

## Principal's Corner: October 2018

Dear Parents:

The 2018-19 school year at Virginia Beach Middle School is off to a great start despite some unexpected weather challenges, and many new things are in store for the school year. You are no doubt already aware of the Virtual Learning Days scheduled to overlap staff days for teachers as well as the new Advisory classes each middle school student will participate in five times this year. The Advisory bells challenge students to look beyond middle school to tackle Academic and Career Planning.

Of course, I am new to VBMS as well, and I have appreciated the warm welcome I have received from the Seahawk community. With new leadership comes new expectations, and I want you to know my time at VBMS will be marked by an emphasis on establishing good order to protect the learning environment, on building a culture of acceptance, kindness, and collaboration, on fostering innovation in our classrooms, on establishing consistently high expectations for both students and staff, and on developing strong relationships with the students, staff, and community.

As we move through the 2018-19 school year, I encourage you to take an active role in your child's education. *Make sure your child knows that his or her academic progress is important to you.* On a daily basis, engage in conversation with your child regarding what was learned in school each day (Do not accept "nothing" for an answer. Continue to probe with questions regarding each subject area). Attend open houses, parent conferences, and sporting events. Know when each grade reporting time occurs, and if you do not see progress reports or report cards, contact the school without delay. Ensure you are registered to access Parent Portal. Parent Portal will give you access to your child's grades and absences 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. To register for Parent Portal, go to [www.virginiabeachms.vbschools.com](http://www.virginiabeachms.vbschools.com) and click on the Parent Portal link in the "Parents" drop down.

*Be available to help and guide.* Examine your child's planner. Your child should keep a daily record of homework assignments. Review your child's homework and ensure that your child is completing his or her A-day homework on A-day and B-day homework on B-day (keeping this consistent pattern will prevent your child from falling behind on assignments). Set aside a regularly scheduled time and a quiet study area at home and monitor your child as he or she studies, providing assistance as needed. Do not give more help than is wanted. Keep in mind it is your child's responsibility to be organized, to get homework done, and to prepare for tests. Ensure that the telephone, television, and other distractions are eliminated during study time. Also, examine the planner passes located on each week of the planner. This will provide you with a record of your child's time out of the classroom. Of course, it is important that time out of the classroom be minimized.

*Maintain regular communications with teachers through written communication (notes or email), phone calls, and/or conferences.* Progress reports were issued on Tuesday, October 9, 2018, to all students. If your child is experiencing difficulty in his or her

academics, contact your child's guidance counselor to arrange a conference. You will find an email link for all of our teachers, counselors, and administrators on the Virginia Beach Middle School website. You may also wish to contact Ms. Claffy, School Improvement Specialist, to discuss opportunities for additional assistance through SOL tutoring. Ms. Claffy will be happy to share information about tutoring opportunities. Of course, students who struggle are also being offered assistance during their Seahawk Prep time, a critical time that is part of each child's daily schedule, and which is designed in part to help students recover from poor grades or low test scores. It is a great resource for students who are falling behind or struggling, especially in math and English, and we appreciate your help in emphasizing its importance. Send your child a message that learning is not an option.

To keep open communication between home and school, VBMS is continuing with our weekly electronic mail service (My School Mail) for our parents. This service provides parents, via email, school specific information such as announcements of important dates, special events, and volunteer opportunities. Please subscribe to this service so we can keep you up-to-date. Subscription directions are available on our school website at [www.virginiabeachms.vbschools.com](http://www.virginiabeachms.vbschools.com), again under the "Parents" drop-down.

As always, please call on any member of the administrative team or me should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

D. Alex Bergren  
Principal