



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

Carrington Middle School



2008-09 School Statistics

(Source: 2008 NC School Report Card.)

Community: Suburban fringe of large city
Enrollment: 1059
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Traditional

Student Demographics

56% African American
36% White
7% Hispanic

36% Free/Reduced Lunch
3% English Learners

2006 AYP: No Recognition
Met 27 of 31 performance targets

2007 AYP: No Recognition
Met 23 of 29 performance targets

2008 AYP: School of Progress
Met 24 of 31 performance targets

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

Designated in 2007

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School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Carrington Middle School is located on the north side of Durham. In the past it was a predominantly rural school, but the demographics have shifted significantly in the last five years as the city has spread out into the suburbs. The community is far more diverse than in the past, but the school has become an important part of the community, and has done an excellent job of involving parents and community members from all across the district in their school. The school has done an excellent job of promoting spirit and unity, and the principal will tell you, "We bleed orange and black!" Indeed, the colors are everywhere at this school.

Academic Excellence

- The school benchmarks student progress regularly, and then uses the data to drive-and improve-instruction.
- The curriculum is rigorous, and a wide variety of instructional tools and strategies are used on a regular basis.
- There is a strong collaborative spirit among the faculty, and there is a lot of conversation about instruction and student work.
- It is clear that no one is allowed to fall between the cracks. Time on task is impressive, and students are interested and engaged.

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Academic Excellence *(Continued)*

- There is a very strong commitment to, and focus on, improvement. We heard from a number of teachers, "We continually try to figure out what more we can do." Students clearly support this observation.

Developmental Responsiveness

- There is a wonderful "Leadership for Learning" class that develops leaders among diverse student groups. They form a cohesive and powerful support group for each other and for the school.
- There is a commitment to advisory-which is conducted through core classes. Students clearly "belong," and a visitor would never know that students come from 18 feeder schools.
- The school is part of a district initiative to have the staff trained in "Capturing Kids' Hearts." The staff at Carrington has clearly succeeded. Students really like to be here.
- Parent volunteers are a strong presence throughout the school, and we saw many parents interacting at the classroom level. There were also many parent conferences occurring. This is the normal state of things at Carrington.
- Teachers have a wealth of vehicles for communicating with parents, and parents all feel well-informed about what is happening in the school. The principal sends out weekly updates by "Phone Master" to alert parents about what's happening in school, and communication is translated into Spanish for those families where it is needed.
- Elective courses are wonderful and well supported. The school recently held the first middle school production of the popular "High School Musical"

Social Equity

- Students are confident and happy. It is clear that their diverse needs are constantly addressed and re-examined on a regular basis.
- A number of computers have gone home to families, and there is a commitment to accessibility on the part of the entire community.
- Students and parents clearly have voice. One parent responded, "I've been involved for three years now, and it is amazing to see what impact three years of working on this school has had. We are a part of the process."
- There is a clear no-bullying philosophy, and we saw several instances where the "no-putdown" policy was enforced by students between students. It is part of the culture of the school
- There has been a long-term plan in place to reduce suspensions, and it is paying off. Numbers continue to decline, and the use of "Positive Behavior Supports" is well-integrated into the school.

Organizational Support

- The school has strongly bought-into the district middle school reform plan (which is aligned to the Schools to Watch criteria). Carrington is clearly a school with a vision for success and achievement by each and every student.
- There is a strong commitment to teaming. Teams meet and plan daily along with regular horizontal and vertical articulated teaming.
- Professional development is continuous and on-going. It is often staff-led, and is supported by district initiatives.

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Organizational Support *(Continued)*

- There are a number of strong partnerships. A local judge runs the Truancy Court on Fridays. There are 21st Century Partnerships with local faith community organizations. The school sends a bus over to a local college to get student volunteers who then come back to the school and tutor/mentor students. There are partnerships with Duke, NC Central, IBM, and the local Rotary to name a few.
- The school is VERY strong on details and procedures, and little is left to chance. There are signs for procedures everywhere... which staircases to use at what time, how to enter the lunchroom, etc. There is even a "Lunch Logistics Award" given to a staff member who helps improve the lunchtime experience.