Williston Central School

Middle School Info Night

May 12, 2026





Welcome and Introductions

Greg Marino, Williston Lead Principal

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Kim Odachowski, School Counselor

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Nadine Paffett-Lugassy, Behavior Systems Coordinator
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Abbie Bowker, Art Teacher

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Agenda for this Evening

- People Who Can Help
- Building a Foundation of Community
- Share information about our middle level program
- Outline the placement and transition activities
- Discuss adolescent development
- How Can You Help
- Q & A

WCS Leadership team for Next Year

Greg Marino

WCS Principal



Ayrin Thibault

WCS Assistant Principal



Sara Gordon

Director of Special Services



People who can help...

School Counselors, Howard Services School Clinician, Behavior Systems Coordinators

Danielle Morin



Kim Odachowski



Cairsten Keese



Emily Chadwick



Erin Chicoine



Nadine Paffett-Lugassy



Community First



- We believe that trusting relationships and community are foundational to success for all.
- Building relationships and community takes time and attention.
- This is particularly important now, after a substantial restructuring
- We will take an intentional approach, especially in the first 6 weeks of the school year, to make time and space for relationship and community building
- Team and grade-level assemblies, Staff / Faculty Meetings
- Advisory: 3x/wk, 25 mins, consistent peer group with consistent adult
- Team-based fall field-trips or activity days
- Guest presenters / performers
- Build and Reinforce Community Expectations: What it means to Take Care of Ourselves, Each Other, and This Place

School Wide Expectations



The Wildcat Way

Take Care of Yourself

Take Care of Others

Take Care of this Place



Adolescent Changes

“Young people undergo more rapid and profound personal changes during the years between 10 and 15 than at any other period of their lives." National Middle School Association (NMSA)



Characteristics of Middle Level Students

Students begin to think abstractly

Their bodies are changing rapidly

May have unpredictable emotions and mood swings



More Characteristics...

Belonging to a group and fitting in is becoming most important

Increased awareness of the world & interest in making connections

Students have a strong sense of justice - "It's not fair!"



More to Consider...

Students are able to zero in on discrepancies (Ex. you have a disagreement with your student for not cleaning their room, yet your room isn't always so neat.)

Ultimately, they are trying to establish who they are! They crave independence, but still want & need their parents' attention and acceptance.





The brain is under construction until the mid 20’s.

The parts that control impulses and plan ahead mature last.

The brain connections involving emotional responses are changing throughout the teenage years.

Sleep deprivation increases impulsive behaviors.

Executive Functioning



Definition:

The brain-based skills that are required for humans to execute, or perform tasks

Biology and experience play a role in EF development

Practice is important to develop EF skills

Basic Executive Functioning Skills



- Response inhibition
- Working memory
- Emotional control
- Sustained attention
- Task initiation
- Planning & organizing
- Time management
- Goal-directed
- Flexibility
- Metacognition

5-6 Multi-Age Team Structure

3-Teacher Teams

*Math
*Science
*Humanities

5-6 Teams

- **Maple**
- **Oak**
- **Tamarack**

7-8 Teams

- **Cedar**
- **Spruce**
- **Willow**



More About Our 5-6 Teams



Our 5-6 Teams

- Team size: ~67
- Class size: 22-23
  - **Maple** (5-5-6)
    - S’ra Desantis (Science), Josh Roof (Humanities), Amy Skapof (Math), Ryan Palmer (Spec ed)
  - **Oak** (5-5-6)
    - Amy Durant (Science), Aron Merrill (Humanities), Chris Rose (Math), Courtney Sherman (spec ed)
  - **Tamarack** (5-6-6)
    - Stephanie Bruning (Science), Sadie Lavallee (Math), Michael Willis, (humanities)

Student Groupings Within Classes



Math is grade level grouped

Language Arts/Humanities (includes Social Studies) can be either grade level specific or a multi-age group

Science can also be grouped in single grade or mixed, depending on the team or unit of study

Literature Groups are grouped either by interest or reading level

Curriculum Information



All teams are guided by the same curriculum which is based on the Common Core and the common CVSD Learning Targets.

JumpRope houses student grades and scores .

Trimester vs Semester system



Balance - gender, academic groupings, social needs, behavioral needs etc.

Parent input

Teacher input

Peer relationships

Current sibling's team

What's Different in Middle School?

Academic expectations increase

Independence is the goal

Teachers work with up to ~67 students vs 20, so the teacher contact will feel different



Teaching Staff & Philosophy

We hire teachers with middle level training and certification

Most teachers have certification in at least two content areas of instruction

All teachers take a role in teaching and supporting literacy

We use common assessments to measure progress and help ensure consistent curriculum across teams







Essential Arts at WCS:

Art, Design & Technology, General Music, Family and Consumer Science and Physical Education

Essential Arts meets daily for 6-week rotations

Band & Choir group rehearsals are at a common core time

Band lesson rotate & students are pulled out of classes

Guidance classes woven into the rotation above

Co-curricular Activities, Athletics, and Clubs



- Athletics begin in 6th Grade and are offered in the fall, winter and spring
- Unified Sports
- **Clubs:** Speech and Debate, First Lego League Robotics, Iron Chef, Garden Club, Chicken Ambassadors, GSA / Rainbow Club, Fiber Arts, Social Justice, “OVX” leadership, Math Counts, American Sign Language, Inter-Gen Reading, Golden Dome,
- Co-curricular Music: Jazz Band, Varietones
- Drama Club: Fall Play, Spring Musical
- Thursday SPARK Enrichment

A day in the life of a 5-6th Grader at WCS

What does a typical schedule look like?

Time	Sample 5th-6th Grade Schedule (This example is intended to illustrate the components and flow of the day for 5th and 6th graders - it is not an exact model of what the schedule will be.)
7:45	Bus Arrival
7:55	Attendance and Lunch Count in Homeroom
8:00	Advisory (3 days / week - 25 mins)
8:30	Academic Pd 1 (Math, Sci, Humanities)
9:30	Academic Pd 2 (Math, Sci, Humanities)
10:30	Snack
10:45	Essential Arts
11:25	5th Grade Academic Flex / 6th Grade World Language
12:00	Lunch / recess
12:50	Core / Band / Chorus (rehearsal days vary per ensemble)
1:30	Academic Pd 3 (Math, Sci, Humanities)
2:30	Clean up
2:40	Dismissal

Assessment Information

- Learning habits & academics are assessed separately.
- Like 3rd and 4th grade, all grades are scored on a 1-4 proficiency scale.
- CVSD has common learning targets for the curriculum.
- The assessment platform, JumpRope, is used for report cards and reports go out 3 times per year

The Transferable Skills

*Clear & Effective Communication

*Responsible & Involved Citizenship

*Informed & Integrative Thinking

*Self-Direction

*Creative & Practical Problem Solving



The Transition



Step-Up day on June 9 - an opportunity to meet their teachers and classmates

Teacher-to-Teacher sharing time

Teams make core placement in the summer

Each 5th grade student & family will have the opportunity to meet with their child's core teacher before the school year begins or within the first few weeks of school

In late August, there will be a school-wide welcome back breakfast , including a meet and greet in Team

Supporting Your Student in the Summer



Set aside a regular reading time for your student

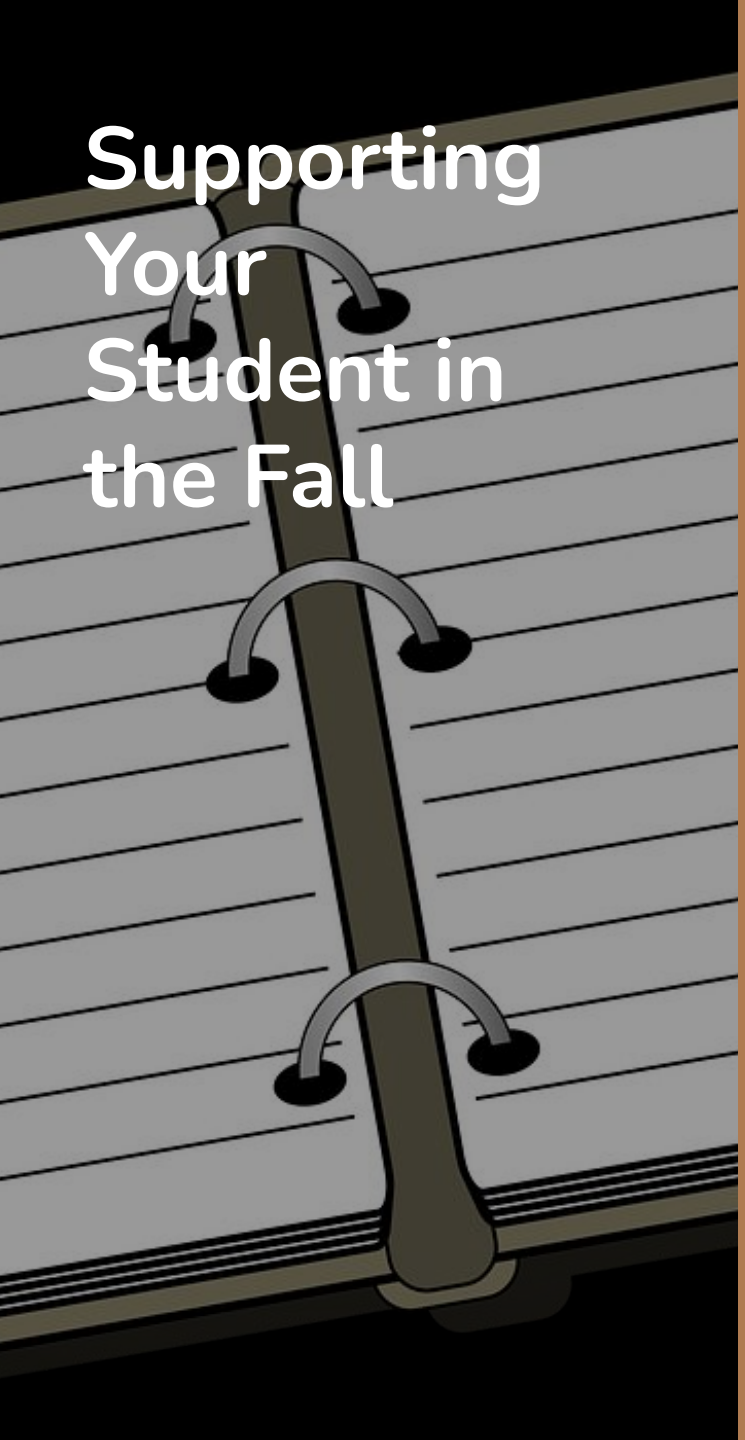
Practice basic math facts-especially multiplication & simple division - if your student has not yet mastered them

Talk about "change" in a positive light

Acknowledge being nervous is normal

Seek out peers and nurture social connections

Look for opportunities to build independence



Supporting Your Student in the Fall

- Encourage and model building positive adult relationships with the team
- Encourage your child to be their own best problem solver. Avoid the quick rescue.
- Create a clear plan for homework completion at your home
- Check-in regularly with your student- middle school students often share that managing friends, homework & organization is a huge challenge
- Communicate with your student's core teacher



TIME FOR Q & A