

## WILLIAM BYRD MIDDLE SCHOOL



### 2018-2019 SCHOOL STATISTICS

Designated in 2016

Re-Designated in 2019

Community Size - Suburban

School Enrollment - 850

Grade Levels - 6, 7, 8

School Calendar - traditional

Free & Reduced Lunch - 39%

English Learners - 2%

Students with Disabilities - 18%

Roanoke County

2910 Washington Ave., Vinton, VA 24179

Tel 540-890-1035

Principal - Todd Kageals

<https://www.rcps.us/WBMS>

### School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

#### Academic Excellence

William Byrd Middle School (WBMS) opened its doors in 1988 as the first school in Roanoke County that was designed with the middle school concept in mind. In 2015-2016, WBMS was recognized as a "School to Watch" by the Virginia Middle School Association. The architectural design of the building offers some uniqueness with the availability of grade level hallways and stairwells encompassing a centrally located guidance department and library. A sense of unity with William Byrd High School is made possible through our shared campus. Sharing a campus allows both William Byrd Middle and High Schools to share resources including, but not limited to, staff members, buses, and both academic

### 2018-2019 School Demographics

- African American - 6%
- Asian - 2%
- Caucasian - 82%
- Filipino - 1%
- Hispanic - 4%
- Native American - 1%
- Pacific Islander - 1%
- Other - 1%
- Two or More - 1%

and athletic facilities. A shared radio airway among key stakeholders in the two schools adds an additional sense of teamwork and promotes a safe environment. It is not uncommon for the resource officers, nurses, office staff, or administration to be seen working between the two schools. During any potential crisis or celebratory event, the Terrier nation is unified.

The community and staff truly are invested in providing the best possible education for our students. Whether it be funding for sport teams from booster clubs, support from local business and churches in the form of donations and volunteers, to the use of the facilities for the local Parks and Recreation department; William Byrd Middle School has an active partnership with our community. In addition to community support, the devotion to the 'Terrier' alma mater can be seen daily throughout our school. Eight staff members have children or grandchildren who currently attend WBMS. Many others have children who are products of William Byrd Middle School, and several staff members are former Terriers themselves. In 2015, William Byrd Middle School was recognized in the Roanoker Magazine, earning a Silver Award for one of the best Middle Schools in the Roanoke Valley.

The school, with a student population of 838 students, houses co-teaching and collaborative models which are ideal for students of all learning abilities. Four feeder schools, three of which are Title I schools, fill WBMS with a variety of students, including an 18 percent special education population and a free and reduced lunch rate of 30 percent. To accommodate the needs of students, ten special education teachers and eight classroom instructional assistants create an ideal learning environment for differentiation and remediation. Seasoned co-teaching teams and smaller collaborative classrooms make it possible for all students, regardless of ability, to benefit from collaborative classroom settings across all core content areas. Co-teaching teams and grade level teachers are able to participate in lesson planning and professional learning communities through shared planning time. WBMS is one of 44 demonstration sites across the state of Virginia with a co-teaching team selected as part of the Excellence in Co-teaching Initiative. The team offers professional development opportunities within the building and district and hosts co-teaching teams from other school divisions.

Teachers seek and are provided with a variety of professional development opportunities. These opportunities for teachers center around providing individualized differentiated instruction, implementing 21st century skills, and improving student engagement, as well as how to improve reading skills in all children. In addition to seeking professional development, our staff also offers professional development at conferences and other schools within the district. Presentations offered include providing engaging activities for students and how to establish and maintain an effective co-taught classroom. The level of enthusiasm and engagements our teachers offer is evident in our results and in the words and actions of our students. Recently, upon entering the building, a sixth grade student was overheard as he said "I cannot wait to get to reading class today; it is going to be so much fun." This remark was made in anticipation of a "book tasting" event planned in his reading class that particular day. The staff at William Byrd Middle School seeks to provide this sort of engaging activity that make students love to come to school and attend class. A new "engagement rubric", recently developed by Roanoke County Schools, allows administration to provide meaningful and observable data for teacher growth and development in the area of student engagement.

Teachers at William Byrd Middle School seek to promote a deeper understanding of the essential knowledge part of the curriculum, not just ways to pass tests. Lessons are designed to challenge students to think critically, collaborate with others and strengthen communication skills, and apply what they have learned to real world situations. In our continued effort to promote

collaboration between students, WBMS introduced collaboration rooms during the 2017-18 school year. There are three different collaboration spaces available that include student friendly furniture, comfortable seating, and colorful décor. These classrooms offer a more inviting atmosphere for small group instruction and group projects. In addition to the collaborative classrooms, our school has a seasoned, functional Maker Space area within the Library. Equipped with a variety of hands-on and technologically innovative items, including a green screen, robotics, and 3D printer, the Maker Space offers the perfect setting for STEM activities. Our librarian collaborates with teachers across all content areas to develop and implement activities and lesson plans for students to foster learning and enhance previously taught concepts through the Maker Space.

In the fall of 2017, William Byrd Middle School grew its 1 to 1 laptop program to encompass all students in grades 6 through 8. Digital citizenship is encouraged across all grade levels with specific tutorials made available to and required for all students during the first few weeks of school. All classrooms have active boards and two classrooms received new 'touch screen' smart boards. Learning is at our students' fingertips.

Student data drives instructional planning at William Byrd Middle School. Teachers meet individually with administration on a regular basis to discuss student progress. During these staff meetings, we consider assessments to make sure they are fully aligned with the essential knowledge of the standards. We also consider individual students and implement tiered levels of support or differentiation as needed. Lesson rigor and alignment are also considered during these meetings. Each grade level guidance counselor participates in these data meetings to aid in supporting the whole child. This data is used to support and drive improvement of school-wide progress and is shared during the monthly principal's meeting at the district level.

Reading improvement has been a school wide focus and goal for WBMS during the 2017-18 school year. Content area teachers look for ways to teach reading through core classes. English teachers use the flexed group model to form literacy groups. Ongoing reading assessments such as the Scholastic Reading Inventory, informal assessments, Fountas & Pinell, and benchmark testing keep a current reading level for each student. This helps us determine the level of understanding and offer the leveled reading instruction so that all students are making appropriate gains.

Academic success is not as easy for some as it is for others. Thirty-one percent of our students receive free and reduced lunch. Eighteen percent of our students also receive special education services. Ninety-six percent of students receiving special education services are fully included in regular classes. Here they are exposed to the content of the standards-based curriculum. In co-taught classes, an extra teacher can meet the individual needs of these students. Flexed grouping and 'on the spot' remediation is afforded to every student regardless of identified abilities or disabilities. In every English class, students read for a sustained amount of time every day. Leveled supplemental reading programs also aid in offering each student the opportunity to read on his or her instructional level every day.

Along with improvement in reading, there has also been a focus on improving our students' written language skills. A writing vertical alignment based on the Virginia SOLs was written by our English teachers to strengthen the writing skills of our students. This alignment specifically outlines grade level writing expectations. Having these expectations in all core classes reinforces the importance of writing skills in all areas. This interdisciplinary approach reinforces the skills the students need to master.

In math classes, the teachers use the spiral review approach. This looks different in each class; however, the concept is the same. Students are taught new material and review old material every day in class. Every week students are assessed on their level of understanding of new material as well as previous material. Math teachers use this data to design their lessons and review sessions for the following week. Each week the assessment gets longer. This helps students increase mastery of mathematical concepts and builds endurance. What sets the spiral review assessment process apart from traditional testing is that assessments are designed with eighty percent old or review material and twenty percent new material. This not only allows for continued growth in all areas but also provides an opportunity to build higher level abilities on old material while assessing new material at a base level.

William Byrd Middle students are afforded the opportunity to take advanced classes in English, math, science, and social studies. The administration, teachers, guidance counselors, and parents help each student select the most rigorous class schedule he or she can handle.

Students are encouraged to take at least one Pre-AP course. A large percentage of students at WBMS are taking advanced English and advanced math classes. A select group of students who are exceptionally talented in math are placed in the accelerated math track. This group of students will take Pre-Algebra (a hybrid of Math 6 and 7) in sixth grade, Algebra 1 in seventh grade, and geometry in eighth grade. A large number of students are enrolled in Algebra 1 or geometry in eighth grade. Other high school credit classes offered are Latin, German, Spanish, French, and keyboarding.

Students at William Byrd Middle School have many opportunities to challenge themselves outside of the typical classroom through a variety of clubs and groups. In addition to standard sports teams, students have multiple clubs from which to choose from such as Chess Club, Bee Keeping Club, Terriers Read, Fitness Club, Dance Club, the HAM radio club, Dungeons and Dragons, Yu Gi O, and Characters in Action. These, in addition to our music and art programs, afford students a wide variety of choices.

Academic Excellence is at the heart of William Byrd Middle School. The administration, teaching staff, and support staff are truly invested in our students and believe that all students can be successful. Students are valued. On any given day, one can walk through our building and see staff members going above and beyond to reach students, helping them to achieve goals. Students often meet with teachers before school, during lunch, or planning periods to gain additional support. The staff at William Byrd Middle School helps students believe in themselves and that they can achieve.

## **Developmental Responsiveness**

Knowing that middle school students undergo rapid changes, the staff at William Byrd Middle School understands that our students arrive as sixth grade children and leave the eighth grade as adolescents. The staff at William Byrd Middle embraces the middle school mindset and helps to make these difficult years a positive experience.

Transitioning into middle school can be difficult for some students. At William Byrd Middle, many opportunities are given to rising sixth graders and parents to help facilitate this process. As fifth graders, students visit William Byrd Middle to experience a typical 'middle school day'. They take a guided tour with current sixth graders who are chosen by the staff to be ambassadors. They visit classrooms, experience lockers, participate in class changes, and have questions answered by

other students or staff members during an informational assembly. Additionally, toward the end of the current year, the administrator and counselor which will be assigned to the rising sixth grade go visit the four feeder schools to introduce themselves to the students on a more personal level.

Shortly before school begins, students and parents participate in a more in depth sixth grade orientation. Students have opportunity to walk through their individual schedules and meet with their teachers. They are given locker combinations and opportunities to practice using a combination lock as well as time to decorate or stock their lockers with supplies. Parents are given an opportunity to meet privately with administration and support staff to have their questions answered in more detail. In this meeting, they are given a multitude of helpful information such as traffic patterns, dress code policy, attendance policy, and extracurricular opportunities for their child.

Our registration process is now individualized. Each of our rising sixth grade students and his or her parents are given a separate appointment to sit down and work with a staff member face to face. This improved format provides parents and students the opportunity to meet a staff member who will become a familiar face once the student starts school and is able to field questions related to scheduling and class selection. Transfer students enroll individually with a member of the guidance department and experience a welcome to William Byrd Middle School on a personal level as well. An ambassador is assigned to every new transfer student for several days to help make the transition smooth. Students identified as having a disability through an IEP participate in transition meetings at WBMS.

The modified block schedule offers our students ninety minutes of English and math every day throughout the year. Science and social studies are taught in semesters. Physical education and electives are on an A/B rotating basis every other day. Eighth graders are given the option of taking high school credited classes such as keyboarding or foreign language. The ninety minute blocks allow teachers time to build relationships with students and provide small group instruction designed to meet the needs of all students.

## **Social Equity**

Students at William Byrd Middle School are empowered to help others and our community. There are recycling containers and a collection container on campus. The Character in Action club meets during the grade level lunches and seeks to involve students in community projects such as Relay for Life, Soup for Seniors, or visits to nursing homes.

Student voice is valued at William Byrd Middle School. The Student Advisory Committee elects representatives from each grade level and sends one representative to the county level. Students are encouraged to go to the guidance counselor or grade level administrator with concerns. Maintaining the same administrator and guidance counselor for all three years of middle school (looping) provides our students with a sense of comfort and familiarity from the beginning.

Some middle school students face challenges and obstacles above and beyond those of a typical teenager. William Byrd Middle School offers a Student Assistance Program to aide these students in making the right choices and seeking the appropriate supports. The program offers individual and group counseling sessions, as well as classroom lessons. The SAP coordinator most often works with students at risk with substance abuse, conflict resolution, and anger management.

William Byrd Middle School encourages parents to continue to play active roles in their child (ren)'s education. Weekly, detailed emails from the principal keep parents up to date with schedule changes, important events and announcements. Since all teachers utilize Blackboard, parents are able to view their child (ren)'s assignments and classroom announcements. Parents are able to view their child (ren)'s grades through the Synergy operating system. When an important message needs to go to parents, ParentLink is used so that parents receive it immediately on their personal devices.

Partnering with Radford University, William Byrd Middle School has implemented a program called, "College in Six". Sixth grade students are given an opportunity to tour a college campus. They are given information about college life from students and experience a campus lunch. Eighth grade students participate in "College and Career Day". We believe early exposure and knowing what college is like will help our students make wise academic decisions with course planning.

Several William Byrd Middle students participate in the Special Olympics program. As their fellow students cheer them on with posters and signs, they are excited to board the bus to participate in this community event. In addition to the athletes, WBMS sends athlete 'buddies' to the event. This practice promotes a continued sense of inclusion and support for our students. The bonds formed during the event are often evident throughout the middle school and high school years of our athletes.

WBMS offers three meal times for our students including breakfast, lunch, and second chance breakfast. Second chance breakfast is offered after the first block of classes and provides a healthy, grab and go style option.

Students in need of school supplies are supported through our guidance department. Through our community, many supplies are donated to help in this area. Staff members who recognize the needs also provide supplies for students.

The community helps students and families during the holiday season. Local businesses donate Thanksgiving meals, and area churches donate coats. The community and staff anonymously support students in need during Christmas. Funds are also available to provide financial assistance for field trips.

## **Organizational Support**

The administrative team at WBMS consists of a principal and two assistant principals.

Administrative duties are shared among the administrators with the two assistants serving as the athletic director and data specialist. Each administrator works with a specific guidance counselor. The counselor and administrator loop with a grade level for three years. This system allows each grade level to operate like a school within a school. All discipline, IEP meetings, child studies, and 504 meetings are handled by the grade level administrator and counselor.

Teachers meet regularly with their grade level administrator and counselor to discuss data and student needs. Data meeting notes are shared with the principal. All discipline is shared with the principal as well as any academic concerns. Administrators evaluate grade level teachers while all provisionally licensed teachers are evaluated by the principal regardless of the grade level. The administrative team has an open line of communication.

Safety is a priority at WBMS. Administrative arrival times are scheduled to allow for at least one administrator to be on campus prior to the arrival of students and all administrators to be on campus at the conclusion of school. One administrator is available during on-campus, middle school level sporting events. While the principal greets arriving students in the foyer each morning, the assistant principals meet and greet the bus riders. Upon arriving at school, sixth grade students report to the cafeteria while 7th and 8th grade students report to the gymnasium. Parents wishing to check child (ren) in or out must do so using a designated and secured attendance area. Visitors wishing to check a student out of school must provide photo identification and be listed on the child (ren)'s emergency contact/release form.

Main entry doors are secured using a camera and buzzer system. When the buzzer sounds, the visitor must identify himself or herself and state the purpose of the visit. The visitor's image is immediately available to office staff. Once inside the vestibule, the visitor must scan his or her driver's license. Our Lobby Guard system is designed to identify anyone who is on the sexual predator list. No one is allowed out of the waiting area unless the visitor has a scheduled appointment, wears a visitor badge, and is escorted by staff to the appropriate location (meeting, guidance department, etc.). WBMS also has a full time Resource Officer.

The master schedule is designed to meet the needs of all students. Size of co-taught classes, number of SPED students in each class, interest block rotations, and balancing the itinerant teachers with other schools are all considered in developing the schedule. Once the schedule is developed and students are assigned classes, the administrators and guidance counselors review class lists to make sure students are placed accurately. The master schedule also includes common planning for grade level core teachers. Teachers are expected to plan together. Collaborating to plan engaging lessons that meet the needs of all students is the practice at William Byrd Middle.

Instructional time is protected as much as possible. Interruptions are minimal. Announcements are held at the beginning of the first and last block. This information is also posted on the TV in the cafeteria and updated on a daily basis. Messages are relayed to teachers during planning time to prevent classroom disruptions.

William Byrd Middle School is one of five middle schools in the Roanoke County School System. The county's strategic plan outlines the vision and expectations that schools should follow. Our school goals align with the County's vision. William Byrd Middle School staff understands the importance of the students and accepts accountability for every student's achievement. We seek to build positive relationships with students, which is one key to their success.