

## COLUMN: ADMIN CORNER

## Harold E. Winkler Middle School: An IB World School

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Harold E. Winkler Middle School, an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, opened its doors in August 2011 with a mission to provide a high-quality, challenging, and globally minded education for students in 6th through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Today, Winkler serves over 1,100 students and is home to a dedicated staff of more than 100 professionals. The school is named in honor of Harold "Butch" Winkler, the former superintendent of the district who served from 1990 to 2009. His vision of excellence in education continues to influence Winkler's philosophy and its commitment to developing inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring students.



At Harold E. Winkler Middle School, it is a common understanding that the process of learning is ongoing, and we are committed to growing together as a school community. We strive to ensure this is reflected in everything we do—from our inquiry-driven curriculum and collaborative professional development to our focus on service learning and extracurricular activities.

Our IB World School status is a key component of our mission to provide students with a globally focused, high-quality education. By fostering curiosity, critical thinking, and a commitment to making a difference, Winkler staff work to

prepare students not only for success in school but also for the challenges and opportunities they will face in the world as their futures unfold.

We are proud to be a school that values continuous growth, collaboration, and a deep commitment to both academic excellence and personal development. Whether it's through our rigorous academic programs, professional development initiatives, or service-learning projects, Winkler is dedicated to helping students thrive in every aspect of their education and lives.

In addition to Winkler's designation as an IB World School, the school has earned the honor of being named a National Forum School to Watch, an accolade that recognizes schools for their commitment to academic excellence, developmental responsiveness, social equity, and organizational structures and processes. This recognition highlights Winkler's focus on providing a world-class educational experience that challenges students and supports their growth in all areas—academic, social, and emotional.



Being named a National Forum School to Watch is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our teachers, staff, and students. It reflects the collaborative culture at Winkler, where everyone works together to provide a safe, nurturing, and intellectually stimulating environment. Winkler continuously strives to be recognized for its innovation, high academic standards, and emphasis on creating a positive school climate.

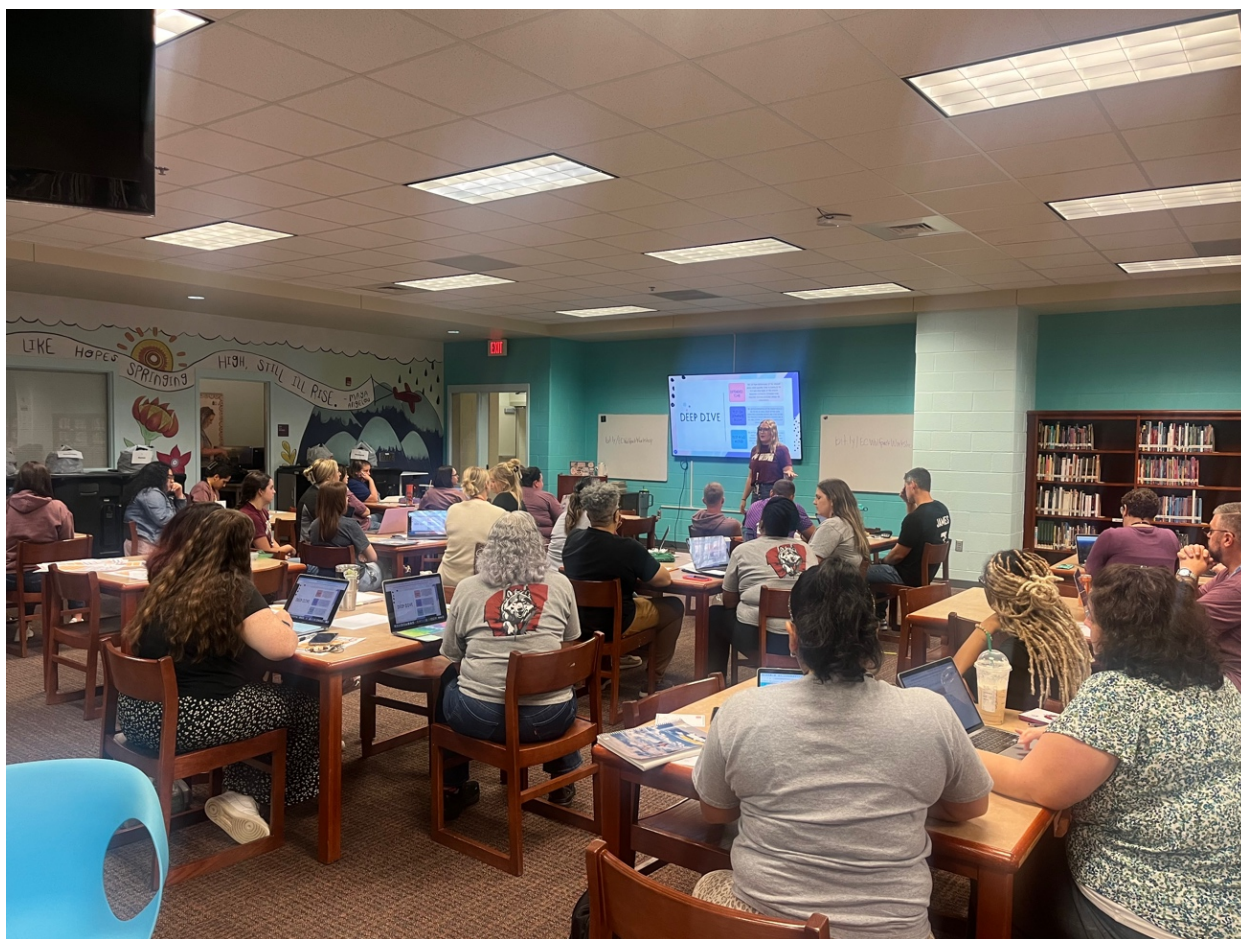
Many things make Winkler Middle School a unique place for staff, students, parents, and community partners. One thing that Winkler staff takes pride in is an emphasis on helping students understand not just *what* they are learning but *why* it matters. This approach is at the heart of the IB program, but also the heart of dedication to the growth and development of students. All students are encouraged to ask questions, make connections across subjects, and explore the broader implications of their knowledge in the world around them.

The continuous goal is to develop critical thinkers who are curious about the world and can apply their learning to real-world situations. This philosophy is central to Winkler's commitment to preparing students for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

At Winkler, we also believe that continuous learning is essential for both students and staff. One of the distinctive features of our school is our commitment to professional development, which plays a vital role in ensuring that our teachers are always improving and innovating in their practice. Each Friday before school, our educators participate in *Wolfpack Workshops*, a series of staff-led professional development sessions.

In these workshops, teachers take on the role of experts, sharing their knowledge and best practices with one another. This collaborative approach not only strengthens our teaching community but also enhances the overall learning experience for our students. By fostering a culture of shared expertise, we ensure that our staff remains at the forefront of educational strategies, making Winkler an inspiring place for both teachers and students to grow.





*Harold E. Winkler Middle School teachers engaged in a Wolfpack Workshop.*

In addition to an academic focus, Winkler offers a variety of extracurricular activities to help students connect with their peers and discover new interests. Each month, Winkler students participate in *Club Day*, where students can choose from over 40 clubs, ranging from Robotics and Art to Cricket, Dance, History, and Community Service. These clubs allow students to explore their passions, develop new skills, and form meaningful friendships with others who share similar interests.

Club Days provide a valuable opportunity for students to build relationships with their peers outside of the classroom, helping to foster a sense of belonging and community within the school. Whether they are working on a creative

project, learning a new sport, or volunteering for a good cause, students have the chance to engage in activities that contribute to their personal growth and social development.

Another belief shared at Winkler is that learning should extend beyond academic performance and include a commitment to community and service. As part of the IB program, Winkler emphasizes service learning as an integral part of students' educational experiences. Service learning helps students understand the importance of making a positive impact on the world around them while developing skills such as empathy, leadership, and problem-solving.

One of the key components of our service-learning program is *8th Grade Community Projects*. This year-long project challenges 8th-grade students to identify a social or environmental issue in their community, conduct research, and take meaningful action to address it. The project not only encourages students to apply their academic skills to real-world problems but also fosters a deep sense of responsibility and civic engagement.

In addition to the 8th Grade Community Project, Winkler offers other service-learning opportunities across grade levels. These initiatives help students build a strong sense of social responsibility while contributing to the well-being of their local and global communities.



In conclusion, Harold E. Winkler Middle School is more than just a place of academic learning; it is a collaborative, supportive community of scholars, staff, parents, and community members that encourages growth, inquiry, and service. Through our commitment to the IB philosophy, staff development, extracurricular activities, and service learning, we aim to create well-rounded individuals who are ready to make a positive impact on the world.



Rebecca Phillips is the proud principal at Harold E. Winkler IB Middle School in Concord, NC. With 18 years of experience in education, she has spent the last 9 years in middle school. Throughout her career, Rebecca has been dedicated to fostering a positive and nurturing learning environment where students and educators alike can thrive. She is passionate about promoting academic excellence, social-emotional growth, and preparing students to become responsible, engaged citizens in an ever-changing world.