, staff members, students and families will interact positively, motivate and encourage each other to achieve our best, and participate in on-going analyses so students become productive citizens and contributors in society.
- The continued implementation of grade level interdisciplinary teams to assist in student learning and developmental growth.

- Each month Curriculum Teams meet. Through vertical articulation, monthly calendars with targets are shared, resources are discussed and strategy ideas are given based on the needs presented by data sharing.
- Cognitive coaching courses have provided the principal and assistant principals the opportunity to practice reflective practice as staff set goals and plans for teaching.
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