School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

**Academic Excellence**
- Frequent reflection opportunities for staff surrounding our essential questions: What are we teaching? How are we instructing? How do we know that students are learning? How are we remediating and enriching? How are we connecting students to our school environment?
- Interdisciplinary team model with scheduled time for both teams and departments to meet within the school day
- Opportunities for flexible blocking in ELA and Social Studies
- Common literacy development strategies and intentional vocabulary instruction across all content areas
- Individualized math and reading learning goals (based on NWEA MAP results) for students, which are shared with parents, students, and teachers. Math goals are linked to strands on ixl.com.
- Use of assessments (NYS assessments, MAP data, F&P, CBMs, and common benchmark assessments) to inform instruction.
- Students’ instructional programs determined by multiple data sources, including NWEA MAP results, state assessment data, and classroom performance; programs frequently tailored to individual needs (based on the RtI model) to include math lab, literacy lab, guided study hall, and 1:1 or small group interventions.
- Accelerated math and science programs, honors ELA and Social Studies programs
- Inclusive special education program, including the consultant teacher model, resource room, special class co-taught classes in ELA, Social Studies, and science, and a LINKS class (*Linking Independence, Needs & Knowledge for Success*)
- Inclusive ELL program, including pull-out and push-in support opportunities
Developmental Responsiveness
- Our school is driven by the concept of “C.A.R.E.”: Civility, Awareness, Respect, and Excellence. Students are educated on the meaning of this and it is reinforced and tied to our program regularly.
- School counselors work with a class for all three years
- Counselors push into classes to teach lessons on goal-setting, scheduling, and C.A.R.E. concepts (including bullying)
- RtI structures are foundational to all we do (including a formalized Instructional Support Team, and Student Support Team, as well as many individualized Tier 1 / Tier 2 interventions that are implemented and monitored by classroom teachers and mental health staff)
- Strategic Learning Specialist oversees the RtI process and progress monitors students throughout the building
- Flexible blocking opportunities for ELA/SS; teaming model provides opportunities for regular collaboration and interdisciplinary activities
- Common literacy development strategies and intentional vocabulary instruction across all content areas, in order to build students' background knowledge
- School spirit activities (ie, annual bocce tournament, pep assemblies, spirit days, hoe-down)
- Community outreach events such as “Penny Wars” to raise money for local charities, food drives, holiday gift baskets for families in the community, school supply drive, “Hoops for Heart” (charity basketball tournament), the annual faculty fundraiser basketball game, “Soles for Souls” shoe drive, used book drive, King Arthur Flour’s Life Skills Bread Baking Program (students baked loaves of bread for a local shelter)
- Student opportunities to have a voice – asset leader program, literary magazine, student council, and HUDDLE (a group dedicated to making healthy choices)

Social Equity
- Inclusive special education program, including the consultant teacher model, resource room, special class co-taught classes in ELA, Social Studies, and science, and a LINKS class (Linking Independence, Needs & Knowledge for Success)
- Inclusive ELL program, including pull-out and push-in support opportunities
- RtI model to support students beyond the traditional schedule; schedules individually tailored to provide additional time on task for specific academic and/or social-emotional needs (including math labs, literacy labs, guided study halls, and 1:1 or small group academic and/or social/emotional support)
- Regular department meetings and weekly department planning time allows our teachers to evaluate student learning and align our 6-8 curriculum
- Weekly Principal’s Recognition (recognizing students who show C.A.R.E.)
- Student of the month designation
- Student asset leaders are active within the building and community
- Urban-Suburban program

Organizational Support
- Meeting students where they are (the RtI process) is essential to what we do
- Time to reflect on curricular coherence, literacy-rich environments and quality teaching.
- Curriculum Steering Committees to promote vertical alignment with schools in district, and horizontal alignment between the two middle schools
- Release days to co-plan and develop units
- Content-rich professional development
- Staff book groups to discuss current educational practices
- Transitional Process in place for incoming 6th graders and outgoing 8th graders (orientations, tours, student-to-student interactions, communication w/ home)
- Monthly meetings for special education teachers and AIS providers to discuss using assessment data to inform instruction (including IXL.com, CCLS assessments, Easy CBM.com, NWEA MAP assessments, common benchmarks, and anecdotal evidence)
- Collaboration with local colleges
- National Board certified teachers
- Teacher mentor program
- Frequent and regular communication w/ home and school regarding academic goals and student performance.