

WEST ALEXANDER MIDDLE SCHOOL



2018-2019 SCHOOL STATISTICS

Designated in 2019

ReDesignated in n/a

Community Size - Rural

School Enrollment - 569

Grade Levels - 6-8

School Calendar - Traditional

Free & Reduced Lunch - 35%

English Learners - 1%

Students with Disabilities - 12%

Alexander County Schools
85 Bulldog Lane, Taylorsville, NC 28681

Tel 8284954611

Principal - Dr. Chad Maynor

<https://www.alexander.k12.nc.us/Domain/17>

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

At West Alexander Middle School, the most important element necessary to establishing the highest standard for academic excellence is to establish a safe, clean, and welcoming learning environment. West Alexander Middle School has exceptional policies, procedures, and organizational structures that are consistently applied and clearly communicated to parents, students, and diverse stakeholders throughout each school year.

Another essential element in obtaining unprecedented academic excellence is achieved through continual efforts to establish a school culture in which all students and teachers believe

2018-2019 School Demographics

- **African American - 2%**
- **Asian - 2%**
- **Caucasian - 87%**
- **Filipino - 0%**
- **Hispanic - 5%**
- **Native American - 0%**
- **Pacific Islander - 0%**
- **Other - 0%**
- **Two or More - 4%**

that every child can learn and achieve at high levels and feel equipped with any and all tools needed to assist and enlarge possibilities for our students and their families.

Administration partners with teachers each week during PLC meetings to collaborate over the development of learning goals and activities that align to grade level standards, ensure that adequate time is set aside for all standards to be covered and to emphasize standards that will be most heavily used to determine students' grade level proficiency, while also continually progressing in the level of thinking and rigor students are asked to display through questioning, discussion, writing, and various products they are allocated.

Teachers at West Alexander Middle School are incredible at making learning relevant and applicable to real world and college/career readiness. The teaming approach and daily common grade level planning allow teachers to develop integration opportunities across all contents in order to help students recognize and utilize the importance of making connections and synthesizing information.

The professional development focus for our school and system has centered around the Learning-Focused Schools Instructional Framework. Teachers have and continue to receive job-embedded PD during PLC and other collaborative planning times, required workdays, as well as additional optional teacher determined PD offerings. Through these efforts, teachers have become well versed in the most recent and pervasive meta analysis.

Some of the high-yield strategies teachers continually work to make most efficient in their analysis of student understanding and mastery are entry and exit tickets, quick writes, classroom observation, assignment rubrics, as well as quizzes and projects. Students are given frequent opportunities to peer and self assess through questionnaires, surveys, rubrics, Google forms, and reflective writing.

The daily schedule includes an Intervention/Enrichment period which offers teachers and students the flexibility to offer additional support to students whose understanding and work quality reflect needed intervention or remediation. Teachers have the flexibility to use this time to frontload for difficult concepts about to be covered during Core instruction and/or to allow additional instruction and practice time in foundational skills or skills that have already been taught but not mastered by some students.

In closing, West Alexander Middle School employs a variety of committees and teams in order to ensure that teachers, parents, and diverse stakeholders are included in decisions affecting all aspects of organizational planning. The School Leadership team analyzes student outcome data to make informed decisions on professional development offerings, new initiative implementation, best instructional material and data sources, and accomplished levels of the multitiered instructional model. The school's Student Support Team identifies students at risk in areas of academic success, attendance, and behavior and works collaboratively with teachers, expert psychologists, social workers, EC and EL services, translators, health services, and other outside agencies to develop and implement appropriate interventions and supports for struggling students and families.

Developmental Responsiveness

West Alexander Middle School strives for excellence in developmental responsiveness for every student's needs. Middle school is a unique time when student's experience many developmental changes. Students experience unique changes personally, socially, and academically. The administration and staff at our school are highly qualified and knowledgeable about adolescent learners and make every effort to assist students through this transitional time continuously seeking out new and best practices in social and emotional development.

At West Alexander Middle School, each grade level has two designated teams comprised of four content teachers with the exception of one 8th grade team made up of three content

teachers each of which also teaches one period of social studies. These teams allow teachers to work closely in order to create a smaller highly supportive learning community for with focus on meeting the individual needs of students. Through these smaller learning communities, a family atmosphere is formed to foster personal, social, and academic success.

To Support our students during this transitional time, our teachers work hard to assist in fostering healthy physical, emotional, social, and academic development. Each day student participate in "movement" which allows physical activity through a 10-15 minute walk outside after lunch. We offer Health, PE, and Weight Lifting as Exploratory options as well as a variety of sports in which students are encouraged to participate. We have offered a variety professional development/trainings during professional learning communities (PLC), and district meetings that deal with meeting the needs of adolescent learners at all levels and from all backgrounds.

One of the biggest struggles in our changing technology saturated world is engaging students in the classroom. Teachers at West Alexander Middle School realize the need to incorporate real-life application and college and career readiness skills in order further student engagement. Students are encouraged to apply learning concepts to their daily lives as well as through project based learning and inquiry based learning activities.

Teachers at West integrate across content areas daily to improve student understanding of concepts, enhance engagement, and create rich learning opportunities. Social Studies teachers routinely incorporate English standards to assist with developing the domains of literacy. Our Science teachers are incorporating Math through STEM and STEAM activities to allow students more practice. Through bi-monthly PLC meetings teachers are encouraged to discuss integration opportunities and plans.

West is fortunate to have family involvement to support the well-being of the whole child. Our teachers reach out to parents routinely throughout the school year. Families and parents are a vital role to the school's support of each child. We encourage parents to be involved throughout the middle school experience. Teachers correspond with parents through emails, Remind 101, Class Dojo, parent newsletters, teacher websites, etc. At the beginning of each year teachers invite parents to participate in "Get to Know You Conferences." The "Get to Know You" conference allows parents to meet their child's team of teachers and the opportunity to discuss their child's needs. Parents are asked to describe their child, explain strengths/interest, and areas they might need help in. The "Get to Know You" conferences open lines of communication between parents and teachers. Each grade level team then holds a team breakfast at the beginning of the year. Parents are encouraged to attend and bring a breakfast item to share. Our school has a Parent Advisory Committee that meets quarterly and a West Parents in Action Committee that meets monthly. We also have parent representation on our School Leadership Team and invited to attend Student Support Team, SST, meetings. Families are a vital role to encouraging student success.

Student involvement in a school activity is important to their sense of belonging to middle school. West sees the need for students to feel involved in school activities. A wide variety of sports are offered to students including, baseball, softball, football, cheerleading, soccer, track, wrestling, etc. Students are encouraged to try-out for these teams. Coaches assign managers to assist with teams. Our music department offers band and chorus to students wishing to learn these skills. Our band and chorus teachers work very closely with students to learn and grow in the performing arts area. Clubs are also a vital role to helping students find belonging. The Jr. Beta, Student Council, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and School Spirit clubs offer a wide-variety of meaningful learning opportunities to improve their community and school. These clubs have sponsored clothing drives, food drives, meal boxes to needy families, and encouragement to students. The sporting teams and clubs offer teacher to continually make connections with students to encourage developmental response to student needs.

Social Equity

The children we teach come from backgrounds that seem infinite in their variances of environmental exposure and knowledge base. During the years of K-12 education, students are surrounded by same age peers and have the opportunity to achieve a common experience that allows us to measure how personal experiences influence one's ability to relate with others and process concepts and ideas.

West Alexander Middle School has the following minority population percentages: 1.7% African American, 2.6% Asian, 87.1% Caucasian, 4.7%, Hispanic, 3.9% other. More so than cultural diversity, there is diversity in socioeconomic aspects within the community our school serves. The staff at West Alexander is committed to meeting the needs of all students. Some of the ways our leadership and staff support an equitable learning environment are by giving special attention to arranging student schedules in heterogeneous groups to the fullest extent possible, including advanced and inclusion classes. Students with needs requiring more intensive intervention and/or special education services have the opportunity within each school day to have their individual needs supported through resource classrooms and small group pull-out, while also spending the majority of their day among their peers in the regular heterogeneous classroom.

The highly qualified staff at West Alexander Middle School are given regular opportunities each year to expand their repertoire of differentiated and individualized instruction through PD offered on AIG, EL, EC, and trauma induced and other behavioral risk concerns. Teachers collaborate regularly with EL, EC, and grade level expert teachers in order to ensure appropriate differentiation and scaffolding is in place.

Administration works hand-in-hand with teachers to ensure that teachers' expertise is utilized in decisions made concerning curriculum, pacing, and instruction. Content teachers from our system meet each year to develop and update curriculum maps, make pacing decisions, link best resources, and create assessment measures.

The 2018-2019 school year will be our school's 3rd full year of 1:1 with Google Chromebooks. We as a faculty have grown so much in our understanding and ability to meet the needs of our 21st century learners by equipping them with mastery in digital learning competencies through intentional and engaging digitally enhance instruction. All students are fluent in most Google Apps, various digital learning tools and presentation platforms, an LMS like Canvas or Google classroom, and best research practices.

Teaching and learning at West Alexander Middle School centers around real and substantial relationships among students and staff. By knowing their students, teachers can better incorporate materials and sources inclusive of the cultures and backgrounds present in their classroom. Our teachers give special attention and time to finding and developing resources appropriate, engaging, and inclusive to all the learners they serve.

The staff at our school recognizes the essential role that parent involvement plays in academic success. Parents and advocates are welcomed and invited to be part of daily school life through Jump Start and Open House events, team breakfasts, parent teacher conferences, participation in West Parents In Action (WPA) and school leadership committees, as well as field trips and other special events.

Through this high level of parental support and involvement, as well as the dedication to establishing real and substantial relationships, students are encouraged to take full advantage of the learning opportunities being offered them. The school's culture rewards hard work and citizenship through recognition and incentives like extended freetime or movement, drawings for giveaways, outdoor seating at lunch, etc.

School rules and policies are clearly and regularly communicated to students and parents through paper forms, websites, and parent information sessions. Teachers spend time going over rules and consequences at scheduled times throughout the year and students watch videos made by their peers that show model positive behavior and more fully explain expectations. Administration, School Leadership Team, and the PBIS team analyze student behavior data on a regular basis to ensure that practices are being fairly and consistently utilized across the school.

Organizational Support

Renowned football coach, Vince Lombardi, once said, "The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual." A school embodies this quote, perhaps better than any organization. By creating an environment where shared and distributed leadership affords teacher leaders to emerge, with the support of sustained leadership, we are able to remember where we have been, recognize where we are, and develop a plan as to where and what we want to be in the future as an organization. Through a shared vision of excellence, supported by high standards for all, as well as clear goals, West Alexander Middle School is able to meet its mission of creating a community of lifelong learners by encouraging students to learn, achieve, and reach success.

As the principal of West Alexander Middle School, Dr. Chad Maynor, clearly understands the importance of holding the school's School-Improvement Enterprise together. During his tenure over the last six years as principal of West Alexander Middle School, three assistant principals have moved on to principal roles within the county at the end of their second year as assistant principal under his leadership. While possessing their own unique skill sets, all three of the prior assistant principals possessed the motivation and desire necessary to work alongside Dr. Maynor towards a trajectory of excellence. By keeping open lines of communication, being willing to make things happen, putting staff in the position to be the most successful, both individually and collectively, and keeping expectations clear, explicit, and communicated in a timely manner, the school has been able to function as a productive unit in its day-to-day know-how, coordination, strategic planning, and communication efforts to support staff in their efforts to achieve success over this time span despite changes in leadership.

As a school community, learning, experimentation, and the opportunity for reflection are the norm. School leadership fosters and supports interdependent collaboration among departments, teams, grade levels, and school-wide toward the common goal of ensuring our students are given every opportunity possible to be successful. Through our efforts to establish a Professional Learning Community (PLC), staff has the opportunity to discuss at-risk students, collaborate on curriculum integration within and across content areas, and to further define the craft of teaching through targeted professional development opportunities, such as Learning-Focused Schools, we are able to function interdependently towards a common goal.

As a school and district, professional development is aligned with research and evidence-based instruction intended to reach our goal of increasing student achievement for all students, not simply groups of students. These efforts are evidenced in the fact our district has committed professional development allotment towards providing schools with the opportunity to participate in Learning-Focused School Training.

West Alexander Middle School functions as part of a network of learners within the Alexander

County School System. Through our collaboration efforts with our middle school colleagues at East Alexander Middle School, the three elementary feeder schools, and the district's high school and early college, teachers work with their content-specific peers and departments to vertically articulate our curriculum maps to ensure a natural progression across grade levels and content areas. By working with the district to strategically planning curriculum mapping and content meetings periodically throughout the school year, teachers are able to collaborate to further refine their curriculum maps to meet the needs of our students.

As referenced above, a culture of continuous improvement permeates West Alexander Middle School. As reflective practitioners, teachers hold one another accountable for student achievement as they analyze data sources, both formative and summative, to make informed decisions for instruction, intensive improvement (i.e., Informational Texts, Literature, Vocabulary, Geometry, Number Sense, etc.). When data is suggestive of weaknesses, teachers collaborate with administration, teaching peers, and district leadership to refine their efforts.

When barriers arise, these barriers are viewed as challenges and opportunities for growth, not problems. By utilizing a positive, growth mindset approach to tackle our improvement efforts, we are able to collaborate with school and district leadership to assess and evaluate our current programs.

West Alexander Middle is proud to partner with Appalachian State University as part of the Appalachian Public School Partnership Agreement between both Appalachian State University and the Alexander County Schools. Aside from the professional development opportunities, Appalachian State University places student teachers at West Alexander Middle School, further supporting our efforts to recruit the most highly qualified applicants in the field of education. In addition to Appalachian State University, West Alexander Middle School partners with Lenoir-Rhyne University to place student teachers, participate in job fairs, solicit speakers for College Days, etc. When vacancies arise, Appalachian State University and Lenoir-Rhyne University are one of the first two lines of contact when seeking highly qualified applicants to fill existing vacancies.

In closing, the final and perhaps most important component of our school's organizational structures and processes relies on the families of those we are entrusted with educating. Without the support of parents and families, our efforts are destined to fall short of our end goal of excellence. Through monthly newsletters, social media posts, School Messenger calls, opening day parent correspondence efforts, "Get To Know You" Conferences, team breakfasts, book fairs, and the school's website, West Alexander Middle School has numerous means to share and discuss goals for student success and students' responsibility for meeting those goals.