

**APPLE VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL
2009 SCHOOL TO WATCH**

by

Marcie Wilson, Principal
Apple Valley Middle School - Henderson County Schools



March 1, 2009

Apple Valley Middle School is very proud to be a 2009 School to Watch. We are a school of 890 students: 54% are on free or reduced lunch, 18% are Limited English Proficient, 20% are Hispanic, and 25% are Exceptional Children. With our diverse population come challenges that we have strived to meet since our opening in 1995.

Our faculty and staff are committed to academic excellence for our students. We have participated in many staff developments and initiatives through our years, which have contributed to a high level of devotion to students. These staff developments include a study on Ruby Payne's, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, Harvey and Goudvis', *Strategies that Work*, and *Thinking Maps* training. These staff developments helped us to understand our students and their needs and also gave us strategies to help our students gain reading comprehension skills in all subject areas. However, we realized that we could be doing more for our students.

In 2004, we began a study on Learning Focused strategies. This is a county initiative that focuses on using research based strategies to best meet the educational needs of our students. These strategies include the use of essential questions, activators, summarizers, graphic organizers, culminating projects, vocabulary strategies, rubrics, previewing, and extending and refining. Although our teachers had used all of these strategies in various lessons, this training provided a template so that every lesson has an essential question that guides student learning. There are hooks and links for learning through the use of activators and previewing. Students use graphic organizers actively to organize their learning. Each unit has an essential question that is answered through a culminating project, which can take many forms. This project is graded using a rubric, which is given with the project assignment. This ensures students know the criteria by which they will be graded.

The result of this staff development is lessons that are engaging and motivate student learning through the use of research based strategies. Learning is focused by an essential question which is posted so students know what they will be learning that day. Learning is directed by a student learning map and students show their learning by participating in a culminating activity. We use writing activities, projects, activators, summarizers, and hands-on lessons that stimulate student interest and learning.

There have been significant increases in student proficiency and we were a school of high growth for the 2007-2008 school year. As you can see from the table below, our overall proficiency has grown from 75.1% to 80.4% in the past two years. We have also seen growth in all of our subgroups and grade levels in reading for the past two years and in math for the past three years. We attribute this growth to the research based strategies that we are implementing in all our classrooms and the targeted intervention strategies that we use for students that are struggling to be proficient or who have struggled to be proficient in the past.

PERFORMANCE COMPOSITE				
	Percent at or above Level III			
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009
All Students	79.90%	81.60%	75.10%	80.40%
READING				
Student Subgroup	Percent at or above Level III			
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	
All Students	92.90%	62.90%	74.70%	
Hispanic	90.70%	48.90%	56.20%	
Multi-Racial	95%	60.50%	< 40	
White	93.10%	66.40%	79.70%	
Econ. Disadv	86.90%	53.50%	66.70%	
Lim English Proficiency	87.50%	36.90%	46.10%	
Students with Disabilities	82.80%	60.70%	73.00%	
6th grade	90.60%	66.40%	78.98%	
7th grade	93.20%	58.10%	66.80%	
8th grade	94.90%	64.30%	74.00%	

AYP % Target	76.70%	43.20%	43.20%	
MATH				
Student Subgroup	Percent at or above Level III			
	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	
All Students	76.10%	80.60%	86.40%	
Hispanic	66.90%	73.20%	80.40%	
Multi-Racial	68%	74.40%	< 40	
White	78.70%	82.20%	87.80%	
Economically Disadvantaged	67.70%	75.30%	81.40%	
Lim English Proficiency	54.70%	64.30%	76.70%	
Students with Disabilities	81.70%	90.00%	95.10%	
6th grade	76.00%	78.60%	82.40%	
7th grade	78.20%	82.80%	83.90%	
8th grade	73.90%	80.30%	90.80%	
AYP % Target	65.80%	65.80%	77.20%	

Another strategy that we have implemented is a No Zero Policy. We began this policy during the 2008-2009 school year and are satisfied with the results we have seen thus far. Our policy is that every assignment is important and should be completed. Students are expected to complete all assignments or attend a No Zero work session on Friday afternoon. This session is every Friday from 2:05-3:05. Teams meet on Thursday and develop their list of students to attend their teams' No Zero session during Friday Finale. This session allows for small group and individualized attention for students that need additional assistance that whole group instruction sometimes does not allow. Students that do not need to attend a No Zero session attend a club of their choice. We have many clubs at Apple Valley that are based on student and teacher interests such as drama, cooking, STOMP, sewing, chess, craft, weightlifting, walking, yoga, Pilates, Battle of the Books, Future Teachers of America, carpentry, Math Counts, wildlife, student government, Beta Club, rocketry, Health Occupations, drama, and the environmental science club. Having the Friday Finale session during the school day allows those students to participate in clubs that would not have had transportation to participate in an after-school club meeting. These clubs also serve as hooks for our students as they mimic clubs that are offered at our high school.

As we look to the 2009-2010 school year, we have made some changes to our No Zero policy that we think will continue to show gains in student learning. We have increased our Advisee/Advisor time from ten minutes to forty minutes. This time will be an immediate No Zero session for students that did not understand or did not have time to complete their homework the night before. Students will also participate in non-fiction reading activities and character education activities during this time. We have also made Friday Finale every other Friday instead of every Friday. With our increased AA time, we hope to limit the No Zero sessions during our Friday Finale time so every student is able to participate in a club meeting.

Apple Valley Middle School is a wonderful place for our students, faculty and parents. Student learning is our top priority and we look forward to each new school year full of exciting challenges and accomplishments.



Quilting Club connects to math

A student learning map for 7th grade math, titled "Ratios, Proportions, and Percents". The map is organized into several sections:

- Key learning:** Develop and use ratios, proportions, and percents and apply them to real-life situations.
- UEQ:** How do I use ratios, proportions, and percents in real-life situations?
- Concepts:** Ratios, Proportions, Percents
- LEQs (Learning Essential Questions):**
 - Ratios:** What is a ratio? How do I use ratios in real-life situations?
 - Proportions:** What is a proportion? How do I use proportions in real-life situations?
 - Percents:** What is a percent? How do I use percents in real-life situations?

7th Grade Math Student Learning Map



6th Grade Math Student Learning Map



6th Grade Language Arts Student Learning Map