

NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS TO WATCH

MODEL SCHOOL—VISITOR'S GUIDE

Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School



Designated in 2009

Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School • Berlin Township Public School District • Camden County • Leslie Koller, Principal • 235 Grove Avenue, West Berlin, New Jersey 08091 • Tel (856) 767-0203, Fax (856) 767-7992 • Website: <http://www.btwpschools.org/berlin/DDE/top>

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- Over the last four years, the school has engaged in a systematic approach to curriculum development, using the Understanding by Design model, the Standards Clarification Project, Lauren Resnick's Principles of Learning, and interdisciplinary instruction as guiding principles. Essential questions and rubrics are visible in most classrooms.
- Language arts and math teachers loop for students in grades 7 and 8. The school attributes gains in grade 8 achievement to this practice.
- The school has significantly increased the number of students achieving advanced proficient status in math and language arts literacy and has decreased the number of partially proficient students.
- The school uses a flexible schedule that is owned by the team. Science and Social Studies have a daily 80 minute block that can be "flexed" to facilitate projects and labs.

2009 Statistics

Berlin Township, also known as West Berlin, has a total area of 3.2 square miles and a population of 5,290 people. According to the 2000 Census, 34.5% of the households have children under the age of 18 living with them. 55.1% of these households are headed by married couples living together. The median income for a household in the township is \$54,448. About 5.9% of the population lives below the poverty line. Public school students from Berlin Township attend [Overbrook High School](#) for grades 9-12 in Pine Hill, NJ. Many of our students are second-generation students at DDE – some are even kids of parents who actually met in our middle school years before. Grandma lives down the street. Auntie and uncle live around the corner. It's a family affair here in Berlin Township with deep, deep roots in tradition. Four years ago, we engaged in an intensive reform effort to restructure DDE from a junior high school into a developmentally responsive middle school. Being recognized as a School To Watch is an honorable affirmation that we are heading in the right direction for our community's children.

Enrollment: 237

Grade Levels: 5,6,7,8

DDE Middle School runs a 6-1/2 hour school day. We utilize a flexible schedule with as few dictated periods as possible. All students have 80 minutes each of Math and Language Arts Literacy each day. Of these 80 minutes, 50 minutes is lesson and 30 minutes is Accelerated Math or Accelerated Reader respectively. Students also have a daily 80-minute block, which is shared between Science and Social Studies. In each school day students have a 40-minute lunch period, which is divided up equally between lunch and recess. Additionally students have 30 minutes of Advisory or Supplemental Instruction (alternating each day), and a 55-minute special period. Every third day students have PE/Health. On the remaining days, students have either Art, Music, Instructional Technology, Critical Thinking Skills, or Spanish.

Student Demographics:

- 8% Hispanic
- 73% White
- 14% African American
- 5% Asian

- 40% Free/Reduced Lunch
- <1% English Learners

Visit website below to view this school's data for prior years.

<http://education.state.nj.us/rc/rc07/dataselect.php?c=07;d=0340;s=030;lt=CD;st=CD&datasection=all>

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Academic Excellence *(continued)*

- All students have 80 minutes of math and language arts literacy each day with part of that time dedicated to Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math. The school uses Renaissance Learning's STAR Reading and STAR Math tests to benchmark student progress and Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math to provide daily practice.
- Partially proficient LAL and Math students receive a basic skills pull-out intervention which is differentiated for each student according to their cluster scores on the previous year's NJASK. Renaissance Learning Read Now Power Up and Math Facts in a Flash, Study Island, and the Wilson Reading Program are all tools used to support students in this intervention.
- Teachers are actively involved in recreating their curriculum using Reeves' Power Standard initiative and the State Standards Clarification Project to guide them. Teachers meet departmentally on six release days during the school year to collaborate on this initiative.
- Lunchtime and after-school homework clubs are offered to students as well as an every-other-day supplemental period during which team teachers remediate or preteach students daily- and long-term learning objectives. Advanced proficient students are guided in critical thinking learning activities during this time.

Developmental Responsiveness

- Students are challenged to think about how they learn. Every student engages in the Let Me Learn (LML) Learning Connections Inventory which measures the degree to which students use one of four interactive learning processes. The student planner includes sections that require students to analyze their individual learning processes. In addition, the student planner requires students to track NJASK scores, marking period goals and grades, and their grade point average.
- The school uses technology to engage students in learning. Students use AlphaSmart Neo IIs, Renaissance Responders, Smart Boards, and Airliner Digital Slates as part of regular classroom activities.
- Classrooms are designed to facilitate student interaction. Numerous activities engage students in group work, discussions, and simulations.
- Teachers are grouped into grade-level interdisciplinary teams.
- Each student has an advisor who serves as their school advocate. Students meet with their advisory group every other day. Advisory activities include, life skills, character education, Let Me Learn and school spirit activities.
- The school-wide universal discipline plan is advisor-based and is tiered to allow students the ability to "right their wrongs" and "buy back" privileges.

Social Equity

- The school uses an extended AM or PM schedule to hold awards celebrations where students are recognized for academics, behavior, character, athletics, music, and technology skills.
- The Let Me Learn Process enables teachers to focus on a student's learning behaviors. Combined with benchmark assessments, teachers are better able to differentiate instruction and provide support. The school's template for teacher planning supports this by addressing learning connections, differentiation, assessment, and reflection in addition to traditional lesson planning requirements.
- To meet the needs of students with disabilities, the school employs two full-time special education teachers for each grade-level interdisciplinary team. The teachers provide both resource and in-class support for math and language arts. The school is moving towards an ICS model with a true co-teaching structure.

Organizational Support

- The school has been transformed in about three years due to the leadership of the principal and the commitment of the staff. Teachers developed a new behavior management plan using a positive reinforcement approach. A new vision and mission for the school was developed that connects to character education and advisory. The principal introduced Resnick's Principles of Learning and incorporated the principles into professional evaluations.
- Teachers and students feel they have a voice in decision-making.
- Teams write yearly grade level missions and covenant statements about how they work together.
- The school uses a template for teacher planning that addresses learning connections, differentiation, assessment, and reflection in addition to traditional lesson planning requirements.
- Professional development is differentiated per individual teachers and small learning communities according to identified needs and interests.