We are not defined by statistics, we are defined by our attitude.

In a district that has an 84% minority population, where 76% of families qualify for free and reduced lunch, Middletown is rejecting the status quo. Many believe the number one predictor of success or failure in school is poverty. In Middletown, we look beyond the mask of poverty to the child. We know all kids can do all things, if the playing field of life is leveled. We are replacing stereotypes with pride. And falling through the cracks is not allowed.

Our classrooms are focused on personalized learning, small group instruction, and customized plans, all aimed at unlocking student potential.

At Middletown, we believe you cannot have high expectations without rich opportunities. So we give our students: state-of-the-art technology, year-round support, mastery classes, sports, arts, music, college courses, technology, career days and college visits.

We also give every student the blessing of time. We want our students to succeed. Every kindergartener ready for first grade, every high school graduate ready to take on the world.

We don’t just think all kids can succeed, we tell them we expect them to.

Our teachers are the epicenter of our success: dedicated, passionate, highly trained specialists.

We feature 1:1 technology in all grades and students in grades 7-12 each receive a Chromebook to take home because the world demands tech-savvy learners.

We have a cohort graduation rate of 89% and many of our students leave MHS with one year of college credit.

We have pushed the feel of poverty out of our schools and given our kids every opportunity to be successful in the world. We have erased "I can’t" by giving our kids access to more and made them realize they have access to everything so nothing can hold them back.

“Middletown is creating classrooms that are technology-integrated, forward thinking, data driven, and highly-personalized learning environments.

The district’s goal is to make teaching and learning successful for ALL students.”

Dr. Kenneth Eastwood, Superintendent

Our philosophy

Focus on the whole student – The district works hard to empower students by providing opportunities beyond academics, including extracurricular activities, athletics, music and more. Every student is encouraged to take part in all the district has to offer.

Give students the opportunity to succeed – The district does not believe in "social promotion" where students are moved from grade-to-grade because of their age. Instead, the goal is to ensure student proficiency in math and reading before the end of fifth grade. Similarly, eighth graders need to be proficient in pre-algebra and appropriate literacy skills to be prepared for the high school experience. Our Mid-point program provides children the opportunity of time to learn at their own pace, in a supportive environment, with targeted interventions, while utilizing multiple modes of instruction to accommodate their specific learning needs.

Add technology while supporting teachers – The district connects every student K-12 to technology while equipping teachers with the skills and training they need to personalize learning for every student.

Data driven from the start

Middletown has a teamwork approach to ensuring educators have access to, and know how to use, tools and data that can accelerate student progress toward meeting college- and career-ready graduation requirements. Teachers and administrators in Middletown routinely analyze and use data from classroom, district, and state assessments to modify instruction, to group students based on skill strengths and needs, and to help students set goals for their own learning. Instructional accountability teams meet monthly in each school building to assess data and discuss instructional strategies that can be used in the classroom to increase student learning and achievement.
Two-Year Kindergarten (2YK)

For students who may not be developmentally ready for kindergarten, Middletown has found a way to provide a more solid foundation for school success.

The Two-Year Kindergarten program, or 2YK, provides two full years of kindergarten for students who — after a careful two-part screening — are identified as at-risk for not being successful in a traditional kindergarten program. Here, 2YK allows children who need it the time to grow at a developmentally appropriate pace with support and personalized instruction.

In year one of 2YK, highly-trained teachers deliver age-appropriate curricula building foundational skills in literacy and mathematics. A mandatory 20-day summer intensive program serves as a learning bridge between Year 1 and Year 2. The second year of 2YK is designed to provide our youngest learners with the pivotal social-emotional skills and experiences needed for success in first grade. Along the way, goals are set, progress is monitored, and instruction is differentiated to meet the individual needs of each student.

Most importantly, our 2YK students are exposed to early success and high expectations rather than failure and frustration. And the latest data show 2YK is working in Middletown as these students have consistently outperformed other general education students in both reading and math through fourth grade.

Elementary “Mid-point” learning ensures path, pace and place

In Middletown, allowing those who need more time to reach developmental goals does not end with kindergarten. Middletown has ended the use of “social promotion” by implementing Mid-point classes for students whose academic performance is not likely to qualify them for success in the next grade. At the end of each grade K-8, students who do not demonstrate proficiency do not move to the next grade level and instead are enrolled in Mid-point classes where they receive intensive ELA and math support and instruction tailored to their specific needs and learning gaps.

The district’s Mid-point strategy is to replace the outdated practice of holding a student back a year where he or she would have to repeat an entire year with the same course curriculum and delivery that didn’t work the first time. Mid-point allows intervention specialists to diagnose where a student needs the most support to get that student on track again.

“Two-Year Kindergarten (2YK) programs are designed to support incoming kindergarteners who are identified as at-risk of not being successful in a traditional kindergarten environment. If we determine there is a need, we have a conversation with families where we say ‘we want to give your student the best chance for success.’ It’s an opportunity to work as a team right from the start.”

Amy Creeden, Principal, Race to the Top Grant
MASTERY CLASSES

Beginning in third grade and continuing through fifth grade, a Mastery program provides opportunities for higher-achieving students. Students in the Mastery program move across the curriculum as quickly as they demonstrate mastery with the concepts and the curriculum. Lessons are enhanced with project-based learning where students work collaboratively and explore deep subject matter.

BLENDED LEARNING

In looking for ways to boost student proficiency in English language arts (ELA) and math, Middletown realized it could expand a teacher’s reach – and motivate students – by harnessing the power of technology to help teachers create a more personalized learning environment in the classroom.

Blended learning – which combines traditional instruction with online learning – is providing teachers with useful data, expanding student choices of learning materials through digital content, and providing opportunities for students to navigate their own learning styles and demonstrate performance at a pace and place that is all their own. Where teaching had been differentiated for groups of students in the past, blended learning takes differentiation from the small group level down to the level of the individual child.

Collaboration has been key in implementing blended learning. It was important that the expertise and experience of Middletown teachers were reflected in the final design of the program. Using a “classroom flex rotation” students spend time working independently, collaboratively in small peer groups, and with the teacher in both group settings and individually. Ongoing professional development provides teachers in blended learning classrooms with support and training. Empowered with tools to help them succeed, teachers in Middletown’s blended classrooms are better able to pinpoint gaps in student learning, identify how a student is progressing, and provide interventions to support students at just the right time.

Personalized learning using the blended model allows mastery students to advance their studies while those having difficulty are provided with the individualized help they need.

The blended learning initiative has increased student engagement and its success has attracted the attention of many teachers in the district who have been opting into the program at a fast rate. They are among those seeing the opportunities and results coming from these blended classrooms.
ENL/TRANSITIONAL BILINGUAL/ DUAL LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Middletown recognizes that the education of English Language Learners (ELLs) includes not only the acquisition of a new language and culture, but also requires special consideration and attention. For this reason, Middletown opted to expand its language programs to help prepare more students for the global marketplace.

Our English as a New Language (ENL) program is an immersive approach for developing English language proficiency. ENL ELLs work on developing phonics, grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, and communication skills in English only.

The Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) program is an early exit model that is designed to develop English proficiency while offering quality instruction in both Spanish and English through a gradual release structure. TBE is tailored to meet the developing English language skills of each student and the amount of English instruction gradually increases as the child gains proficiency in English.

Under the Dual Language program, ELL students are placed in classrooms with students whose first language is English. Our Dual Language program is a 50/50 Two-Way Immersion (TWI) model in which students are taught completely in English one day and in Spanish the next. Two teachers — both certified Bilingual teachers — team up to provide explicit instruction in either English or Spanish. The Dual Language program has been well received by parents and students within the program are outperforming some of their peers. This program has been extended into the Middle School level in order to provide a smooth transition into our World Language programs.

FLIPPED LEARNING

With Middletown’s 1:1 Chromebook program, traditional classrooms have become “flipped classrooms.” A flipped classroom is one in which the more traditional instruction has been flipped to become “homework” that students watch or listen to online outside of class. As a result, class time now revolves around group projects, solving problems and other styles of active learning. In a flipped classroom, the teacher moves from being a “sage on the stage” to being a “guide on the side,” who leads students to build the critical 21st century skills they need to succeed and flourish.
Erasing the look and feel of poverty
Middletown is invested in erasing the look and feel of poverty by providing students with an environment that is rich with opportunity. A $38.8 million capital improvement project is helping the district fulfill another of its goals: a high school facility that is state of the art featuring:

- A new 28,000-square-foot third-floor addition that includes four science laboratories, a large collaboration suite with 16-foot long LCD panels, smart-glass technology, and a science research room.
- A 10,000-square-foot basement was renovated into a large collaborative learning room with a video conference suite, a Cisco Networking Academy lab, a TV production studio, four renovated technology classrooms and a “Genius Bar” where students can help their peers with technology.

This project-based collaborative environment is scheduled to be open in the evenings so high school students are able to access these resources — and a free light dinner — beyond the traditional instructional day.

High School Academies
Middletown has expanded its high school academy structure so students have more options for focusing their studies in specific career areas of interest and/or exploring a variety of career paths.

- Academy of Finance
- STEM Academy (including Pre-Engineering, Biomedicine, and Cisco Networking)
- Information Technology
- Academy for the Humanities and Leadership
- Middletown Arts Institute

The academies offer challenging coursework which include opportunities to earn not only high school credit, but college credit and in some instances, field-approved certifications.

Free college access for students
Middletown High School offers more than 100 college credit opportunities through its partnerships with three colleges and universities: Syracuse University, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Stevenson University.

The college experience begins in high school with a Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) introductory course called College Learning Strategies. This course helps students develop better study habits and learning strategies.

High school students in grades 11 and 12 can take a more formal and deeply integrated College Learning Strategies course that will earn them college credit from the university.

An innovative College and Career Center
Middletown’s College and Career Center has become an invaluable resource to students and their families as they begin their college search.

The center is staffed by former college admissions counselors. Their experience in reviewing countless college entrance essays brings tremendous value to students and families as they work through the college application process.

Annually, the center organizes a college fair with over 100 colleges and universities in attendance. The center facilitates college visits and weekend experiences for students and their families.

Cisco Networking Academy
There is a growing demand for experts who are skilled in networking, maintaining, troubleshooting and setting up technology devices. Middletown is now preparing interested students to graduate from high school as certified technicians in these fields by offering a four-year sequence that concludes with certification exams given at the high school. Successful completion of these exams will qualify our students for entry level positions as IT Specialists, System Administrators, Service Technicians and more.
“We are not going to abandon students who leave and find they are having a hard time getting a job. We want to insure that they will be successful beyond these walls.”

Billy Donohue, Instructional Leader for Humanities and member of the ECSDM Data Subcommittee

**The 20/20 Guarantee – Insuring a Middletown education**

Middletown is proud to have a cohort graduation rate of 89 percent. Just as important as the number of students who graduate are the life skills those students leave with.

The Enlarged City School District of Middletown stands behind these students and guarantees that its graduates have met proficiency requirements in literacy and mathematics.

In doing so, if an employer establishes that a Middletown graduate is not proficient in either basic mathematics and/or literacy skills, the employer can petition the school district for additional adult education instruction in the subject area identified as non-proficient. The district will then provide the appropriate adult education courses needed to develop proficiency and honor its guarantee to students and the community.