



Middle School Program Guide

2013-2014

*The core purpose of Albemarle County Public Schools
is to establish a community of learners and learning,
through rigor, relevance, and relationships,
one student at a time.*



Message from the Superintendent



You might be wondering what it is like in middle school. Sometimes it is difficult to be in the middle, like when you are riding in the middle seat for a long trip on the bus. Other times, it is fun. For example, you may be in the middle of reading a suspenseful story, and you can't wait to see what happens next. That is middle school. It is the middle of your story, and you are the hero. Elementary school is behind you and high school and college are further into your future.

As you move up to middle school, we realize it is a big change. It means moving to a new building and perhaps riding a different bus with unfamiliar students. You may be going to a separate school from your well-known elementary school friends. You will have new teachers and possibly more rigorous expectations for learning and assignments. But remember, this is the middle of a great story—your story—and often the hero of a great story (you) must overcome obstacles and challenges as the story reaches toward happy outcomes.

Your new school was designed with you in mind. Your middle school exists because caring teachers, administrators, and community members wanted to create a place that is just right for your age and development. Once you get used to the unfamiliar, you will make new friends on the bus and in class. They won't replace those you miss, but the experience of new friendships is always positive! As you progress in grade level, your teachers will expect you to become more self-directed and independent with your learning. As a result, you will have more opportunities for choice and chances to express yourself with support from your teachers.

The middle of your story is upon you. Your new teachers are waiting eagerly for you. Your friends—both familiar and yet to be made—are waiting to join you. Your story has everything ready for a successful outcome. All it needs is you: your spirit, energy, and unique character.

On behalf of the Albemarle County School Board and your new principal and teachers, I want to welcome you to middle school. I hope that you are excited about the new school year and all the possibilities for learning and fun that await you. I wish you the best this year and all that follow.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Pamela Moran".

Dr. Pamela Moran
Superintendent

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The Albemarle County Public Schools Middle School Program Guide presents a general overview of the county's middle school program. Specific information about individual schools and their policies is contained in each school's Parent/Student Handbook.

The Mission of Middle School

The strategic mission of Albemarle County Public Schools is to establish a community of learners and learning, through rigor, relevance, and relationships, one student at a time. Building on this mission, Albemarle County middle schools seek to educate students and encourage them to discover and appreciate who they are, what they may become, and how they are able to contribute to our society. Our middle schools are diverse communities of learners where students are valued, all individuals are respected, and learning is the primary focus.

The goal of the Albemarle County middle schools is to help the early adolescents who move through our schools enter high school with a strong academic background, a high degree of personal self-confidence, and the ability to make well-informed, meaningful choices from among the many options available to them at the high school level and beyond. It is critical for students to have a solid foundation in essential skills, which enables them to make informed choices when planning for high school. In order to reach this goal, Albemarle County has articulated five basic, interrelated beliefs about effective middle school education and has developed an integrated program that reflects these beliefs.

I like middle school because everyone is friendly and we help each other out. ~ Hannah

BELIEF ONE – CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MIDDLE SCHOOL CHILD

The middle school is the center of the K-12 continuum. Students aged 10 to 14 are in a period of human development recognized as one of the most complex. Albemarle County middle schools recognize the nature of the middle school child and have developed educational environments that support the children's development. Students should emerge from the dependency associated with early childhood and develop the independence associated with young adulthood during their middle school years.

Intellectual

- Prefers a wide range of intellectual pursuits
- Likes active learning experiences
- Begins abstract thinking
- Questions his/her world

Emotional

- Seeks increased independence
- Tends to be self-conscious and sensitive
- Experiences emotional ups and downs
- Develops personal values system
- Builds personal and academic self-esteem

Physical

- Has increased energy and periods of restlessness
- Experiences rapid physical changes
- Displays heightened interest in personal appearances and privacy
- Displays awkwardness and lack of coordination
- Displays strong, but not always sustained, interest in activities

Social

- Displays strong need for peer approval
- Wants recognition for effort and achievement
- Demonstrates a variety of behaviors
- Experiments with slang, fads, and new peer relationships
- Learns to work cooperatively
- Seeks recognition as an individual

BELIEF TWO – TRANSITIONS

Early adolescents are making multiple transitions: entering puberty, attending new schools, encountering more demanding peer relationships, discovering self, establishing independence, and testing boundaries. Adults facilitate these transitions. Students treated with fairness and firmness develop positive attitudes about themselves and their environment.

The Albemarle County Middle School Program facilitates smooth transitions from elementary school to middle school, from one grade level to the next, and from middle school to high school by promoting communication among teachers, counselors, students and parents.

School Counseling Program

Albemarle County middle schools provide a comprehensive, developmental school counseling program that assists all students in acquiring the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to become effective students, responsible citizens, productive workers, and lifelong learners. The school counseling program supports the school's academic mission by promoting and enhancing the learning process for all students through an integration of academic, career and personal/social development.

The school counseling program is an integral part of the total educational process and a shared responsibility of the entire school community. The professional school counselor collaborates with other school professionals in helping students learn. A successful program requires the support and participation of all school personnel, parents, guardians, outside agencies, and the community at large.

Transition Activities	Target Groups
School Visits	5th and 8th Graders
Parent Orientation Meetings.....	Parents of 5th and 8th Graders
Teacher/Counselor Meetings	5th, 6th, 7th, 8th Grade Teachers
School Visits	Student/Parent/Counselor

My teachers watch over me just like my parents would. ~ Mayo

Communication

Communication is a vital aspect of the Albemarle County Middle School Program. The following are used to ensure effective communication:

- Open house and parent orientation meetings
- Individual conferences
- Interpreters in world languages
- School newsletters
- ConnectEd (voice and e-mail notifications)
- School web pages
- Team/department and classroom communications
- Interim grade reports
- Report cards
- Telephone
- Letters
- Monthly calendars
- Homework and school hotlines

Classroom issues are best resolved through parent-teacher communication. Also, school counselors are available to assist with individual parent concerns. If parents have already brought a concern to the attention of the teacher or counselor and still have concerns, they should contact the school administrator.

Working Together

Questions About ...

Questions About ...	Call ...
Discipline	Administration
ESOL	International & ESOL Program
Grouping	Teacher/Counselor
Scheduling	Teacher/Counselor
Attendance	Secretary/Counselor
Homework	Teacher/Counselor
Academic Concerns	Teacher
Special Education Services.....	Special Education Teacher/Counselor
Peer Relationships	Counselor
General Questions	Secretary
Other Concerns	Teacher/Counselor/Administrator

You are not alone here. ~ Unknown Middle School Student

BELIEF THREE – PROGRAM

The middle school years are a critical time in the cognitive, intellectual, social, emotional and physical development of emerging adolescents. Instruction in basic skills is an essential part of the curriculum. Course content is rigorous, relevant and engaging. During the middle school years, students begin to acquire the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that prepare them for a lifetime of learning, including capabilities outlined in Albemarle County's Framework for Quality Learning to:

- Plan and conduct research.
- Gather, organize and analyze data, evaluate processes and products, and draw conclusions.
- Think analytically, critically and creatively to pursue new ideas, acquire new knowledge, and make decisions.
- Understand and apply principles of logic and reasoning, and develop, evaluate and defend arguments.
- Seek, recognize and understand systems, patterns, themes and interactions.
- Apply and adapt a variety of appropriate strategies to solve new and increasingly complex problems.
- Acquire and use precise language to clearly communicate ideas, knowledge and processes.
- Explore and express ideas and opinions using multiple media, the arts, and technology.
- Demonstrate ethical behavior and respect for diversity through daily actions and decision making.
- Participate fully in civic life, and act on democratic ideals within the context of community and global interdependence.
- Understand and follow a physically active lifestyle that promotes good health and wellness.
- Apply habits of mind and metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate one's own work.

Instruction is student-centered, active, and rich in experience, demonstration, practice, and personal relevance. The Albemarle County Middle School Program emphasizes mastery of essential skills, exploration, and the development of critical thinking. Middle school students learn and grow in different ways and at different rates. A successful middle school program recognizes and provides for individual differences.

Academic Grouping

All students do not learn in the same way or at the same pace. When instruction is adjusted to meet the needs of students, greater advances in achievement occur. A variety of models for grouping are used in our middle schools. These models include differentiated instruction for mixed ability grouped classes, advanced/honors level classes, cluster ability grouping, and collaborative classes. Teachers tailor instruction to the students' interests, capabilities and needs. Academic challenge is provided for all students in the context of consistent curricular expectations across leveled courses as outlined in Virginia's Standards of Learning.

Grouping for instruction in grades six, seven and eight occurs in mathematics and English/language arts at the standard and advanced/honors levels. Additionally, in grade eight, advanced/honors levels are offered in science and social studies.

Placement in course levels is determined by teacher recommendation using multiple criteria. Some examples of these criteria are teacher observations, grades, achievement test scores, Standards of Learning test results, and benchmark assessments. A description of each level follows:

Standard (Grades 6-8)

The standard level course provides a broad base of knowledge and allows for in-depth study. Language arts and mathematical skills are strengthened through daily 90-minute blocks of instruction in these areas. The pace of instruction allows for the completion of grade level or above curriculum content. Students are expected to grasp concepts quickly and apply them often as independent learners.

Advanced/Honors (Grades 6-8)

In the advanced/honors level course, content is presented at a faster pace and in greater depth. Students should have grade level or above reading skills. Students should also have the ability to progress independently on assignments at school and at home.

Bell Schedule

Albemarle County middle schools use modified block schedules. Students attend most classes in 90-minute blocks on alternating days. Below is a schedule for a typical sixth-grader. Please note that schedules vary somewhat from school to school. For example, in some schools, blocks are split into two 45-minute exploratory periods. In addition, some schools teach science and social studies by semester. In these schools, students have science every day for one semester and social studies every day for the other semester. When science and social studies are taught as year-long courses, they alternate days the entire year; for example, science on Day A and social studies on Day B.

	Day A	Day B
Block 1	Language Arts	Language Arts
Block 2	Science (1st Sem.) Social Studies (2nd Sem.)	Science (1st Sem.) Social Studies (2nd Sem.)
Block 3	Math	Math
Block 4	Health/PE	Exploratory

I like block scheduling because I don't like doing everything the same every day. ~ Unknown Middle School Student

Curriculum

The Albemarle County middle school curriculum provides a transitional experience for the student between the elementary and secondary years. An effective middle school curriculum that ensures success has the following characteristics:

- A common core of basic skills in all subject areas
- An integrated curriculum that facilitates learning connections
- Physical education and health
- Exploratories

The middle school curriculum includes instruction in the core areas of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, physical education, and health. Exploratory programs include opportunities for instruction in business, marketing and finance, world languages, performing arts, engineering and technology education, media and communication, visual arts, and human services.

The Commonwealth of Virginia tests all middle school students in grades six, seven and eight on the Standards of Learning (SOL) in English, mathematics and social studies. The state also tests students in grade eight on the SOL in science. In addition, students participating in Algebra I or Geometry take an end-of-course SOL test that may result in a verified high school credit.

Virginia Standards of Learning Tests
for Middle School Grades

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Reading	X	X	X
Writing			X
Mathematics	X	X	X
Social Studies	X	X	X
Science			X

Students must earn a minimum of nine (9) verified high school credits to graduate from high school with an *advanced studies* diploma: two (2) in English, math, science, and history/social studies, and one (1) additional verified credit of choice. Students must earn a minimum of six (6) verified high school credits to graduate from high school with a *standard* diploma: two (2) in English, and one (1) in math, science, and history/social studies, and one (1) additional verified credit of choice. Verified credits are earned by passing both the course and the end-of-course Standards of Learning test.

The Middle School Program Overview

Required Core Courses

Grade Six	Grade Seven	Grade Eight
Language Arts	Language Arts	Language Arts
Social Studies	Social Studies	Social Studies
Health/Physical Education	Health/Physical Education	Health/Physical Education
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
Science	Life Science	Physical Science

Exploratories

Exploratory classes are an integral and critical part of middle school curriculum, providing students with different ways to view the world while complementing academic core offerings. Albemarle County middle schools offer three exploratory strands: World Languages, Career and Technical Education, and Visual and Performing Arts. Students must participate in at least one exploratory experience in each strand during their middle school years.

Additional exploratories, including independent study, may be offered at each middle school based on the talents and interests of the students and faculty and staffing availability. A complete list of electives can be found on-line at <http://www.k12albemarle.org/msguide>.

Note: Students with additional academic needs may participate in intervention courses in lieu of one or more electives.

My favorite school subject is band because you are making your own music and it sounds very well blended together.

~ Unknown Middle School Student

What We Teach in Sixth Grade



What We Teach in Sixth Grade

In sixth grade, students begin the transition from elementary to middle school. They learn increasingly complex material as they develop organizational and study skills. Sixth-graders take required courses in the following areas: English/language arts, math, science, social studies, and health/physical education. They have the opportunity to take exploratory courses in conversational Spanish, performing arts, visual arts, and career and technical education.

Required Core Courses

English/Language Arts

Middle school students explore the language arts through five interdisciplinary concepts: systems, change and continuity, communication, aesthetics, and universality. Courses are designed to incorporate a balanced literacy diet that includes the components of fluency, word study, comprehension, and writing.

A focus on systems reinforces students' developmental processes in fluency and word study, as well as their continued growth as readers and writers. Students in each middle school grade use a second interdisciplinary concept, change and continuity, as a focusing lens through which they gain deeper understanding of language and literary elements. Students further experience English/language arts through exploration of communication (a third interdisciplinary concept) and author's craft (a correlating language arts concept). This emphasis allows sixth-grade students to study structures (systems) and styles (communication) that authors use to communicate ideas about the world. As such, students read extensively from a variety of genres, including fiction, narrative nonfiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and transfer what they learn about those genres to their own writing and speaking. Students write for a variety of audiences and purposes, using narrative and expository forms. Additional emphasis is placed on continuing to build comprehension strategies, understanding Latin roots for vocabulary development, and using correct punctuation and grammar.

Each middle school provides a highly-structured, research-based intervention for students who are reading below grade-level. This course offers an accelerated, sequential approach to literacy, while addressing the components of a balanced literacy diet. This course offers students who have experienced difficulty with reading skills opportunities to break apart the structures of language to gain deep understanding of how words, sentences and paragraphs work, and how

authors use structures to create meaning. Students read and write extensively in nonfiction forms; other genres are experienced through read-alouds, literature circles, and independent reading. Based on extensive pre-assessments, students are placed in mixed-grade ability groups to accelerate mastery of specific skills.

Health

The health curriculum focuses on the development of positive health habits and an active lifestyle. As outlined by the Virginia Standards of Learning, health education allows students to apply health knowledge to improve their health; demonstrate their ability to identify valid and accurate health information, products and services; and demonstrate a variety of health practices and behaviors that promote safe and healthy communities. Students also have the opportunity to take family life education. Information on this part of the health curriculum is sent to parents at the beginning of the year and again as the unit begins so parents can decide if they want their child to participate.

Physical Education

Physical Education is an integral part of the education process. Developing and incorporating a physically active lifestyle helps prepare students to handle day-to-day situations. Physical education classes help students develop motor skills, increase fitness and wellness levels, enhance social skills, and improve academic learning. Physical education content includes fitness and conditioning, fitness planning, and lifetime sport activities. Students learn to evaluate their own level of fitness and establish individual goals for improvement.

Mathematics

Our sixth-grade mathematics curriculum comprises five instructional strands: numeracy, geometry, measurement, algebra and patterns, and probability and statistics. We strongly encourage students to work toward taking Algebra I in middle school. Our goal is to prepare you for success, and learning algebra will open up greater possibilities for you in your study of mathematics and in your college and career pathway. Both the advanced and honors levels are designed to progress students through the middle school curriculum to include completing Algebra 1 for high school credit prior to the ninth grade.

I like math because it is a subject that really tests your skills and is very challenging. ~ Shaniqua

*I thought (math) would be scary, but it's fun.
~ Unknown Middle School Student*

Using real-life applications, student-centered inquiry, calculators, and computers, sixth-grade math students do the following:

- Investigate, develop, and use ratios and proportions to compare data sets.
- Measure and use standard and non-standard units for measurement, and make conversions within a measurement system.
- Investigate applications of symmetry, parallel and perpendicular lines, and views of three-dimensional figures.
- Develop, use and solve linear equations with one variable.
- Describe, predict, analyze and represent various types of data.

Science

Sixth-grade students focus on data analysis and experimentation in their science classes. They learn precise methods for testing the validity of their predictions and conclusions. Students use an integrated approach to study the role of the sun's energy on the Earth's systems; water in the environment; air and atmosphere; and basic chemistry concepts. They also study the solar system and natural resource management, particularly as it relates to public policy.

Social Studies

The American Landscape: United States History I to 1877

Students use the skills of historical and geographical analysis to explore the early history of the United States from pre-Columbian times until 1877, to understand the ideas and events that have shaped our nation. Connections between geography and history help students understand how patterns emerge over time and place. Patterns emerge to help explain how the past influences the present and the future. Students deepen their understanding of social studies relationships, such as cause/effect, change/continuity, and historical perspective. A major focus is on the "mental and cultural" landscapes that are foundational to the growth of our American democracy.

Exploratories

Albemarle County middle schools offer three exploratory strands: Career and Technical Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Languages. Students must participate in at least one exploratory experience in each strand during their middle school years. Sixth-grade students have the opportunity to participate in an exploratory rotation that allows students to experience four to six exploratory offerings during the academic year.

Career and Technical Education

Our career and technical education exploratory program helps sixth-grade students explore their talents and interests. Courses introduce students to career pathways in business, marketing and finance, engineering and technology, media and communication, and human services.

Keyboarding / Productivity Skills

Students develop and enhance touch skills for entering alphabetic, numeric and symbolic information on a computer keyboard. Students compose and produce personal, educational and business documents, incorporating basic proofreading and editing techniques.

Technology in the Workplace

Students explore industrial and communication technologies, including electronics, computer-aided design (CAD), pneumatics, graphics, and video production. Using industry-specific equipment, students will experience the processes and procedures used in today's technology workplace.

Personal Life Skills for the 21st Century

Students learn strategies for successful time management, goal-setting and problem-solving in the context of transitioning to middle school. Students examine their roles as contributing members of their school community and families. Students acquire basic personal life skills related to home safety, nutritional health, and physically active lifestyles.

Visual and Performing Arts

Art

In our art exploratory program, sixth-grade students use the principles of design as the basis for a study of color and balance. They create realistic drawings from observation; produce fantasy-based art; paint complementary color studies; use one-point perspective; use computer graphics to create original art; and create and maintain a portfolio of their work. Sixth-graders also study art movements in post-Reconstruction America, relating the movements to changes in science and technology.

I think it is really neat that you can choose from a small range of electives in middle school, because you can express yourself and do what you like. ~ Unknown Middle School Student

Music

Sixth-grade students have the opportunity to participate in strings, band, chorus, or a general music class. Students in the general music class study music theory and styles, in addition to developing a vocal performance repertoire. Students in the beginning instrumental classes select an instrument for study and begin to perform music as a group.

We make the school, not the grown ups. It's your choice.

~ Unknown Middle School Student

World Languages

Spanish

This exploratory course provides students with a continuation of the conversational approach to Spanish used in the elementary schools, and introduces the grammatical approach used in the secondary schools. The course uses listening, speaking, reading, writing and culture to expand on themes that were introduced in the elementary program. Grammar is taught through cultural application.

Note: Additional exploratories, including independent study, may be offered at each middle school based on the talents and interests of the students and faculty and staffing availability. A complete list of electives can be found on-line at <http://www.k12albemarle.org/msguide>.

You get more freedom (in middle school).

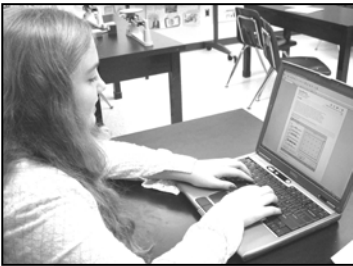
~ Unknown Middle School Student

(Sixth-graders) should just try to get involved in some things you like; there's plenty to do that'll let you feel more like a part of the school.

~ Unknown Middle School Student

(My middle school) is not as big as you think it is and everyone is nice and helpful. Don't be worried. ~ Dalton

What We Teach in Seventh Grade



What We Teach in Seventh Grade

In seventh grade, students learn material that is increasingly complex as they continue to develop organizational and study skills. They take required courses in English/language arts, math, science, social studies, and health/physical education. They have the opportunity to select exploratory courses from three strands: Career and Technical Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Languages.

Required Core Courses

English/Language Arts

Middle school students explore the language arts through five interdisciplinary concepts: systems, change and continuity, communication, aesthetics, and universality. Courses are designed to incorporate a balanced literacy diet that includes the components of fluency, word study, comprehension, and writing.

A focus on systems reinforces students' developmental processes in fluency and word study, as well as their continued growth as readers and writers. Students in each middle school grade use a second interdisciplinary concept, change and continuity, as a focusing lens through which they gain deeper understanding of language and literary elements. This emphasis enables seventh-grade students to explore the etymology of language through continued study of Latin roots and Greek combining forms. The lens through which students read, write and speak continues to focus as students achieve a deeper understanding of various genre structures and author's craft and begin exploration of universality (the human experience). Students seek to answer several critical questions: Why does language change? Why do certain themes pervade literature? How does literature reflect individual and cultural beliefs? Seventh-grade students read extensively from a variety of genres, including fiction, narrative nonfiction, nonfiction, and poetry, with an emphasis on historical fiction. Seventh-grade students write for a variety of audiences and purposes, using narrative, expository, persuasive and reflective forms.

Each middle school provides a highly-structured, research-based intervention for students who are reading below grade-level. This course offers an accelerated, sequential approach to literacy, while addressing the components of a balanced literacy diet. This course offers students who have experienced difficulty with reading skills opportunities to break apart the structures of language to gain deep understanding of how words, sentences and paragraphs work, and how authors use structures to create meaning. Students read and write

extensively in nonfiction forms; other genres are experienced through read-alouds, literature circles, and independent reading. Based on extensive pre-assessments, students are placed in mixed-grade ability groups to accelerate mastery of specific skills.

Health

The health curriculum focuses on the development of positive health habits and an active lifestyle. As outlined by the Virginia Standards of Learning, health education allows students to apply health knowledge to improve their health; demonstrate their ability to identify valid and accurate health information, products and services; and demonstrate a variety of health practices and behaviors that promote safe and healthy communities. Students also have the opportunity to take family life education. Information on this part of the health curriculum is sent to parents at the beginning of the year and again as the unit begins so parents can decide if they want their child to participate.

Physical Education

Physical Education is an integral part of the education process. Developing and incorporating a physically active lifestyle helps prepare students to handle day-to-day situations. Physical education classes help students develop motor skills, increase fitness and wellness levels, enhance social skills, and improve academic learning. Physical education content includes fitness and conditioning, fitness planning, and lifetime sport activities. Students learn to evaluate their own level of fitness and establish individual goals for improvement.

(My middle school is special because) we have a unique group of students that will make something of themselves some day.

~ Robert

My middle school is special because of the students and staff... they never hesitate to do whatever it takes to help students learn. ~ Sara

Mathematics

Our seventh-grade mathematics curriculum comprises five instructional strands: numeracy, geometry, measurement, patterns and algebra, and probability and statistics. Students who meet the prerequisite requirements may be able to take Algebra I for high school credit. We strongly encourage students to work toward taking Algebra I in middle school. Our goal is to prepare you for success, and learning algebra will open up greater possibilities for you in your study of mathematics and in your college and career pathway. An option to accept high school credit is given at the end of the eighth-grade year. Students will follow the high school exam exemption policy.

Using practical applications, student-centered inquiry, calculators, computers, and videos, seventh-grade math students do the following:

- Explore proportional reasoning and consumer application problems.
- Identify, investigate and use real numbers and operations.
- Identify, investigate, use and apply attributes and properties of geometric figures, and apply formulas for linear measurement, area and volume.
- Investigate, develop, solve and apply linear equations and inequalities.
- Collect, organize and analyze data to make inferences and predictions.

Science

Seventh-grade students focus on the life sciences. In addition to learning about the cellular structure of organisms, they learn how organisms are classified, and how they change and relate to each other. In their experiments, students organize and analyze data, manipulate variables, and identify sources of error.

Social Studies

The American Identity: United States History II 1877 to the Present

This course tells the story of America's people. The study of our nation's history, from 1877 to the present, emphasizes the intellectual skills required to understand the importance of the individual in history, as well as the impact of groups on society. Students analyze key events and movements that have shaped modern day America and America's place in the world. Students continue to develop skills needed to understand complex historical issues, and they are expected to go beyond the facts to examine the historical records for themselves—to consult primary and secondary source documents, data, artifacts, and other evidence to understand how the past influences the present, and to connect history to their own lives.

Lockers are not tricky at all and (sixth-graders) might be worried about gym class or whatever...you get the hang of it later on.

~ Unknown Middle School Student

Everyone should try to experiment with making new friends.

~ Unknown Middle School Student

Exploratories

Career and Technical Education

Our career and vocational exploratory program helps seventh-grade students explore their talents and interests. Courses introduce students to career pathways in business, marketing and finance, engineering and technology, media and communication, and human services.

Computer Solutions

Students gain a basic knowledge of word processing, spreadsheet, database, and graphics applications as they apply in a work setting. Specific skills in each area include composing, formatting and editing basic business documents; calculating, charting and manipulating numerical data; constructing databases and learning to query specific information; and using clip art, drawing tools, animations, and transitions for graphics presentations.

Technology Systems: Inventions

Students construct models of significant inventions that have advanced society. After studying these developments, they explore contemporary technological problems facing them, their community, or the world, and apply systematic procedures to invent new products or innovations as solutions.

Personal Life Skills and Career Pathways 7

Students develop advanced personal life skills related to home safety, nutritional health, and physically active lifestyles that lead to independence. Students extend those skills through exploration of careers in human services, including hospitality and tourism, child care, teaching, and other human service career paths. Students investigate job and entrepreneurship opportunities that exist for teenagers in the Charlottesville/ Albemarle area.

Being able to choose (electives) really helps you focus on what you pick rather than being bored in one you didn't. ~ Jen and Laura

*I like choosing electives because I feel more independent.
~ Unknown Middle School Student*

Visual and Performing Arts

Art

In our art exploratory program, seventh-grade students use principles of design as the basis for study of shape, form and color. They build clay pieces using the coil method; draw compositions from observation; create 3-D sculptures using geometric forms; draw from observation, emphasizing linear perspective; and create and maintain a portfolio of their work. Seventh-graders also study artistic styles and themes from historical times and places.

Drama

Drama students develop a variety of improvisational and more formal acting skills. Students learn fundamentals of stage design and presence, performing selected dramatic works as a troupe. Emphasis is placed on gaining comfort in a variety of performance styles, while building confidence in public communication skills.

Music

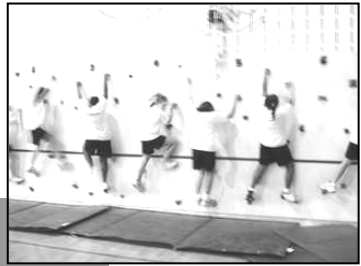
Seventh-grade students have the opportunity to participate in strings, band or chorus. Instrumental and choral students study and perform a variety of music genres. Public performance opportunities expand as students work with increasingly complex music. Advanced students may participate in local and district honors chorus, strings, and band events.

World Languages

Seventh-grade students may begin the study of French or Spanish through a one-semester exploratory course that may, upon successful completion of two additional semesters in eighth grade, lead to high school credit. Coursework includes a strong emphasis on speaking, listening, reading, writing, and cultural awareness. Basic vocabulary and essential grammar are taught.

Note: Additional exploratories, including independent study, may be offered at each middle school based on the talents and interests of the students and faculty and staffing availability. A complete list of electives can be found on-line at <http://www.k12albemarle.org/msguide>.

What We Teach in Eighth Grade



What We Teach in Eighth Grade

In eighth grade, students begin the transition from middle to high school. They take required courses in the following areas: English/language arts, math, science, social studies, and health/physical education. They have the opportunity to select exploratory courses from three strands: Career and Technical Education, Visual and Performing Arts, and World Languages.

Required Core Courses

English/Language Arts

Middle school students explore the language arts through five interdisciplinary concepts: systems, change and continuity, communication, aesthetics, and universality. Courses are designed to incorporate a balanced literacy diet that includes the components of fluency, word study, comprehension, and writing.

A focus on systems reinforces students' developmental processes in fluency and word study, as well as their continued growth as readers and writers. Students in each middle school grade use a second interdisciplinary concept, change and continuity, as a focusing lens through which they gain deeper understanding of language and literary elements. Eighth-grade students focus on universality and expressing their own voices as part of the human experience. Reading extensively from fiction, narrative nonfiction, nonfiction, drama, and poetry, students explore such themes as the search for identity; coming of age; cooperation versus isolation; and tolerance of the atypical. Through speaking and writing, students contribute their own voices and experiences to the timeless, universal conversation about what it means to be human. Eighth-grade students also write for a variety of audiences and purposes, using narrative, expository, persuasive and analytical forms. Additionally, students use knowledge of Latin roots and Greek combining forms to discuss the etymology of language and use language effectively as speakers and writers.

Each middle school provides a highly-structured, research-based intervention for students who are reading below grade-level. This course offers an accelerated, sequential approach to literacy, while addressing the components of a balanced literacy diet. This course offers students who have experienced difficulty with reading skills opportunities to break apart the structures of language to gain deep understanding of how words, sentences and paragraphs work, and how authors use structures to create meaning. Students read and write extensively in nonfiction forms; other genres are experienced through

read-alouds, literature circles, and independent reading. Based on extensive pre-assessments, students are placed in mixed-grade ability groups to accelerate mastery of specific skills.

Health

The health curriculum focuses on the development of positive health habits and an active lifestyle. As outlined by the Virginia Standards of Learning, health education allows students to apply health knowledge to improve their health; demonstrate their ability to identify valid and accurate health information, products and services; and demonstrate a variety of health practices and behaviors that promote safe and healthy communities. Students also have the opportunity to take family life education. Information on this part of the health curriculum is sent to parents at the beginning of the year and again as the unit begins so parents can decide if they want their child to participate.

Physical Education

Physical Education is an integral part of the education process. Developing and incorporating a physically active lifestyle helps prepare students to handle day-to-day situations. Physical education classes help students develop motor skills, increase fitness and wellness levels, enhance social skills, and improve academic learning. Physical education content includes fitness and conditioning, fitness planning, and lifetime sport activities. Students learn to evaluate their own level of fitness and establish individual goals for improvement.

Mathematics

Eighth-grade students complete their three-year focus on five mathematical instructional strands: numeracy, geometry, measurement, patterns and algebra, and probability and statistics, and begin to focus on more abstract thinking skills. Students who meet the prerequisite requirements may be able to take Algebra I or Geometry for high school credit. We strongly encourage students to work toward taking Algebra I in middle school. Our goal is to prepare you for success, and learning algebra will open up greater possibilities for you in your study of mathematics and in your college and career pathway. An option for accepting high school credit is given at the end of the eighth-grade year. Students will follow the high school exam exemption policy.

I like algebra because it's not about writing or remembering. It's about numbers. ~ Unknown Middle School Student

Using appropriate tools and technologies and student-centered inquiry, eighth-grade math students do the following:

- Develop, investigate, solve and apply multi-step equations.
- Collect and graph data using a variety of representations; analyze the data to make inferences and predictions; and in some cases, develop rules to describe the data.
- Use probability to predict and calculate outcomes for data.
- Identify, classify and apply transformations to geometric figures.
- Measure, convert and use standard and non-standard units for measurement, and apply formulas for linear measurement, area and volume.

Science

Eighth-grade students continue their involvement in scientific experimentation. They plan and conduct research projects that include classroom experimentations and literature reviews. Their research focuses on variables, repeated trials, and validating conclusions using evidence and data. Students share their work in written reports and oral presentations. They develop an in-depth understanding of the nature and structure of matter and the characteristics of energy, and explore how technology applies to physical science principles. Eighth-graders study the periodic table; physical and chemical changes; nuclear reactions; temperature and heat; sound; light; electricity and magnetism; and work, force and motion.

Social Studies

Civics and Economics

Eighth-grade students explore the fundamentals of American constitutional government and our economic system. Students are engaged in relevant and real-life tasks to prepare them for becoming active and responsible citizens. They continue to develop critical/analytical thinking and writing skills. Students use primary and secondary source documents, simulations, and service learning to answer important questions, such as: What does it mean to be a citizen? How is public policy made in the U.S.? How does an increasingly global and interdependent economy affect U.S. interests and my own future?

Exploratories

Career and Technical Education

Our career and vocational electives allow eighth-grade students to explore their talents and interests. Courses introduce students to career pathways in business, marketing and finance, engineering and technology, media and communication, and human services.

Designing, Writing and Publishing Multimedia Content

Students develop enhanced skills introduced in Workplace Technology Productivity Skills. Students learn to incorporate various media from the Internet, such as video and sound, animation, and digital images, into a variety of publication formats. Advanced word processing skills, such as mapping, merging, and table creation, are developed in this course.

Entrepreneurship: Making It Your Business

Students are provided opportunities to run small group or class businesses based on their own design for providing a service or product needed at their school. Concepts introduced include types of business ownerships, marketing strategies, financial strategies, planning and implementing production techniques, and staffing and performance evaluations. Students examine labor and community issues, as well as health, safety and environmental issues in the workplace.

Engineering, Building and Maintaining Physical Structures

Exploring component systems and construction techniques of physical structures, including electrical, heating and cooling systems, and support, framing and finish systems, students develop understanding of the building and maintenance of physical structures. Through practical application of key concepts of mathematics and science, students develop skills essential to careers in engineering and construction.

Personal Life Skills and Career Pathways 8

Students develop personal life skills related to smart consumerism, personal finance, and nutrition and wellness. Students explore related careers in health care and apparel design, construction and marketing.

I think it is cool to be able to learn how to cook or do stuff in technology or robotics. ~ Unknown Middle School Student

Visual and Performing Arts

Art

Eighth-grade students use the principles of design as the basis for study of line, color and texture. They create clay sculptures using slab construction; draw human figures; use multiple perspectives; make prints; and create and maintain a portfolio of their work. Eighth-graders also examine the art and architecture of different times and cultures and learn to critique their own work and the work of others.

Band

Students who play band instruments receive sequential instruction on their instrument. They typically perform several formal concerts during the year and may participate in competitive district events, festivals and parades. Selected advanced students may also participate in the county's Honors Band Program.

Chorus

Students practice and perform choral literature drawn from a variety of musical styles and foreign languages, including Latin. They may participate in district-wide festivals and events. Selected advanced students may also participate in the county's Honors Chorus Program.

Drama

Drama students develop a variety of improvisational and formal acting skills. Students learn fundamentals of stage design and presence, performing selected dramatic works as a troupe. Emphasis is placed on gaining comfort in a variety of performance styles while building confidence in public communication skills.

Strings

Students who play stringed instruments receive sequential instruction. They typically perform several formal concerts during the year. Advanced students may have the opportunity to participate in district strings events.

World Languages

Eighth-grade students have an opportunity to take French I or Spanish I. Coursework includes a strong emphasis on speaking, listening, reading and writing, and cultural awareness. Basic vocabulary and essential grammar are taught. Students who successfully complete this first-year high school program may elect to earn high school credit for the course and take French II or Spanish II in ninth grade. Students follow the high school exam exemption policy for these courses.

Participation in the grade 8 world languages courses is open to students who participated in a grade 7 world language exploratory.

Note: Additional exploratories, including independent study, may be offered at each middle school based on the talents and interests of the students and faculty and staffing availability. A complete list of electives can be found at <http://www.k12albemarle.org/msguide>.

Interdisciplinary Teacher Teams

Albemarle County middle schools may use grade-level, interdisciplinary teacher teams to collaboratively support students in attaining high levels of achievement. Time is provided during the school day for teachers to plan learning experiences that integrate skills and content disciplines. Teachers, school counselors, special education teachers, and administrators meet to plan strategies to accommodate student needs.

Technology

Albemarle County's distribution of technology resources in middle schools is designed to support student inquiry and analysis, research, and communication. A new distribution model serves to put increasingly powerful computers into each instructional space and computer lab station. Research facilities at library media centers feature increased numbers of computers and access to a variety of online encyclopedias, periodicals, and other databases. Wireless laptops, interactive whiteboards, and projectors are employed to bring sophisticated technology resources to individual classrooms as needed to support the instructional program.

Library Media Center

Middle school library media centers provide students with access to a wide variety of print and electronic materials and resources. Library media center specialists provide individual guidance, formal instruction, and appropriate resources to help students become lifelong learners, independent thinkers, and responsible citizens who are able to access information, present results of research effectively, use information technology efficiently and responsibly, and read for pleasure and personal enrichment.

Broadcast Media and Communication Center

Middle school students have the opportunity to create audio, video and graphical content suitable for broadcast TV, the Internet, DVDs, computer presentation, and other media through participation in middle school broadcast media and communication centers. Students communicate ideas and opinions by researching, scripting, performing, editing and presenting multimedia content in the production of a daily video segment for broadcast on the school television network.

Attendance

School attendance is directly related to academic achievement and the development of good habits, which are important in the world of work. Optimal student attendance is a cooperative effort. The School Board expects parents and students to take an active role in accepting the responsibility for good attendance.

Students are expected to make up work for all missed classes within five (5) days of returning to school. Additional time may be granted for extenuating circumstances.

The principal has the discretion to deny promotion to students who miss more than eight (8) class days or the equivalent block time during a semester, or a total of sixteen (16) days or the equivalent block time during a full school year.

Policy allows parents to request for their child to be transferred to a school other than the one serving their community in order for their child to participate in a course or program not offered at their home school.

Note: After consultation with both principals involved, the Superintendent may approve a transfer request for curriculum requirements, specific medical reasons, or extraordinary reasons. Requests for transfers to schools other than the one serving the student's residential area may be approved only on an annual basis.

Prevention, Intervention and Remediation

The *Standards of Quality* require the local School Board to provide programs for prevention, intervention or remediation for students who are educationally at risk. The Division Superintendent may require participation in these programs for identified students.

Programs for prevention, intervention and remediation include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Academic Learning Project Schools (ALPS)
- Summer school
- Specifically designed programs
- Tutorial programs

Homework

Homework is assigned at the discretion of the teachers to meet students' needs and enhance the quality of the curriculum taught in the classroom. Completion of homework is an important expectation for all students. Homework is not used for disciplinary purposes.

Grading

The following is the grading scale adopted by Albemarle County Schools:

Letter Grade	Percentages
A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	0-59

Note: This change to a 10-point scale became effective in 2007-08, and will be noted on the school profile for student transcripts.

(Middle school is) harder than fifth grade. ~ Kenny and Rashad

I think it is really neat that you can choose from a small range of electives in middle school, because you can express yourself and do what you like. ~ Unknown Middle School Student

Methods of Instruction

Effective methods of instruction are varied and capitalize upon the enthusiasm and energy that typify the age group. Instructional strategies include the following:

- Active teaching and active listening
- Reading across the curriculum strategies
- Writing across the curriculum strategies
- Cooperative learning
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Learning stations/contracts
- Tiered lessons, centers and products
- Small group instruction
- Peer tutoring
- Individual and group work
- Problem-solving, research, and project oriented activities
- Differentiated assignments that reflect students' interests and abilities
- Hands-on activities
- Appropriate levels of reading materials in all subject areas
- Use of instructional technology
- Use of interdisciplinary units involving core and exploratory programs
- Approaches that provide for individual participation, recognition and accomplishment

BELIEF FOUR – SPECIAL NEEDS

Each student has a unique combination of interests, abilities and talents. Since self-esteem arises from competence, student interests, talents and capabilities are encouraged and developed. Each student deserves to be surrounded by adults who have high expectations for him/her and promote his/her successes. In order to meet the needs of each student, the Albemarle County Middle School Program includes special services.

Special Education

Albemarle County middle schools are committed to providing all children with opportunities to benefit from a public education. Students experiencing significant difficulty in achieving educational success may be referred to the School Based Intervention Team (SBIT). This team collects information regarding the student's specific area(s) of weakness and develops a plan of strategies to implement. The impact of the applied strategies is tracked. If these interventions are not successful and the team suspects that the child has a disability and requires special education services, the student may be referred for an evaluation to determine if he/she is eligible to receive special education services. A child with a disability must meet criteria established by the Federal Government and the State of Virginia to be eligible for special programs and services.

If a student qualifies for special services, he/she is entitled to services designed to provide an appropriate educational program. These programs are discussed and planned by school personnel, parents, and often times, the involved student. The instruction may be delivered in either a regular or special education classroom. Review of the student's special education plan is conducted at least annually.

Alternative Learning Opportunities

Albemarle County middle schools are committed to helping all students succeed. The Albemarle County Middle School Program includes alternative learning opportunities and intervention services for students in need.

The Community Public Charter School was opened in the fall of 2008. The mission of The Community Public Charter School is to provide an alternative and innovative learning environment, using the arts, to help children in grades six through eight learn in ways that match their learning styles, developing the whole child—intellectually, emotionally,

physically, and socially. Seeking to serve students who have not succeeded in school, the program will close their achievement gap by offering a balance of literacy tutorials and an arts-infused curriculum.

The mission of The Community Public Charter School is to provide an innovative learning environment, using the arts, to help children in grades six through eight learn in ways that match their learning styles; developing the whole child intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially. Seeking to serve students who might be at risk of not meeting their potential, the program assists students in meeting the following goals:

Expand opportunities for students, who have not been successful in school, using the arts as a means of increasing literacy skills and as a means of expression; Use discovery, invention and reflection as the primary teaching pedagogy; Create an intimate educational setting designed to engage and empower each student to think critically, creatively and reflectively; Design extensive process-oriented activities that result in a balance of process and product; Provide quality instruction by engaging and retaining a team of dedicated teachers and professional artists; Give students the skills to pursue their own goals and evaluate their own progress; Encourage family involvement as a key contributor to success; Teach students to think like artists.

Community Public Charter School welcomes students with the following characteristics:

Students who might:

- Be one or more years behind in reading and/or math.
- Learn differently from how school is traditionally taught.
- Lack motivation to do well in school.
- Experience difficulties with peers.
- Have poor organizational skills.
- Show an interest in learning through the arts.
- Thrive in a smaller middle school environment.
- Perform better with more active, experiential, hands-on-learning.

Literacy Initiative

Sixth-grade students are enrolled in a double period for reading and language arts. Students enrolled in the standard level of reading and language arts in grades 7 and 8 are also assigned a double period. In addition, students may be eligible for participation in a research-based

intervention approach to literacy that teaches reading, writing, spelling, grammar, language skills, and vocabulary.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

The English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Program is designed to help limited English proficient (LEP) students develop high levels of academic attainment in English and meet the challenging state content and student achievement standards set for all children. The ESOL Program provides support within the context of regular classroom instruction.

Gifted Education Services

Middle school students who are intellectually gifted benefit from a continuum of services. Each middle school offers advanced/honors level classes in language arts and math at each grade level; in addition, advanced/honors level science and social studies are available for eighth-graders. Placement in these classes is based on a student's achievement level in the particular subject.

Differentiation of core class instruction is supported by a Gifted Resource Teacher (GRT) at each school. The GRT collaborates with classroom teachers to plan differentiated lessons, locate advanced materials, and arrange and lead enrichment activities and projects to complement the curriculum.

Additionally, Gifted Resource Teachers support opportunities for excellence beyond the regular curriculum. Students participating in programs such as Destination Imagination, Odyssey of the Mind, Science Fair, Knowledge Masters, and Stock Market Game experience increased interaction with intellectual peers, develop expertise in an area of interest, and showcase their accomplishments.

School Nurse

A school nurse is available to students at each Albemarle County middle school. In accordance with Albemarle County School Board policies, the school nurse is required to dispense all medications. Minor problems are handled at school, and every effort is made to have the student return to class as quickly as possible. If, however, in the judgment of the school nurse, the student is too ill to remain in school, parents are notified and must arrange for transportation home. Also, the school nurse works with teachers and students to reinforce good health habits.

Activity Period

Each middle school offers an activity period that encourages student participation in a wide variety of activities that are not normally taught in the curriculum. This provides an opportunity for community members and staff to share their expertise, interests and hobbies, and to interact with students in a non-academic setting. During this time period, students participate in clubs, intramurals, and/or planned activities.

After-School Sport Activities

The Albemarle County Parks and Recreation Department sponsors the Middle School Sports Program, a recreational program for all abilities, at all middle schools. The purpose of the program is to provide an active, organized and fun activity for students after school hours. The program consists of a variety of sport activities for girls and boys. Students learn the rules and skills of each sport, as well as participate in game situations. Games are played within each school and with the other middle schools. For information about this program, please contact the Albemarle County Parks and Recreation Department at (434) 296-5844.

BELIEF FIVE – COMMUNITY

The home, school and community are interdependent in the development of the emerging adolescent. The middle school is a community founded on mutual caring and respect. It fosters the development of shared values, social responsibility, and citizenship. Parents are expected to support intellectual development, give positive reinforcement, introduce cultural experiences, encourage independence, celebrate success, share exploration time, motivate and challenge, and provide a supportive environment. Students and teachers are sensitive to and accepting of each individual's uniqueness. Cultural diversity is embraced.

School Climate

Albemarle County middle schools nurture a climate that promotes trust, idea sharing, and sensitivity to students' needs, and ensures a healthy environment for intellectual, physical and social development for all adolescents. The following components contribute to school climate:

- The school is safe, clean, secure, healthy and comfortable, with adequate space for active learning.
- The learning environment features a positive, caring and supportive atmosphere, characterized by respect among and between students, staff and parents.
- The interdependent efforts of home, school and community foster the students' development as self-directed learners.
- The school fosters intellectual risk-taking and creative problem-solving.
- All students are encouraged to take pride in their work and expected to do their best.
- The school offers a wide range of opportunities for students.

Students as Learners

As community members, students have responsibilities and obligations. Albemarle County middle schools expect that students will do the following:

- Become actively involved in their education.
- Comply with school rules and School Board regulations.
- Treat all students and staff with respect.
- Participate positively as members of the school community.

Character Education

Character education looks different in every school, but the goal is the same—to integrate character education into the school culture and develop a climate of mutual respect and responsibility within the staff and students. Albemarle County Schools take a comprehensive approach to character education that touches all aspects of the school climate, from classroom management to teaching strategies, from the hallways to field trips. As required in the Code of Virginia, the inappropriateness of bullying is addressed through character education. Each Albemarle County middle school has implemented the Olweus Bullying Prevention Model, a comprehensive, proactive model that incorporates school-wide, classroom, individual, and community components.

Youth Service

To encourage good character and provide opportunities for student engagement, schools develop service as a means for expressing good character. Service, specifically service learning, boosts student engagement and achievement by giving students opportunities to see relevance in their education. All Albemarle County middle schools provide student opportunities for service that are structured, meet a genuine need, are high interest and engaging, and involve partnership with the local and extended community.

Parents as Partners

Parents are an important part of the school community and are encouraged to participate in their child's education in the following ways:

- Promote daily attendance.
- Encourage their child to do his/her best every day, complete assignments, and be prepared.
- Provide a time and place for their child to complete homework and review assignments.
- Call their child's teacher/counselor if they have any concerns.
- Attend parent conferences, open houses, and other school activities.
- Participate in parent organizations, such as PTO, and volunteer for school activities.

In Closing

This guide provides a general overview of the middle school program in Albemarle County Public Schools, outlining common components across our middle schools. Our mission is to build a community of learners and learning, through rigor, relevance, and relationships, *one student at a time*. We are committed to challenging students capable of higher-level work, providing additional assistance to students as necessary, and meeting the needs of individual school communities whenever possible. As such, individual middle schools may offer courses or programs that go beyond these baseline expectations.

Everyone works together. ~ Unknown Middle School Student

My middle school is special because there is no bullying. You can come to school relaxed and you can be yourself without being worried that someone is gonna talk about you for being you.

~ Quanesha

School Directory

Jackson P. Burley Middle School

901 Rose Hill Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Office: (434) 295-5101
Guidance: (434) 295-5102
Homework Hotline: (434) 296-5836
Fax: (434) 984-4975

Joseph T. Henley Middle School

5880 Rockfish Gap Turnpike
Charlottesville, VA 22932
Office: (434) 823-4393
Guidance: (434) 823-5040
Fax: (434) 823-2711

Jack Jouett Middle School

210 Lambs Lane
Charlottesville, VA 22901
Office: (434) 975-9320
Guidance: (434) 975-9321
Fax: (434) 975-9322

Mortimer Y. Sutherland Middle School

2801 Powell Creek Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22911
Office: (434) 975-0599
Fax: (434) 975-0852

Leslie H. Walton Middle School

4217 Red Hill Road
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Office: (434) 977-5615
Guidance: (434) 977-6533
Fax: (434) 296-6648

Community Public Charter School

901 Rose Hill Drive
Charlottesville, VA 22903
Office: (434) 972-1607

ACPS Website

www.k12albemarle.org