

Valley Road School School Snapshot 2016-2017

Valley Road School makes a difference in the lives of our students daily. Dedicated teachers, staff and administrators; students who are excited and energetic about learning and parents who are committed to supporting our school all work together to create a caring and responsible learning environment. Our instruction and curriculum support the New Jersey Learning Standards, which provides children with a quality education.

The teachers in Valley Road School follow the motto “Educators Make a Difference”. The staff is motivated to continue to improve instruction. Making a difference requires collaboration, continual learning and dedication. Teachers engage in valuable dialogue focused on instructional practices. Our goal is for teachers to continue to be learners, to share information, and also to model life long learning to our students. Balanced Literacy with guided reading, independent and shared reading as part of the Reading Wonders program provides comprehensive reading instruction. This program has various assessments, which help the teachers guide instruction for the class and for individuals throughout the year. The Sounding Reading program, which helps students in need of phonemic awareness and phonics remediation, has been used for remedial instruction in grade one and two. The Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills assessment (DIBELS) is an ongoing assessment system that monitors our students’ reading progress in grades K-2 remedial classes. This short formative (ongoing) assessment takes only several minutes per student, yet gives the teacher and the school data on how well our curriculum is meeting the basic reading skills. We used data from these and other assessments to guide our instruction. We also utilized a running record reading assessment in grades K-5 that assesses reading and gives the teacher valuable feedback and a reading level for each child. Reading Wonders is also a comprehensive language arts program with a scope and sequence that will incorporate the various concepts and components in reading and language arts. Our language arts instruction is guided by assessments so it stays in line with our students’ needs. Language arts instruction includes centers and/or group work, which incorporate needed skills while the teacher can work with smaller groups of students to meet their specific needs. We are trying to better meet our students learning needs by utilizing instruction that is differentiated according to individual needs. This allows the instruction to be more meaningful for each child as it meets his/her needs whether those needs are higher or lower than others. This may sometimes include materials on different levels or different activities. We have also been focused on writing instruction, which is also incorporated in our Wonders program. In mathematics we have had a focus on whole class math instruction utilizing the Everyday Math program from Chicago University. This program has a spiraling curriculum with many “hands on” math activities. Professional development in these areas along with teacher collaboration has brought about positive results. We have Academic Enrichment Instruction (AEI) teachers that meet with our students needing remedial help for math and language arts instruction. This year we implemented daily AEI for reading /language arts in grades 1 and 2. This added time increases achievement.

Emotional and social growth of our students results from a deliberate effort to promote respect and responsibility. Our school nurse, guidance counselor, special area teachers, and special education professionals also demonstrated a commitment to making a difference in the lives of our students. Our teachers continued to implement programs that build positive social skills and self-esteem. Programs such as student council, safety patrol, peer leaders, DARE, healthy living, K-Kids and the Buddy Program have been held. Character education is reinforced weekly through classroom meetings and a student/teacher/parent created code of conduct. The work of the staff through the Olweus Committee and Bully Prevention Program has also reinforced character building and the acceptance of others. K-Kids, Student Council, the guidance counselor and other staff members encourage Community Service. In social studies in upper grades we focus on seeing history’s events through different perspectives. This lets students see issues from both sides of an issue. They learn that often no one is absolutely right, but that there are good points on both sides of an issue.

Making a difference can only happen with a strong home/school connection. Valley Road School prides itself on its collaborative relationship between home and school. The school newsletter and website keeps parents informed. The staff has developed classroom and school-wide discipline procedures designed to provide parents and teachers with plans for maintaining a safe school environment. The Parent Teacher Association is an active group that collaborates closely with the school. It is committed to supporting all facets of our curriculum through a variety of initiatives. It includes two very active and influential committees of parents and teachers who sponsor programs that reinforce learning. The Reading Committee and the Cultural Arts Committee play instrumental roles in providing students with a well-rounded education through programs, special events and assemblies that enrich our instruction. The enthusiasm and dedication of the PTA, parents and teachers working together, “makes a difference”.

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Together staff, parents, and administration make a difference for students as we collectively reach our primary goal, which is to prepare our students to become good citizens in the 21st century.

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