

VIRGINIA SCHOOL TO WATCH



Wallace Middle School



Newly Designated 2014

Wallace Middle School
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Bristol, Virginia 24202
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Web Address: HYPERLINK "http://wms.wcs.k12.va.us"
<http://wms.wcs.k12.va.us>

Start/Stop Time:
8:20 A.M. to 3:10 P.M.

2014 School Statistics

Community: Rural Southwest Virginia
Enrollment: 450
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Modified Block

Student Demographics

96% White
1.78% Hispanic
.89% African American
.67% Asian
.44% American Indian (Native American)
49.55% Free/Reduced Lunch

Meets FAMO Requirements

School Characteristics and School Achievements

Academic Excellence

At Wallace Middle School, our mission is to create a rigorous, relevant, and caring learning environment for students who are transitioning from childhood to early adolescence. We know that every child can succeed when their individual needs in academics, social/emotional, and physical wellness are met. While standards and content are an intrinsic part of instruction, emphasis on 21st Century skills draws attention to how content and best practices apply to the real world; students are aware of the distinct relationships between what they are learning and how it will help them be successful in the future.

Apart from standards, objectives, and 21st Century skills being displayed daily in classrooms, each teacher provides students and families with a course syllabus that stresses both content and high expectations for achievement. Close attention is paid to student learning styles, strengths, special needs, and structure that will facilitate deep understanding so that students think critically and discover the interconnectedness of the world around them. All students have a Wallace Middle School day planner to help keep up with important dates and assignments. To help all students make connections, teachers have individualized classroom web pages that chronicle the school year's objectives and standards. These websites offer lesson reviews, quizzes, games, samples of student work, rubrics, newsletters, and photographs of students as they work on special assignments and activities. Our online mission is to provide students and their families with snapshots of instruction and outcomes, which are standards-based using best practices. Many of the best practices used come from the teacher-written Wallace Middle School Best Instructional Practices Resource Guide that can be found in every classroom.

A school-wide emphasis on improving reading skills has had a positive impact on Wallace Middle School. Students can earn a varsity letter in Reading! In the midst of their studies, students read ten novels or nonfiction books, create different projects to promote the reading of those books, possess a library card, and participate in activities that attest to the importance of literacy. Many students have the goal of earning all three varsity letters—W, M, S—before moving on to high school. To further promote reading, each year we have a school-wide read where every student and English Language Arts teacher reads the same book and complete projects that celebrate such titles as *Wonderstruck!* and *The Trouble With Lemons*.

At Wallace Middle School, we value every minute of the school day. With the implementation of block classes in eighth grade, an experimental once-a-week block inclusion English class in seventh grade and cooperative learning models to chunk content in sixth grade; students have longer, more challenging core periods. While our school faces setbacks from time to time, we provide multiple pathways for struggling students to achieve. By offering before-, during-, and after-school remediation, review, and intervention to students, problems that could domino are addressed. When math SOL scores dropped last year, an aggressive plan was implemented to revamp instruction, analyze students' strengths and weaknesses, and support students in their learning every step of the way toward success. Algebra Readiness, Education Talent Search tutors, and other intervention measures were taken. Likewise, when students' reading levels do not progress, TeenBiz 3000 and Project Graduation tutors facilitate extra guided practice. All at-risk students are observed, and teachers brainstorm on ways to make learning accessible to all. Our school has committed to models of Response to Intervention (RtI) so that struggling students (regardless of whether or not they have IEPs) receive thoughtful, deliberate instruction and remediation. The idea that a student can revisit a misunderstood concept and redo the work to show mastery is one that our school embraces. Students who need enrichment enjoy opportunities through GATE, Science Bowl, creative writing contests, art contests, and music. Building strong relationships with students and their families is an important facet of academic excellence, and at Wallace Middle School, we know positive reinforcement is vital to growth. What is more, when a student reaches a milestone, has a tremendously great day, does something to make life better for others, or works especially hard on a weakness, teachers send a WOW postcard in the mail to celebrate that moment with everyone at home.

In our school, academic excellence goes beyond mastery of core content. Physical fitness and well-being are stressed. With two full-time physical education teachers in the building, the rigors of

fitness have gone beyond organized games, fitness tests, and organized play. Attention is given to appropriate nutrition, regular exercise, and healthy lifestyle choices. Likewise, the arts are not lost! Students participate in award-winning band and chorus programs as well as exploratory classes; students can explore the arts, technology and computer solutions, Spanish, and Agri-Science. Whether it is an exploratory or a content-centered course, teachers orient instruction to teacher-collaborated school and county-wide standards. State guidelines and updates via professional development and TeacherDirect are also taken into consideration when teachers design lessons and select instructional materials that are best suited to the students they serve.

Teacher mentors and day therapists help students who struggle with social and emotional setbacks that impact well-being and achievement. Peer mentoring and advisory times clear the way for students to spend the entire school day practicing skills that will make them valued adult citizens and life-long learners. Through experiential learning, cross-curricular activities, tier three vocabulary acquisition, work in small groups, facilitation of tolerance and respect for others' ideas and cultures, as well as opportunities for team-building and conflict resolution, Wallace Middle School students are on track with 21st Century goals for a brighter future. By recognizing that there is not an absolute date for students to master a concept or skill, teachers facilitate mastery at different speeds regardless of where a learner is on a given day. Through cooperative, positive experiences, students know Wallace Middle School provides a safe and happy place to learn from their successes and struggles—whether through traditional or technology-based instructional modes. In the span of an hour, students all over the building are online doing research, developing presentations for peers, enjoying Brain-Pop or TeenBiz, conducting high-interest science labs, talking about an article on current events, asking questions of a guest speaker, brain-dumping, taking notes, role-playing, writing in journals, learning new words in Spanish, experimenting with perspective, giving feedback to a classmates on their essays, and applying prior knowledge to new ideas that could ultimately make the world a better place.

There is an evident synergy that comes from teachers who are themselves engaged in learning. Apart from learning from experience and through the eyes of students, teachers seek valuable opportunities to continue their own educations. Their learning spectrum ranges from peer-led in-service training to online professional learning communities, from attending conferences to presenting and then sharing ideas at faculty meetings upon their return, from sitting in a traditional evening class or exploring asynchronous distance learning online, and from researching in a realm of expertise to learning something new in the realm of unknowns. Offering parents opportunities to be informed about their students' instructional and social needs, to enroll in fitness and educational classes, to understand the results of formative assessments or standards, and to send information on a sheet of paper or via a smart device screen comes naturally in the process of making Wallace Middle School a thriving, exciting education center, the heart of the community, and a vital portal to the future.

Developmental Responsiveness

The staff at WMS works hard to create a personalized environment that supports each and every student's intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development. It all starts prior to the beginning of the school year when a team approach is used to place students in classes where they can reach their full potential. Administration personnel, the guidance counselor, classroom teachers, and special education teachers, all have input and provide recommendations concerning students' strengths, weaknesses, learning styles, and personality characteristics, and a concerted effort is

made to match individual students with teachers and other students where they will be nurtured and challenged. Each and every child is accounted for in this process.

Wallace Middle School also employs the team concept in our team-oriented learning communities, which foster stable, close, and mutually respectful relationships between adults and students. The learning communities are grouped by grade levels and further subdivided into two teams per grade level; each team has a team leader that facilitates communication between administration and all team members. Staff is also grouped by subject, and regular meetings are held to allow collaboration between grade levels and unity in the subject matter. A panel of students representing the student body has an opportunity to voice their opinions on school issues and work collaboratively with the principal in the Principal Advisory Group. All students are grouped into character-building Advisory Groups comprised of one teacher and approximately 10 to 15 students. The small group setting allows students a forum to discuss important topics related to their social and developmental growth during middle school. The Advisory Groups meet monthly during the school year to discuss topics such as goal setting, bullying, internet safety, community service, diversity and tolerance, anger management, conflict resolution, making healthy choices and respect for others. The goal for each group is to improve relationships, academics, behaviors, attendance, and leadership. The staff embraces the opportunity to form close relationships with their students and to serve as mentors for them as they experience middle school, and the students enjoy the opportunity to discuss relevant issues in their own lives, their community, and their world in a safe, caring environment.

Student growth is a focal point and a priority for all teachers at Wallace Middle School who plan and prepare their lessons with the students' growth and progress as the ultimate goal. Each teacher is equipped with student data from the previous school year, and throughout the school year, teachers continue to compile data to reflect student performance. This data includes the students identified as "recovery students" who have not passed their Math or English Virginia SOL tests for the previous two years and SOL analysis, including the previous year's Student Performance by Question Report, as well as individual student SOL scores. As the year progresses, teachers track a variety of student performance data and compile it in the SOL binder. This not only helps to monitor student growth, but also helps teachers identify struggling students to ensure that they receive the additional support needed in order to be successful. All teachers give a pre-assessment and post-assessment for their subject area, and Benchmark tests are given each nine-week period in all year-long subjects and every four and a half weeks for block classes to verify students have successfully learned the concepts taught during that quarter. This tool enables teachers to adjust their lessons based on student performance and provide additional support where it is needed. Teachers also have a host of other assessments at their disposal to track student growth such as: Star Reading Assessments, Teen Biz Level Set, an on-line reading comprehension program which evaluates students' Lexile reading levels and automatically adjusts assignments based on student growth in reading comprehension throughout the school year, Pearson Success Net, an online program that gives immediate feedback to students concerning their input, and IXL, and online math program that provides a variety of data for teachers to use. Additionally, teachers consistently use summative and formative assessments in the classroom on a daily basis to determine student growth.

Students who are identified as needing additional support have access to comprehensive services with a range of support staff including a full-time nurse and guidance counselor, resource teachers, four trained counselors employed by Highlands Community Services, a SAP counselor, and a school resource officer who is on call and available as need arises, an Algebra Readiness tutor,

Talent Search Tutor, Life-Skills teacher, Family Life teachers, and a DARE officer. Teachers are encouraged to initiate the referral process for students who may need additional emotional or social support that can be provided by Highlands Community Service's day-treatment program. Students who enter the program are provided intensive counseling and behavior modification support in the classroom. The Highlands Community Services Counselor works closely with parents to increase parent awareness and involvement to meet the students' needs and can provide access to other agencies like the Children's Advocacy Center for example. Identification of these students is an ongoing process. Once a student has been identified, a plan of action is created to provide the student with the additional support they need, whether it be tutoring, modifications, or some other tiered intervention. The Algebra Readiness tutor, who provides additional tutoring in math for identified students on a daily basis, is an integral part of the staff at our school. We also have a tutor available through the Talent Search Program that teaches all subjects to students who have been referred by their teachers. As SOL testing approaches toward the end of the school year, all teachers conduct an assessment and meet as a team to determine which students are good candidates for after-school tutoring and which ones will receive tutoring during the school day during smart block (study hall).

Another way our school provides support for our students' emotional, social, and intellectual growth is through the implementation of our transition programs that help our students plan for their future. This program is designed to aid our students in completing a smooth transition from the elementary level to middle school, middle school to high school, high school to college, and eventually in the career of their choice. Each year, 5th grade students from our two feeder elementary schools, High Point Elementary School and Valley Institute Elementary School, visit Wallace Middle School for orientation. These future Wallace Middle School students are given a presentation by the guidance staff and administration containing a brief overview of our school followed by a question and answer session. They are also given a student-led tour of our facilities and are invited to eat lunch in the school's cafeteria.

Likewise, we want to ensure that our rising 8th graders are ready for their transition to high school. Each spring, the guidance counselor meets with all 8th grade students to provide information about high school registration, course requirements, and options for enrollment and to help them plan for their transition to high school. They also enjoy a field trip to John S. Battle High School where they experience a similar orientation as the 5th graders. Another way they are prepared for high school is by touring the Career and Technical Center that is available to students at the high school level. They are guided through all the different departments and fields of study while CTE teachers explain the details of each program; students get an opportunity to observe older students at work in real life occupations such as cosmetology, food service, masonry, welding, nursing, carpentry, computer repair, CISCO systems, and auto-body repair. This is an excellent way for students to learn about a career that may interest them. Beyond preparing for high school, students are also given exposure to the college level. 8th grade students are given the opportunity to tour the campuses of two of our local colleges—Virginia Highlands Community College and Emory & Henry College. Those students who participate in the Talent Search Program offered at Wallace Middle School have additional exposure to local colleges and have several opportunities to visit a college campus and attend a college sporting event during each school year. Also, each spring eighth-graders travel to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon to participate in the Career Carnival coordinated by the Educational Talent Search Program at Virginia Highlands Community College. Students get to explore many different careers at each of the information booths that are staffed by

experts in their respective fields. Students are encouraged to learn about the different careers as they participate in a variety of interactive and hands-on activities.

Teachers at Wallace Middle School provide enrichment activities that allow students to go beyond their classroom assignments. This is especially true of our Gifted and Talented Education program. This year's theme was Career Exploration, and students were engaged in learning about a variety of careers. The highlights of the year include a trip to Bristol Regional Medical Center where students experienced the Simulation Laboratory and toured the Emergency Department and were given a presentation on all the different fields and types of employment available in the medical field, a tour of WCYB television station for some insight into the broadcasting field, and participation in a school-wide science fair where students completed a science project using the scientific method. Several guest speakers came and spoke to students about their real-life occupations, and students got a personal look at their future career choices by taking a comprehensive online career inventory to find out what careers met the criteria that closely matched with their responses. Afterwards, they chose one of the careers that interested them the most and completed a career research project along with a presentation board showcasing that career. To the delight of several students who expressed an interest in politics, the group traveled to Washington, D.C., to visit the nation's Capitol as a culminating event for the school year.

Social Equity

The goal of the mission statement at Wallace Middle School is to provide a safe and positive learning environment that is conducive to developing lifelong learners and responsible citizens who will become positive contributors to our society. This statement helps the faculty and staff to concentrate on the students' learning process and promote the idea that all students strive to be the best that they can be. Teachers and staff are highly qualified and trained in order to better help students. Teachers enlist and participate in many workshops, conferences, and classes to ensure they are trained with the latest changes and needs for our diverse society in mind. All these plans and ideas help to better prepare our students in the 21st century.

Wallace Middle School is located in a rural community that does not belong to a city or town. This makes it a challenge for the students and the school because it does not have the support base from its own city or town. Our faculty and staff work very hard to get to know our students. It is important for the school to have communication with each child's family and be aware of any needs the child may have. This is beneficial because we are concerned for the whole child. The staff can better provide support when we are aware of the student's needs.

All students are held accountable to achieve high standards at Wallace Middle School. To help ensure that students are enriched, they are placed in heterogeneously grouped classrooms. The classes include students with varying learning styles, and many have IEP's; teachers strive to differentiate instruction, ensuring all students can have equal access to learning valued knowledge. Strategies to help benefit student learning include peer tutoring and working in cooperative groups. Teacher-teaming takes place in inclusion classrooms where the general educator and the special educator work together; this model provides any student the opportunity to not only receive extra help, but also learn content from more than one vantage point or perspective.

All students are required to keep a three ring binder in all core classes. Students learn organizational skills, and as they demonstrate mastery of materials and standards, work is kept in the notebooks. At the end of the courses, they have all materials fixed neatly together to be used for review. Students from various ability groupings quickly learn the benefits from these classes. These classes help them grow socially and be able to work with varying learning abilities.

Another way we encourage students' learning is by offering Algebra Readiness, Project Graduation, and tutoring – before and after school. Many retired teachers tutor, and this is a great benefit for the students and classroom teachers. We use the data from Benchmark Testing to identify students who may be struggling or need help with one particular strand. This helps them become more prepared and not struggle as much in the regular classroom. These students are more comfortable in the classroom because the learning gap has been bridged, and they are more aligned with their classmates.

We take pride at WMS in communicating with parents. Students are given an agenda at the beginning of the year which outlines the rules and expectations to follow. Teachers go over school rules, as well as team rules, and the students sign a contract, so they feel included in the discipline in their school. Parents and students are aware of the rules, and they know what behavior is expected. Consequences are given when the rules are not followed. Teachers communicate with parents by writing in the agenda books, sending e-mails, making phone calls, and having parent conferences. The teachers send WOW cards home when they feel that a student has done something exceptional and needs to be recognized. School calendars, weekly events, weekly e-mails from the principal, and newsletters are sent home to keep parents informed. The phone matter calls students' homes when an important event needs to be acknowledged.

Social Equity of our students is recognized in many ways at Wallace Middle School. We encourage community service, community scholars, and good citizenship and character traits. We have a bulletin board on which pictures of students are placed when they are selected by team teachers for showing a specific good character trait. Also, students' names are posted on a bulletin board showing perfect attendance and honor roll. As an extra bonus, they receive certificates for a free ice cream treat. The Community Scholars Program rewards students for maintaining a 2.5 grade point average and performing at least eight hours of community service. At the end of the year the students are taken out for a nice lunch and receive an award. We are very proud of the large number of community scholars we have each year. For the 2012-2013 school year, we had 93 eligible students, which is 22 percent of the student body.

WMS offers a wide variety of clubs and organizations that encourage students to participate and be involved in the school and community. These clubs appeal to the students' interests by doing fun activities and being involved in helping the community. Clubs include the SCA, National Junior Honor Society, 4-H, Girls on Track, Art, Technology, Science Bowl, GATE, Outdoors, and FFA. The students participate willingly in community service. One of the most popular events is the Relay for Life in which students raise money to help fight cancer. Our SCA has partnered with the PTA, and they work collaboratively on a weekly basis on the Backpack Program, which provides food for the less fortunate students on the weekends. We also have at least one annual canned food drive to help restock a local food bank. Students truly enjoy being able to help others and give back to their community. This instills a sense of pride in the students and helps them recognize how important it is for them to help make a difference.

Teachers meet by grade level and subject area to share ideas and plans to benefit students' needs. As they collaborate, they discuss new ideas to try in the classroom. Technology is readily available and used in the classrooms, and this enhances instruction. Wallace Middle School is fortunate to have five computer labs, and the classrooms are equipped with Smart Boards and projectors. Students at Wallace Middle School deserve the opportunity to learn and receive the best education possible. We strive to ensure all students can learn and will be prepared for the 21st Century.

Organizational Structures & Processes

The faculty and staff at Wallace Middle School are dedicated to achieving a shared vision of what a high-performing school should look like within our student body and within our community. All personnel share a common goal, vision, and mission. Our mission statement is posted in the hallway as a reminder to all who pass that our school provides a safe and positive learning environment that is conducive to developing lifelong learners and responsible citizens who will become positive contributors to our society. We have implemented a variety of processes and created various organizational structures to ensure our mission can be accomplished. Examples of these include a School Improvement Committee, Team Leaders, an active PTA, and Advisory Meetings for character and diversity education.

Our administration plays a vital role in motivating our faculty, staff, and students to strive for constant improvement. The administration at Wallace Middle School is active in promoting communication between all of its stakeholders. There is a clear line of communication available. Examples of these include a Student Advisory Program, daily announcements, school website, middle school newsletters, team leaders meeting, Behavior Intervention Team meetings, calendars, six school improvement committees, and community surveys to assist in improving our school. The principal meets with each team on an informal basis in small groups to gather suggestions for improvement and to celebrate accomplishments.

Wallace Middle School is a community of practice in which learning, experimentation, and the opportunity for reflection is the norm. The faculty is involved in professional development opportunities throughout the school year both within and outside of our school. Shared book reads are common and teachers are encouraged to share in their comprehension during faculty meetings. Peer discussion leads to suggestions for improvement by experimenting with new methods. Our school has a Book of Best Practices in every classroom. This book contains ideas and methods for teaching that have been tried and work for other teachers. It is a collaboration involving the entire faculty. Teachers use the book to get new ideas on teaching strategies that engage the students in more active learning.

Our school and district devote resources to professional development, which are connected to reaching our school vision and increasing student achievement. Our school division has been a member of SACs since 1968. We have supervisors for each of our three school levels (Elementary, Middle, and High). Training for new programs has been implemented (TalentEd-teacher evaluation program). We are provided conferences during the school year and in the summer. We have state-of-the-art technology services. Our technology staff assists teachers and continuously upgrades each school's technology on a rotating schedule while providing tech conferences before and during the school year. There are continuous facility improvements in place.

Wallace Middle School is not an island unto itself; it is a part of a larger educational system that networks with the community in partnerships. We have programs in place that show vertical articulation between feeder schools. Our 8th grade visits John Battle High School for touring and scheduling to ease the transition from middle to high school. Our students also tour college campuses of VHCC and E&H for career planning. We have the Washington County Community Scholars program in place that allows our students to maintain community service hours that help fund their future tuition needs at VHCC while becoming better community leaders and citizens. Our students attend career fairs and tour the local Neff and Technical School. Much coordination and strategic planning has taken place to ease our students' transitions.

The administration, faculty, and staff of WMS hold themselves accountable for student success. We analyze and use data for making decisions. Benchmark testing, Algebra Readiness, SOL binders, SOL tests, TeenBiz, pre- and post-tests, STAR Reading, TalentEd (ongoing assessment), and tutoring are just a few examples of the ongoing process that occurs to improve student success.

Our school and district prove that we can persevere and face barriers as challenges and not view them as problems. We have a top-notch Special Education department. Students are ready for high school because of a detailed plan that is in place before they leave WMS. We have resource programs and alternative education programs as well as individualized remediation programs that provide checks and balances for success. After the Connecticut school shooting, we re-evaluated our safety plan and made changes even though we did not have the funds. We involved the PTA and parents in getting the funds to help purchase equipment needed. Budget deficits have been a constant concern, but schools have pooled their resources and received grants to compensate for lost funds and supplies. Teachers have persevered in doing the most with limited funds.

Wallace Middle School works with colleges and universities to recruit, prepare, and mentor novice and experienced teachers. We do this by welcoming student teacher/observation programs from Emory & Henry College, King University, ETSU, Bluefield College, Radford University, Virginia Intermont College, and Virginia Tech. We also have a program, TE BAG, which is a mentoring online information program from E&H for student teacher mentors. Our district advertises position vacancies internally and externally through on-line job postings, and through newspaper listings. We offer competitive salaries and benefits.

Our school includes families and community members in school improvement opportunities. We engage all stakeholders in ongoing conversation about the promotion of school improvement by having Parent/Teacher conferences throughout the school year. We have an active PTA which sends out a newsletter to teachers and parents. Our parents/guardians are made aware of their child's grades through our Parent Portal (a gradebook program available for parents to view). We have a school website, Parent Advisory Committees, Parent/Teacher Communication logs and emails, student planners, teacher Quia pages and a calendar that goes home each month to maintain an active, ongoing line of communication.

Wallace Middle School is a vital center of the Wallace community, and as the community anchor, the entire community—whether households have students in attendance or not—has a vested interest in our school's success. In our eyes, Wallace Middle School is a school to watch.

School Achievements

Wallace Middle School has been recognized on the county, district, and state levels for the following accomplishments:

The Junior Washington County Community Scholars Program recognizes those students that maintain a "B" average throughout the school year, have an attendance record of 95%, demonstrate good citizenship during the year, and perform at least 8 hours of community service. WMS had 77 students in 2011, 86 students in 2012, and 83 students in 2013. The program continues to grow.

Wallace Middle School became a Fuel Up to Play 60 School and received grants in 2010. This program is sponsored by the National Football League and the National Dairy Program. The program combines school-based nutrition and fitness activities to help the development of healthy minds and bodies. The grant money was used to purchase gaga pits.

Each November, Wallace Middle School honors area veterans by hosting a Veteran's Day Program. The WMS students recognize members of each branch and recognize the veteran with the most service and the oldest veteran. The veterans are invited to stay for lunch and visit with the students.

The WMS Science Bowl team participates yearly in the state science competition. The team won 2nd in the division and placed in the top 8 at the 2013 state science competition. The competition was held at the Jefferson Lab in Newport News, Virginia. The Jefferson Lab is a national laboratory for nuclear physics research.

The WMS music department works throughout the year to prepare our students for a variety of performances and competitions. Both the choral and band students have the opportunity to audition for All-County and All-District Chorus and Band. Selected students spend a weekend with other students across the county and district rehearsing with guest conductors, which culminates in a public performance.

Each year the eighth grade class ends the year with a program to recognize students for the following achievements: The Optimist Awards, The Cindy Roberts Outstanding Band Student Memorial Award, WMS's Spirit/Principal's Award, The Civitan Award, and Academic Excellence.

In the fall of 2012, WMS launched a new program called No Child Goes Unfed. This program is designed to assist families in providing food for their child on the weekends and on extended breaks. Each bag contains such items as peanut butter, crackers, soup, cereal, vegetable cups, juice, and fruit. PTA officers and members of the SCA assist in filling the bags.

A student advisory program has been implemented at Wallace Middle School. Each school year, students are placed in small advisory groups and the goal is to promote a positive school environment by improving relationships, academics, behaviors, attendance, and leadership. A variety of topics are discussed each month such as diversity, tolerance, goal setting, self-respect, and respecting others. The students at WMS look forward to meeting with their groups each month to discuss a specific character-building topic.

Smart Blocks are scheduled into WMS's Master Schedule, allowing students to use the time for reading a novel together, remediation, and special projects.

The Varsity Letter in Reading is another program used to encourage reading. Students have the opportunity to earn a varsity letter in reading if they read 10 books and choose to complete project for each book. Each year a student may earn a framed letter upon completion.

A school-wide read has become a popular event at WMS. Each year an interesting book is chosen for the students to read during Smart Block. The Invention of Hugo Cabret, Wonderstruck!, and The Trouble With Lemons were enjoyed by the students.

Students can participate in several essay contests such as the D.A.R., the Patriots Pen VFW Essay Contest, and the PTA Reflections.

GATE Programs are very active at WMS. This year the focus was career exploration and the members were required to design and conduct a science experiment. This group hosted a school-wide science fair with 34 entries submitted by individuals or teams covering a wide variety of topics such as rocket propulsion, aero-dynamics, and chemistry. These students were required to follow the steps of the scientific method and display the data on a presentation board.

Three WMS students won the first annual science fair and were eligible to attend the Regional Science Fair in Radford, Virginia. WMS's first place winner won an engineering award called the Broadcom Masters.

Community Service Day is an annual event at WMS. Students and staff make a difference in their community by partnering with local charities and organizations to complete some type of community service. Everyone is proud to be a part of this collaborative effort to give back to the community and make a difference in the lives of others.

WMS students also contribute to numerous charities each year: food banks, American Heart Association, Special Olympics, and Relay for Life.

Two WMS teachers are recipients of the My History Partner Teaching American History Grants which allowed them to take graduate classes in American History and methodology.

WMS is a recipient of a USDOE National Writing Project Grant which promotes creative reflection writing by teachers.

The administration and faculty at WMS frequently attend conferences at the local, state, and national level. Many volunteer or are asked to present at conferences. Each year the staff has an in-house professional development book and articles to read and discuss. The staff recognizes the importance of staying current with the trends in Middle Level Education.

One WMS teacher was the 2011 winner of the 12th annual McGlothlin Award for Teaching Excellence, which allowed her to travel to England to research Kipling, Doyle, and Arthurian legends.

A teacher was appointed Teacher-at-Large on the Board of Directors of VMSA—Virginia Middle School Association. This is a unique opportunity to edit the organization newsletter and share enthusiasm for innovative teaching that keeps the middle school model in focus.

A WMS teacher was selected as a co-recipient of the 2013 Virginia Middle School Association Master of the Middle Teacher of the Year Award.

Last school year, Wallace Middle School partnered with 51 local business leaders in an effort to build a strong school community and to promote career opportunities.