

SCHOOL PROFILE

Damascus Middle School

INTRODUCTION

Damascus Middle School is a small, rural school in the Appalachian Mountains of Southwest Virginia. We are located on the Virginia Creeper Trail and also on the Appalachian Trail. Our mission, in partnership with our community, is to develop lifelong learners and responsible citizens who will become positive contributors to our society. Our goal is for each student to reach success through the development of his or her fullest potential. Damascus Middle School has a 2015-2016 enrollment of 232 students in grades 6-8, with 79 students in sixth grade, 69 students in seventh grade, and 84 students in eighth grade. Damascus Middle School has 63% of students recognized as economically disadvantaged. Our school provides Special Education Services or 504 services to 19% of the population.

HISTORY

Damascus Middle School opened in the fall of 1991 to serve the students of the Rhea Valley/Damascus area, which is located in a rural section in the southeastern portion of Washington County, Virginia. Three percent (3%) of the student population is comprised of Johnson County, Tennessee residents because of their close proximity to the school. The middle school concept was fully implemented during the 1991-92 school year. Damascus Elementary School became Damascus Middle School and included sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. Limited capacity at the feeder elementary school had resulted in the inclusion of fifth grade in the school; thus making Damascus the only non-traditional middle school in the county. The conclusion of the 2002-03 school year marked the end of the fifth grade residing at the middle school as a result of a building addition to the elementary school.

FACILITY

Prior to the development of middle schools in Washington County, the system was based on an elementary/high school configuration. Therefore, the current building's original design and size had been created for elementary students. At the time of construction, the architectural trend was the open classroom environment. Since then, center pod walls and hall doors have been added to support a partially enclosed classroom atmosphere, and the library has been enclosed. Damascus Middle has a full court gymnasium with bleachers on one side capable of seating 320 people.

STAFFING

The faculty and staff consists of one full-time administrator, one full-time guidance counselor, fourteen core curriculum teachers, twelve exploratory teachers, and nine support staff. Exploratory personnel's teaching assignments range from one period a day to full-time. Teachers in Washington County are contracted for two hundred days annually. The days are divided into one hundred and eighty teaching days and twenty workdays. The workdays consist of in-service, principal workdays, central office workdays, and professional conferences. Many of the faculty

belongs to various professional organizations, including local, state, and national educational associations.

SPECIAL SERVICES

Support departments enhance the educational program that strives to meet the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs of the students. School-based counseling services, along with social and mental health services, and a county school psychologist address the challenging issues and concerns of the middle school student. The services available at Damascus Middle School accommodate the broad spectrum of educational needs. Candidates are evaluated for placement in special services from test results and consensus of the Child Study Committee, and they receive instruction in the inclusion classroom in all core areas and the exploratory environment. Homebound instruction is available to students with short/long-term illness who are unable to attend Damascus Middle School. Guidance and counseling program services are available to help students develop positive learning experiences. The counselor is available when needed to work with individual students on emotional, social, or academic issues. The guidance counselor administers an academic and career plan with all seventh grade students and then updates the plan in their eighth grade year. Eighth grade students attend a career fair and visit the career-technical school.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

The instructional day for grades six through eight in the middle school is divided as follows: Sixth and seventh grades have Math 90 minutes, Language Arts 90 minutes, Science 45 minutes, History 45 minutes, Physical Education 45 minutes, and Exploratory 45 minutes. Eighth grade has Math, Language Arts, Science, and History for 71 minutes each, Physical Education for 45 minutes, and Exploratory for 45 minutes. The average pupil/teacher ratio is twenty-one to one (21:1). Exploratory classes are offered to students in order to augment the curriculum. In exploratory classes, eighth grade students enroll in one period of three twelve-week courses or they take their choice of Spanish, Chorus, or Band all year. Seventh grade students enroll in four nine-week courses or take Chorus or Band all year. Sixth grade students alternate every six-week period through Art, Chorus, Spanish, Library, Keyboarding, Agriscience, and Technology classes or they enroll in Band for the year. Damascus Middle School offers eighth grade students courses in three areas in which a high school credit can be earned. All eighth grade students are enrolled in World Geography and may choose to take Spanish 1. Based on prior mathematical achievement, students may choose Algebra 1.

TRANSITION

The Rhea Valley/Damascus area encompasses one elementary school, one middle school, and one high school. Rhea Valley Elementary School, grades K-5, serves as the only elementary feeder school. In the spring of each year, the fifth grade students from Rhea Valley Elementary visit our school for orientation. The eighth grade class visits the Washington County Skill Center and Holston High School before the transition to high school. The guidance counselor at Holston High School meets individually with eighth grade students to prepare their freshman year schedule.