

Watertown Middle School
By Kimo Carter

Watertown Middle School remains committed to challenging students with rigorous curriculum and instruction, supporting all students who are having difficulty in school, providing students engaging enrichment opportunities, promoting a positive school climate that caters to the needs of the early adolescents, and connecting with parents and other members of the community.

The administrative team of Principal J. Kimo Carter, Assistant Principal Jason Del Porto, and Special Education Coordinator Penelope Giannakopoulos is now in its fifth year at Watertown Middle School. Our four grade 6-12 curriculum coordinators, Jennifer Montgomery in English, Dan Wulf in mathematics, David Sheehan in social studies, and Vera Larkin in science, are working hard to align our curriculum with the high school's so students will have seamless academic transitions, particularly from eighth grade to ninth grade.

Middle School students' MCAS scores continue to rise for the fifth straight year. Watertown Middle School now scores above state averages with all grades, all subjects, and in all subgroups. Although we were not able to meet all Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards, we continue to make substantial progress toward all AYP goals.

We have also received recognition from the Department of Education as one of 36 Title I schools in the Commonwealth whose Limited English Proficient students have made excellent progress. With this distinction we may be able to gain more funding from the state to share our best practices with other schools.

Watertown Middle School also has very strong enrichment programs that allow students to explore new opportunities that showcase their talents. This year we have expanded our enrichment class offerings for seventh and eighth grade students. Students can take advanced art, band, orchestra, chorus, newspaper, robotics, theatre production, and video production as electives. We are also expanding after-school opportunities with the help of the district's new PEP grant. We have a brand new fitness center, and our interscholastic sports are as strong as ever. We also offer after school clubs such as cooking, rock band, community science investigators, cross country running, skiing, the mural club, and gardening.

We attribute part of our academic success to areas we have emphasized over the past five years. First, we have spent much time, energy, and resources toward attaining reading proficiency for all of our students by the time they enter high school. We will continue to teach reading to all middle school students until they reach proficient levels.

Second, we have worked on making our academic support programs more accessible to our struggling students. Our academic assistance classes are available to any student who is having difficulty in school. Likewise, our school-wide binder system has significantly helped students organize their time and materials. We would especially like to recognize

our partners at Staples Print and Copy Center for providing standardized boxes of school supplies for all of our students. Our after school library learning lab continues to be an extremely successful option for students who need homework help.

Finally, we have expanded our services to special education students by adding a substantially separate program for students on the autism spectrum. This program, combined with our learning support offerings, our integrated emotional support services, and our language-based instruction provides a full range of special education programs that can accommodate most disabilities.

Staff, students, and parents are working together to provide a positive school culture for students. We are emphasizing our mascot, the eagle, along with a simple and concrete “recipe for success”: A Watertown Middle School Eagle SOARS (Supporting others in Success, Ownership, Achievement, Respect, and Service). We celebrate student success in a variety of ways, including a success token system where students can earn redeemable tokens when a staff member finds them demonstrating one of the SOARS attributes. Seventh and eighth grade students who demonstrate the SOARS tenets are now able to receive “Eagle Liberties,” privileges that are often only given to high school students.

This year we are also focusing on bullying and teasing education, particularly for student bystanders. We are developing and implementing a curriculum called “Let’s Get Real” to help those students who witness bullying and teasing to inform an adult. Finally, led by our guidance department, our peer mediation program is growing and our peer mediators are trained to help students resolve conflicts.

We continue to experience a huge infusion of technology in the school. This year we have received two additional mobile classroom computer carts. Teachers are working hard to integrate technology into their instruction. We are using our wireless mobile labs to their fullest capacity and we are now wireless throughout most of the building. We will continue to update our hardware and software to meet the technology demands of the 21st century.

Watertown Middle School is making a concerted effort to communicate with parents and reach out to the community. We are increasing parent awareness in a number of ways: automatic phone messages, our new “Watertown Splash” student newspaper, a much more extensive web site, and most importantly, constant active communication via phone and email to parents regarding their children.

Our emphasis on community service remains strong. We completed our annual Coats for Kids drive last fall. Last spring, our Pennies for Patients drive earned over \$25,000.00 for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. Homerooms have created Thanksgiving baskets for families in need, the school hosted an afternoon tea with elderly residents, and students are serving the community in a variety of ways to meet their community service expectations.

Everyday we are striving to make Watertown Middle School a place that the town can be proud of, and a credit to the whole Watertown community.