School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

**Academic Excellence**
- Our school has earned recognition as a NYS High Performing/Gap Closing School and has been rated in the top 7% of the 194 middle schools in Western New York.
- The program of study includes: Math and ELA instruction through the New York State Math and ELA Modules, special area classes integrating reading and writing within their curriculum, STEAM classes such as Biomedical Science, Environmental Engineering, Design and Modeling, Automation and Robotics, Computer Arts, Information Literacy and opportunities for acceleration in Algebra, Living Environment, Earth Science and LOTE.
Best practices are implemented into daily planning and classroom instruction. These practices include, but are not limited to the following: the use of “I can…” statements, essential questions, objectives, daily procedures/agenda, higher level questioning, researched-based instructional strategies/cooperative learning structures, formative assessment/closure, varied text types, responsive seating arrangements, differentiation, and compliance to IEP/504 modifications.

- 1:1 student device program for all of our sixth grade students. Several Chromebook carts to share amongst seventh and eighth grade students. Most of our classrooms have projectors and/or interactive whiteboards.
- RTI team meets multiple times per year and utilizes data from the NYS assessments, Star ELA/Math Assessments, Think Through Math, Successmaker and classroom performance to identify and implement interventions for students.
- Academic Interventions include: differentiation, push-in services, monitoring, direct small group instruction, teacher directed and computer directed academic support labs.
- A guided study hall has been created for 8th grade students that experience behavioral or motivational concerns that impact their learning.

**Developmental Responsiveness**

- We believe in a middle school concept in which our caring staff collaborates to implement a positive school climate through the 5 Points of Character, a progressive and rigorous program of study and an extensive list of opportunities that are sensitive to the unique and enjoyable moments of early adolescence.
- The staff at Starpoint Middle School creates a personalized environment that supports each student’s intellectual, ethical, social, and physical development.
- Our school utilizes a team based approach. These teams provide smaller learning communities that foster connectedness and stability.
- Counselors loop with cohorts to support the transition of students and to fully understand the needs of our students.
- WEB program is used to transition 5th grade students into the middle school.
- Our counselors play an active role in delivering information to students in the classroom. Classroom topics include: empathy, bullying, harassment and pro-social skills.
- Homeroom meetings occur monthly that are designed to promote unity and friendships in a small, family-like setting.
- Teachers use interdisciplinary approaches to reinforce important concepts, skills and address real-world problems. Within each grade level, teachers collaborate to incorporate interdisciplinary units, as well as to incorporate literacy.
- Students have the opportunity to research and examine careers and life skills through FACS projects.
- College and Career Wall that displays information about universities, careers and academic institutions.
- We have an abundant amount of student leadership opportunities. Some of these include: SSA, WEB, Student Council, Darwin D. Martin Docent Program, as well as a music leadership group.
- Parent representatives are part of the interview process when hiring new staff members and are included in our Building Leadership Team meetings.
Our school communicates with parents through teacher web pages, parent conferences, Parent Portal, Remind text systems, all-calls, newsletters, as well as social media pages, including Twitter and Facebook.

Our PBIS program displays posters throughout the school informing students about: cooperation, integrity, empathy, responsibility and respect.

Our students recognize the importance of helping others. For example, our students have: purchased gifts for the underprivileged families, created gifts for custodial staff and school bus drivers, collected Halloween Candy for the Troops, completed the Pink Pillow Project to benefit local hospitals and created placemats for the local chapter of Meals on Wheels. Our musical club also presented a musical with all proceeds benefiting the Make a Wish foundation. Furthermore, for the past two years, three 8th grade students have been selected to place a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington cemetery.

The school provides age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character: Book club, Bookstore, FACS, Foreign Language, Fitness, Yearbook, Girls on the Run, Musical/Drama, National Junior Honor Society, Safe School Ambassadors, WEB Program, Fan Club, Ping-Pong Club, Student Council, Talent, Arts and Video, Friendship, Newspaper, Kindness, Yoga and Mindfulness, Jazz Band, intramurals as well as organized sports teams. Additionally, we present a drama or musical annually.

Social Equity

All students, including English learners, students with disabilities, gifted and honors students, participate in heterogeneous classes with high academic and behavioral expectations.

Our school offers advanced Regents level courses in Algebra, Foreign Language, Earth Science and Living Environment.

We also offer a variety of support classes, including Math and ELA AIS, study skills and Reading and Writing lab.

We utilize several computer-based support classes, Successmaker, Think Through Math and IXL.

Every student at Starpoint Middle School has access to a 12th period study hall.

Teachers use Marzano’s Research-Based Instructional strategies which include: non-linguistic representation, vocabulary, summarizing and scaffolded instruction.

Kagan Cooperative Learning Structures are implemented to improve student engagement.

All students have access to computers, wireless internet and smartboards.

Teachers address student needs by implementing flexible seating in classrooms.

Our chorus and band programs select multi-cultural music and compositions.

Counselors coordinate “mix-up” cafeteria days for students to experience different social groups.

The WEB program facilitates a culture of respect, kindness and consideration among our students. This process establishes a relationship that is strong, trusted and valued, by both students and parents.

Our counselors have also implemented a Connectedness Survey to ensure every student has an adult in the building that they feel they can trust. The results of this survey are shared with the staff to further enhance the relationship between students and faculty.

We offer school tours to show parents what our school is like and the opportunities that are afforded to their children.
• Spring transitional meetings welcome and orientate new parents to our building each year. In addition to a transitional incoming sixth grade meeting, we provide time for the new seventh and eighth grade parents to learn about the changes in their children’s programs.
• Parents are also given the opportunity to meet with individual teachers or teams throughout the year.
• We include families in awards ceremonies, including Student of the Month dinner, Stellar Spartans and end of the year award receptions.
• Our Parent Portal provides real time updates on student achievement for parents.
• Parents are encouraged to participate in our active PTA; they are very supportive in planning and running a number of events for our students.
• Rules are consistent within all areas of the school building.
• The primary method of reward is through our Positive Behavioral Intervention System. This system rewards students with Starbucks when appropriate behavior is demonstrated. Students are rewarded for demonstrating the five points of character. Students are also recognized through a variety of award ceremonies.
• We highlight students on the Spotlight Board outside of our middle school office.
• All students and staff have access to a state of the art fitness facility.

Organizational Support

• The principal has the responsibility and authority to hold the school-improvement enterprise together, including day-to-day know-how, coordination, strategic planning and communication.
• The leadership team utilizes the CDEP (Comprehensive District Educational Plan), which includes district initiatives for the 2015-2019 school years, as part of the school improvement process. This plan was created by a committee of staff, administration, board members, parents, as well as community members.
• The Comprehensive District Education Plan informs the work of the Building Leadership Team (BLT). Likewise, the work of the BLT informs building departments, made up of core and special area teachers.
• Additionally, to keep all staff members abreast of the strategies required to meet/surpass current standards, procedures are shared and communicated clearly at faculty and department meetings.
• A self-reflective practice through Effective Schools, Essential Elements and Schools to Watch, will assist the BLT in identifying further building based initiatives each year.
• Parents and community members were asked to complete surveys on parent communication and school safety. The results of these plans were utilized by the BLT and resulted in changes to building procedures and policies.
• The Starpoint Middle School staff models, reflects and engages in a professional community on a daily basis to ensure growth and collaboration.
• Department meetings are held monthly by the curriculum facilitator to ensure curriculum is being delivered effectively and collaboratively with team members.
• The school and district devote resources to content-rich professional development, which is connected and sustaining the school vision and increasing student achievement.
• Teachers also eagerly seek out professional learning opportunities beyond what they are already doing in the classroom. To illustrate, several teachers have received training at Rochester Institute of Technology for Project Lead the Way, national training for our WEB program, PBIS intensive multi-day training, as well as Kagan Cooperative Learning program.
• Teachers are hired using a multi-step process. This process ensures that the most qualified candidate will join the staff.
● Once teachers are hired, they attend several days of new teacher orientation and they are given a one-to-one mentor who has been recommended by building staff and administration for such a role.

● Similarly, some of our staff members serve as adjunct professors at local universities. These relationships are vital to our school’s success.

● We work collaboratively with other buildings to ensure proper transitions and scheduling.

● Our principal is on the forefront of educational trends, as he serves as the Co-President of WNY MS Principal’s Association and a Middle Level Liaison Attendee.

● The work in the middle school extends to other buildings, as we established an emergency response procedure that is utilized throughout the district. Additionally, our school collaborates on grants and initiated AED and CPR training for support staff.

● Middle school teachers have initiated common unit exams, projects and portfolios. Additionally, by working together, teachers have established a consistent approach to assessing student learning. Because our school implements a team based approach to learning, groups of core teachers meet regularly each week.

● Our RTI team analyzes NYS data, Star Assessments, Think Through Math data, SuccessMaker data and teacher input to monitor student progress throughout the year. By using this data, our staff is empowered to make informed instructional decisions. As a result of the RTI process, our teachers can use differentiated lessons to support groups of students needing extra assistance.

● A new cafeteria was built for the middle school. This cafeteria enables the entire grade level to enjoy lunch together.