



Pennsylvania Don Eichhorn Schools: Schools to Watch

Seneca Valley Middle School



2007-10 School Statistics

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

Community: Covering nine municipalities in southwest Butler County

Enrollment: 1,142

Grade Levels: 7-8

School Schedule: Standard 9-bell

Student Demographics

0.2%	Hispanic
95%	White
2%	African American
0%	Filipino
2%	Asian
0%	Pacific Islander
11%	Free/Reduced Lunch
0%	English Learners

2007 AYP: 84.50% Math

87.75% Reading

2008 AYP: 86.10% Math

90.75% Reading

2009 AYP: 87.65% Math

89.80% Reading

2010 AYP: 89.15% Math

89.50% Reading

Designated in 2011

Seneca Valley Middle School • Seneca Valley School District

• Butler County • PA • Principal: Sean McCarty

• 122 Seneca School Rd, Harmony, PA 16037

(724) 452-6043

E-mail: mccartysp@svsd.net

School Website: SVSD.net

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- In support of the District and building mission statements, Seneca Valley Middle School works in partnership with parents and students to encourage and support academic excellence among its diverse students through its positive, integrated academic programs and clear expectations for students.
- SVMS staff utilizes Schoolwires, an online website provider, to further partner with parents in the educational process.
- Common rubrics across team content areas provide a familiar touchstone for students at all times while secondary-certified content-area teachers ensure the highest quality and depth of instruction.

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- Through the daily posting of objectives in all classrooms, teachers share with students what is being learned and why, thus enabling students to share what they are doing and why they are doing it.
- Each Desktop Curriculum contains space in which teachers write commentary and reflection about their daily lessons or longer units, and each team discusses “Best Practices” in our daily team meetings, where again we strive to improve our efforts to deliver meaningful, accurate, developmentally appropriate content to our students.
- Our inquiry-based science classes (ASSET), math classes, interdisciplinary research projects on each team, as well as a multitude of hands-on instruction in our encore classes, all provide the interaction and kinesthetic process necessary to and for middle school students.
- Benchmark assessments such as the NWEA provide crucial data for individual snapshots that drive modifications to instruction and curriculum pacing, while assessing and monitoring through tests and quizzes, projects addressing real-world concerns, performance-based assessments and web-based portfolio process enable students to trace their academic growth.
- Focus on Study and AIM (Additional Instruction in Math) groups receive academic support beyond the regular classroom to strengthen their study and math skills as well as test-taking strategies and homework reinforcement.
- A free after-school tutoring service, monitored by middle school teachers and staffed by honor students from the intermediate and senior high schools in our district, assists all students, and in addition, IEP (Individualized Education Program Plan) students receive support through the learning strategies classes (7th grade) and the support study halls (8th grade).
- SVMS offers an abundance of professional development opportunities including an induction program, after school technology classes, the PLA (Professional Learning Academy), a mentoring program, peer observations, plus in-service days, curriculum workshops, and the PMSA Professional Development Institute Conference.

Developmental Responsiveness

- Our teaming system allows teachers to share and compare observations, and work together to address each student’s academic needs and social-emotional concerns.
- Comprehensive services foster healthy physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development. These include conflict mediation, a disciplinary system, Youth Education Support Services, our “Connections” program, Olweus and Drop Everything and Read.
- Using best-practice techniques, teachers facilitate learning by deliberately teaching study and organizational skills for all students, such as using a planner to keep track of homework assignments; also for identified students, AIM and FOCUS periods are scheduled to provide additional organizational support.
- Students at SVMS are provided multiple opportunities to explore a rich variety of topics and interests in order to develop their identity, learn about their strengths, discover and demonstrate their own competence, and plan for their future.
- SVMS students have opportunities for voice through Student Council, the Principal’s Advisory Council, morning announcements, school-family conferences, and the RTII process.
- SVMS staff members develop alliances with families to enhance and support the well-being of the children through SVIP (Seneca Valley Involved Parents), Open House, and parent orientation night.
- Our staff members provide all students with opportunities to develop citizenship skills, to use the community as a classroom, and to engage the community in providing resources and support. Volunteer opportunities create a culture of caring and community service at our middle school.
- SVMS provides age-appropriate, co-curricular activities to foster social skills and character as well as to develop students’ interests beyond the classroom environment. The Pajama Rama, the Main Event, a myriad of activities introduced at the Fall Activity Fair, sports teams, and intramural programs demonstrate the attention paid to the unique developmental challenges of early adolescence.

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Social Equity

- SVMS emphasizes the importance of developing responsible, lifelong learners through a learning partnership with family and community, while providing young adolescents with a positive, developmentally appropriate, and integrated educational experience in a nurturing environment.
- Teachers customize the learning environment to meet the needs of each learner in a way that is socially equitable, democratic, and fair. It is vitally important that students come to school knowing that they have a safe and nurturing environment in which to learn.
- The learning and social needs of each student are evaluated, and support programs such as advanced courses in math and English, inclusion classes, and pull-out classes are in turn created so that student diversity is addressed.
- Modified courses within the Special Education Department provide academic support for learning disabilities, emotional and behavioral disorders, students with a cognitive disability, and students with other specific disabilities.
- SVMS is committed to structuring instruction in a way that provides all students equal opportunity to demonstrate a mastery of standards by addressing varied learning styles through differentiated instructional strategies, Cyber School offerings, and technology tools that include: Odyssey, Cognitive Tutor, the MLA Research process, and ASSET Science programs.
- The SVMS Connections program exposes students to information that represents diverse cultures, thus giving them the tools they need to appreciate their own culture as well as other cultures that surround them in the world today.
- The district-wide Diversity Committee's mission is to enhance communication among staff, committee members, and students regarding diversity, while advocating the acceptance and growth of all students within the school community.
- Counselors at SVMS present the Career Futures and E-Guidance programs each year to benefit students and to establish a positive relationship with them.
- In order to celebrate the lives and achievements of our developing students, teams recognize student civility through awarding citizenship points, sending positive postcards, naming students of the week, displaying artistic creations in the Student Art Gallery, and hosting an Academic Awards Banquet.
- The SVMS Dean of Students analyzes disciplinary referral data to assure that our consequences are applied in a nondiscriminatory manner, and as a proactive approach to student behavior, principals meet with each team of students at the beginning of the school year to welcome students as well as review the rules and consequences.
- The middle school is a unique entity simply because we strive to bridge the gap between elementary school and high school with our primary goal being to build maturity and self-responsibility so that our students may contribute their individual best to society in an environment that is developmentally and academically responsive as well as socially equitable.

Organizational Support

- The formulated SVMS vision is the connection between Teams, Students, PPT, YESS, Support Staff, Administration, and Department who all work collaboratively toward common goals which are constantly articulated and addressed throughout the school year. The intent of this shared vision is that all members of our educational community grow and learn on their path towards excellence.
- Because communication is vital, monthly faculty programs focus upon educational goals for departments, the building, and grade levels. Leaders at SVMS encourage a collegial support system, time to reflect and share, and a positive learning environment for all.
- SVMS teachers are highly qualified and knowledgeable about educational practices, subject matter, and the unique needs of young adolescents.

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- Since monitoring levels of student success is vital, SVMS uses results from the PSSA, NWEA, and individual snapshots to chart progress and reflect upon all programs in weekly team meetings. By reviewing student data, through the use of Performance Tracker the staff can decide precisely how to implement new strategies and evaluate existing programs.
- SVMS offers a free after-school tutoring program two times a week where middle school students are matched with high school honor students.
- SVMS guidance counselors meet daily with teams of teachers to assess students' needs and coordinate school–family conferences.
- To meet the needs of the whole child, SVMS students and faculty have access to Smart boards, projectors, computers, and other technology to enhance the process of learning.
- With a diverse socio-economic population at SVMS, we strive to adapt our curriculum and other programs to meet the changing needs of our community.
- At SVMS, parent volunteers are welcomed into our building and are encouraged to experience daily life in our school on a first-hand basis by assisting faculty and staff. More direct communication about SVMS is provided to families through our web page, SVTV, e-mails, the activity calendar, and public events.
- The connected teams of students, their families, faculty and staff, and administrators work diligently to set goals, implement ideas, and achieve success for all learners.

Future Initiatives

- The core value of our school is the Middle School Concept, and we are forever building upon this foundation by continuing to develop in the areas of CIA (Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment), RtII (Response to Intervention and Instruction), and technology.
- Providing for reflection and professional growth, the following initiatives establish the framework for effective instructional enhancement.
 - SVMS develops departmental goals facilitated by the department chairs in the three areas of curriculum, instruction and assessment.
 - Peer observations allow for instructional enhancement by facilitating professional growth, aligning performance assessments, and developing greater appreciation and understanding of interdisciplinary material.
 - The Lesson Study provides staff with the guideline for contemplating the rigor and relevance of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
 - The PLA (Professional Learning Academy) will foster collegiate sharing of expertise and pedagogy practices.
- RtII (Response to Intervention and Instruction) is designed to bring together information about the child's strengths and needs with evidence-based instructional approaches that support the child's success. The key components are: a tiered approach to supports and services; early intervention prior to formal identification; screening, assessments, and progress monitoring; the use of standard protocol interventions; and collaborative problem-solving and planning for the child with the parents.
 - Staff will begin before students arrive in the fall compiling student data.
 - Once the student data snapshots are complete, those students who meet established criteria will be assigned an advocate who will identify the child's abilities within a nurturing system and in collaboration with the teaching team and parents/guardians.
 - Through documentation of the child's successes, the advocate will guide instructional approaches that support success.

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- Technology is an integral component of all classes at Seneca Valley Middle School. It is not the domain of one course or teacher, but a set of tools and resources that are woven throughout all areas of the curriculum.
- These initiatives not only create a stimulus for the growth of new programs and ideas but also provide a framework of support for the ongoing educational environment at SVMS. These goals are aligned with our mission statement, that our school will provide young adolescents with a positive integrated educational experience in a nurturing environment, developing responsible life-long learners.