



## INDIANA SCHOOLS TO WATCH MODEL SCHOOL—VISITOR’S GUIDE

### Benjamin Franklin Middle School



#### Designated in 2018-19

Benjamin Franklin Middle School  
Valparaiso Community Schools  
Porter County  
Principal-Jean Sienkowski  
605 Campbell Street Valparaiso, IN 46383  
219-531-3020  
jsienkowski@valpo.k12.in.us  
<https://valparaisobfms.valpo.k12.in.us>

### 2018-2019 School Statistics

#### General Information

Community: Suburban  
Enrollment: 820  
Grade Levels: 6,7,8  
School Schedule: Traditional

#### Student Demographics

11%	Hispanic
81%	White
3%	African American
0%	Filipino
2%	Asian
.1%	Pacific Islander
23%	Free/Reduced Lunch
1%	English Learners

#### Indiana School Wide Letter Grade

2013-2014 B  
2014-2015 B  
2015-2016 B  
2016-2017 B  
2017-2018 A

## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

### Academic Excellence

- We expect the best out of each student and believe that he or she is capable of achieving excellence.
- “Achieving excellence” includes many areas, including helping students develop their own interests and capacities in many dimensions; we care about the whole child’s achievement.
- Students are given multiple and various opportunities to practice and show what they know.
- We strive to communicate learning goals with students and families; curriculum work is done continuously to help our students learn and grow.
- The Master Schedule is reviewed and altered to better support our students academically.
- We employ a variety of instructional strategies, formative checks, assessment strategies, supports, and interventions to help students succeed; we are always working on this aspect of our profession, utilizing technology and instructional coaching to further this process.

*(Continued)*

### **Academic Excellence** *(continued)*

- Data from a variety of sources, including NWEA, ISTEP+, and the PSAT 8/9, help drive instruction. Data is also gathered around the whole child to make instructional decisions.
- Collaboration across our building and our community is a key tool we utilize in helping students in a variety of dimensions, including academic excellence.

### **Developmental Responsiveness**

- We work to connect with students and their families and build better relationships. Teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, custodians, cafeteria workers, IT, bus drivers, our social worker, our nurse, our SRO, instructional aides, secretaries, support staff - everyone works to keep our students tuned in to school.
- We support students and their families, helping with everything from laundry and food needs to school supplies and holiday gifts.
- Students have a wide variety of activities through which they can develop relationships, skills, talents, and interests - everything from Student Council to STAND, from STEAM club to Builder's Club, from athletic & academic teams to events like author visits and service projects.
- The Master Schedule evolves to better serve students' developmental needs, with increased non-academic relationship-building time and smaller teams being implemented most recently.
- Our students learn about and practice respect, metacognition, and citizenship in classes and through extracurricular and co-curricular activities (Brainology, LEAD & Team Peace mentoring programs)
- We value student voice, creativity, participation, and interests through work in and out of class. Many activities and even some clubs (STAND, for example) are student ideas put into action.
- Students experience college visits, career readiness events, interdisciplinary units, and service opportunities, in order to help them be ready for "the real world."

### **Social Equity**

- We strive to give all of our learners and families equal access to opportunities and supports to help everyone thrive.
- We start with proactive programs (Pride Bucks, GREAT, and modeling positive behavior) and use a progressive discipline system.
- We understand all students need positive and negative consequences, that they will make mistakes, and that they need opportunities to try again (and again).
- Master Schedule changes have been made to make it easier to move students for support.
- BF students all have opportunities to participate in a variety of classes and activities that fit their learning needs and interests.

### **Organizational Support**

- Our administrators lead the charge to support the whole child. They are constantly learning and growing, encouraging the faculty and staff to do the same, and thus modeling this for our students.
- BF teachers take advantage of professional development opportunities, including conferences like Valparaiso University's PEP conferences, ISTE, eVillage, IMLEA, and state conferences.
- We work with preservice teachers and observers, sharing our professional knowledge.
- We examine data in the context of the whole child, recognizing that numbers only tell part of a story.
- We work with others outside our building to help our students and their families.