



MIDDLE GRADES EDUCATION

Middle Grades Education

Saint Paul Public Schools has nine middle level/junior high schools. They are all part of the Project for Academic Excellence. This instructional approach is based on state standards that identify what students need to know and describe ways in which students can demonstrate that knowledge. The Project supports instructional reform in the classroom with comprehensive, continuous professional development opportunities.

Disciplinary Literacy and Principles of Learning are implemented in all content areas at the middle level. Disciplinary literacy is defined as mastery of both the core ideas and concepts and the habits of mind of one or more disciplines. Principles of Learning are blended into the implementation of DL. Disciplinary literacy does more than teach students about the discipline, it enables and requires them to do the work of the discipline. Intelligence is socialized through community and instructional routine. Multiple forms of assessment are used to drive the instruction.

Similar to the elementary program, Learning Walks are used as a tool to become smarter about the teaching and learning that is taking place. Site staff move in and out of several classrooms looking at student work, classroom artifacts, and talking with students and teachers about what they are learning and how they know they are learning it. Between classroom visits, staff gather to discuss evidence of their visit and generate questions about what they have observed. At the conclusion of a learning walk, staff work with the administrator to refine observations and questions and to look for patterns within the school.

Additional instructional support is provided to schools through content-focused coaching provided by The Center for Academic Excellence. This strategy allows trained coaches to work individually with classroom teachers to design, implement, and reflect on rigorous, standards-based lessons that promote student learning. With the help of content-focused coaching, each middle level site has developed model classrooms in the four core content areas.

READ 180

READ 180 is a computer based reading program for secondary students who do not demonstrate grade level proficiency. This program is being used with students in several academic settings, including regular education, special education, and ELL. Implementation in the classroom includes multiple instructional strategies. Students start the lesson as a whole group, and then move to one of the three small group sessions: direct instruction, independent reading or computer-based skill instruction. READ 180 has proven to work best when implemented daily for 90 minutes.

Ontrack Program

Students in grades seven and eight are required to have 80% successfully credit completion in order to move to the ninth grade. Students failing to meet this standard are assigned to the Ontrack Program. At the middle grades the Ontrack Program has multiple levels of support which can include an Academic Intervention Plan, enrollment into extended learning and

summer school programs, a mentor and/or enrollment into a school success class. During the 2007-08 school year, students who still failed to meet the 80% requirement are enrolled in a special Ontrack Program located at Cleveland Middle. These students receive daily core content and elective course work in small groups, are engaged in positive behavior reinforcement programs and have the opportunity to be enrolled in after school and summer programming.

Breakthrough St. Paul

Breakthrough St. Paul is a collaborative effort of SPPS and Mounds Park Academy. The program supplies intensive summer academic enrichment and school year check-ins and support for 65 SPPS gifted and talented middle school students. SPPS pays for transportation and student meals; Mounds Park contributes teaching and all other program costs. In addition to the support for our GT middle school students, the program also supplies internship opportunities for recent SPPS high school graduates, and SPPS teachers are involved in program management and teaching every summer. The main goal of Breakthrough is to support middle school students in enrolling and succeeding in advanced-level coursework as early as possible in their academic careers.

Education Intervention Program (EIP)

The Education Intervention Program (EIP), located at 1028 Van Slyke, is a 3-5 day structured classroom learning experience for students who are suspended. This program serves 7th and 8th grade students in St. Paul Public Schools. Students are bussed from their home school to this program and returned at end of day. This program is staffed by one classroom FTE and one TA.

Truancy Intervention Program (TIP) and Family Truancy Intervention Program (FTIP)

TIP and FTIP, located at 1028 Van Slyke, are programs of the Ramsey County Attorney's Office, in collaboration with local neighborhood support agencies and the Saint Paul Public Schools. The focus of these programs is excessive unexcused student absences. The program is a three step process, which can carry over from year to year. TIP serves students 12-17 years old. FTIP serves students in kindergarten through 12 years old. The programs are staffed by two licensed social workers and four EAs.

Transitions for Success (TFS) is designed to offer youth a temporary or transitional school setting with an emphasis placed on increasing academic skills, improving attendance, and learning new skills and strategies that will prepare them for a successful transition into a more appropriate long-term educational setting.

Students in grades 8-12 are typically referred to TFS from juvenile probation, drug court, or the Intensive Truancy Program (ITP) after having completed time in a placement or correctional facility. Students attend for the day and participate in a cognitive skills/anger