



## NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS TO WATCH MODEL SCHOOL—VISITOR'S GUIDE

### Alexander Graham Middle School



#### Designated in 2006

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### 2007-08 School Statistics

(Source: 2007 NC School Report Card.)

Community: Suburban fringe of a large city  
Enrollment: 1056  
Grade Levels: 6-8  
School Schedule: Traditional

#### Student Demographics

66% White  
27% African American  
5% Hispanic  
1% Asian

27% Free/Reduced Lunch  
4% English Learners

2005 AYP: High Growth, School of Excellence  
Met 20 of 23 performance targets

2006 AYP: High Growth, School of Progress  
Met 19 of 25 performance targets

2007 AYP: School of Distinction  
Met 22 of 27 performance targets

(Visit <http://www.ncschoolreportcards.org> to view this school's data for prior years.)

## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Alexander Graham Middle School is a diverse school that draws from a diverse population in Charlotte. There are a significant number of "haves" and "have nots" coming into the school; however, the school has done an excellent job of establishing a culture that meets all students' needs and students get along very well. The school has done an excellent job of providing a rigorous curriculum to students at all levels, yet is one of the few schools we've seen that has stayed committed to the concept of "recess." At Alexander Graham, "Fresh Air Time (FAT)" is taken seriously, and students truly enjoy the break. They have managed to find the balance between hard work, high achievement, and physical activity.

Click [here](#) for a PowerPoint presentation on AG Middle from the 2007 Closing the Gap Conference.

### Academic Excellence

- All classes, at all levels, have very high expectations for students
- Strong use of portfolios, science students have labs frequently, and there is much use of journals and other work products

(Continued)

**Academic Excellence** *(continued)*

- Teachers make connections across the curriculum, and many students refer to those cross-curricular connections in class and in their assignments
- Students demonstrate success using multiple authentic forms of assessment
- Block schedule is well utilized and provides time for a variety of instructional activities
- Teachers make good use of planning time and are intentional about student outcomes
- Self-contained programs for children with special needs are academically rigorous

**Developmental Responsiveness**

- The school is warm and inviting, and students are civil, friendly, and enjoy being at school
- Students recognize that they are part of a global community. They are helping to build a school in Ghana
- There is active family involvement through PTA and parent volunteers
- Students have many opportunities to voice their opinions and concerns. There is a strong student council and service learning opportunities
- Students participate in numerous clubs, sports, and activities that are geared towards meeting athletic, social, and academic interests, and we love the commitment to a physical activity "recess" break during the school day

**Social Equity**

- All students are being pushed hard to achieve academic success
- Wide use in all classes and school of technology, learning styles and teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students
- The school is diverse in population, and the school reaches all to all communities to include them in the educational process
- "Marvelous Middle School" meetings and meetings at community centers provide opportunities for parent involvement
- Excellence in citizenship and academic achievement are valued, recognized, and celebrated

**Organizational Support**

- The school talks much about "building character, building minds." This goes deep into the school culture
- There is a good use of site-based decision making that propels the school
- PTA sponsors in-house professional development and purchased a \$10,000 software program to strengthen vocabulary skills
- Parents are invited and expected to participate in school planning, school activities and school improvement
- The school has strong leadership in its principal, assistant principals, and teachers, and a clear vision