



## Essential Elements Schools to Watch Model School

**School Name:** Ballston Spa Middle School



### Designated in 2015

District: Ballston Spa Central School District

County: Saratoga

State: NY

Principal: Pam Motler [pmotler@bscsd.org](mailto:pmotler@bscsd.org)

School Address: 210 Ballston Ave. Ballston Spa, NY

[www.bscsd.org/Middle.cfm](http://www.bscsd.org/Middle.cfm)

### Description:

Ballston Spa Middle School, a large suburban school of 950 students, is dedicated to delivering the most innovative instruction while tending to the many emotional needs of our students through a mental health and guidance counseling structure that surpasses middle level expectations. Our teachers, staff and families work in unison to foster and support the success of every student both academically and socially through targeted programming and extra-curricular opportunities.

## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

### Academic Excellence

- Extensive use of rubrics throughout the building, across content areas
- Multiple opportunities for mastery/success such as test corrections and revised writing pieces
- Assignments scored based on rubrics aligned with Common Core Standards
- Teachers provide exemplars of work task (either past student work or teacher generated exemplars)
- Peer editing and conferencing is present across content areas
- Curriculum maps are directly aligned with Common Core Standards in core content areas
- Assessments used in class (both formative and summative) align with one or more standard
- English and Social Studies departments work closely on literacy concepts. Other departments were introduced last year
- Grade 6 English and math have application labs one hour every four days to solve real world problems and work on research skills
- Data Driven Instruction: Use of common assessments in all content areas and student reflection forms in all content areas,
- Use of choice assignments, self-scoring, self-assessment rubrics and student scoring exemplars

### School Statistics

(Source: Enter name of data source for stats listed below.)

Community: Size/characteristics

Enrollment: 950

Grade Levels: 6-8

School Schedule: One Hour Block Schedule  
7:30am-2:20pm

Student Demographics

54 % Male

46% Female

1% Hispanic/Latino

96% White

0% American Indian/Alaskan Native

1.3% African American

0% Filipino

1.3% Asian/Pacific Islander

16% Students with Disabilities

30% Free/Red Lunch/Econ. Disadvantaged

0% English Learners

**Developmental Responsiveness**

- Four core academic teams in grades 6 and 7
- ELA and Social Studies teams in grade 8
- School Counselors loop with students for three years
- There is a Girls Only Club for at-risk female youth
- There is a Boys Survivor Club for male students
- Our Best Buddies Program pairs students with student mentors
- Our Peer Leader Program assigns ten grade 6 students to one grade 8 student who mentors them throughout the year
- 2014-15 we will have an on-site Parsons clinic with two clinicians
- Parsons on-site clinic
- School Counselors
- Social worker
- Speech Pathologist
- Nurses
- PTA
- Adaptive Technology
- School Psychologist
- Teachers at all grade levels deliberately teach organization skills, make effective use of the school agenda and study cards
- School wide rules are posted in every classroom and common area in the building
- Middle school has adopted 3 responsibility rules from the elementary level: Be respectful, Be responsible and Be safe
- Teacher websites
- Brain pop
- Froguts
- Computer and laptop access
- Grade 8 Astronomy project
- Launching Pad Productions (with over 150 student participants each year)
- Video lessons posted on Sakai
- Vocational and Career readiness activities in FACS
- Resume writing and interviews
- Service Club Opportunities
- Citizen of the Month Awards
- Project Wisdom
- Collaborative work in daily classroom interactions
- 40 Whole school community service opportunities in 2013-14
- Teaming in grades 6 and 7 in four content areas
- Teaming in grade 8 in ELA and Social Studies
- ELA and Social Studies teachers use common close reading strategies and common writing scoring rubrics
- Math application labs utilize numerous close reading strategies for real-world word problems
- Professional development opportunities in literacy for all faculty
- Technology/science and computer literacy teachers create common projects
- Goal setting meetings with School Counselors and students
- SPED grade 8 vocational assessment
- Regents level courses
- Tec Smart Program for incoming grade 9 students
- Career Day
- DDP
- FACS Resume building and Interview process through Junior Achievement

## Social Equity

- Co-Teaching Model in math and ELA
- TA support in Science and Social Studies
- Gateway (12:1:1)
- 15:1
- 8:1:1
- Humanities classes for self-contained students (enabling them to travel together)
- Extracurricular activities and intramural sports with staff support
- Best Buddies Program
- Grade 6 Application Labs in math and ELA
- After school and lunch time extra help
- Curriculum development in summer, in team meetings and in department meetings
- Professional development in assessment and curriculum
- Use of technology for assessment
- IReady
- EDoctrina
- Common benchmark assessments
- Daily flexible grouping and differentiation in classrooms
- Career Day in grade 7
- Washington DC three day trip in grade 8
- Local field trips to farms, restaurants markets, etc
- Classroom Guests
- International Night
- International Luncheon
- Student Council
- LOTE Celebration/Education Week
- School Counselors and Assistant Principals loop with students for three years
- Students are celebrated publically each month
- Tolerance Program
- DASA student trainings
- PBIS Tenets: Be Responsible, Be Respectful, Be Safe
- Project Wisdom

## Organizational Support

- Shared vision initially driven by District Goals
- Building Leadership Team formulates middle school yearly goals
- Yearly goals are distributed to staff after a full faculty meeting
- Yearly BLT Goals Presentations are posted on the web site
- All DDI, Organizational Consistency, Community Outreach and Transition Goals translated into targeted action and change
- Monday Emails outlining Monday Meeting Agendas
- Full Faculty Meetings to outline yearly targets or goals
- Administrators oversee academic departments
- Every decision for change initially comes to the Building Leadership Team
- Consistent messaging in department meetings, team meetings, staff development meetings
- Team meetings and department meeting time embedded in the school day
- Professional Development offerings to foster all school improvement efforts
- APPR/Danielson framework Presentations
- APPR evaluation meetings
- Peer teacher observations
- Co-Teaching model planning time
- CDEP
- Administrative Council
- Peer teacher observations
- Math and ELA full time teaching coaches
- Professional Development offerings through MyLearningPlan
- Curriculum and best practice department meeting discussions in 6-12 department meetings