



# NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS TO WATCH

## MODEL SCHOOL—VISITOR'S GUIDE

### Dixon Middle School



#### Designated in 2004; Re-Designated 2007, 2010

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### 2009-10 School Statistics

(Source: 2009 NC School Report Card.)

Community: Rural  
Enrollment: 499  
Grade Levels: 6-8  
School Schedule: Traditional

#### Student Demographics

84% White  
11% African American  
3% Hispanic  
1% Native American

45% Free/Reduced Lunch  
1% English Learners

2007 AYP: School of Progress

Met 12 of 17 performance targets

2008 AYP: High Growth, School of Progress

Met 15 of 17 performance targets

2009 AYP: High Growth, School of Progress

Met 17 of 17 performance targets

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

## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Dixon Middle School is located on the coast of North Carolina north of Wilmington. This school of about 500 students is an old, but well cared for school, and is an important part of the community.

### Academic Excellence

- The five teams at Dixon Middle meet weekly to collaborate in decision-making about strategic planning, instructional lessons and units, educational initiatives, utilizing data, safety initiatives, and professional development.
- Two Saturday School opportunities are provided each nine weeks for students to make up instructional time due to absences. Students are also provided opportunities to make up instructional time after the school day.

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### **Academic Excellence *(Continued)***

- Teachers plan and implement thematic integrated lessons. The 6<sup>th</sup> grade team has two thematic units—Medieval Times and Beach Scavenger Hunt. The 7<sup>th</sup> grade team teaches Dragonwings, a unit on Chinese culture. They also teach C.A.T.C.H., an aquatic unit, which culminates in a chartered fishing trip. The 8<sup>th</sup> grade team teaches a thematic unit on aviation.
- In the AIG program, the math curriculum is compacted at each grade level. Students have the opportunity to “compact out” of the curriculum they feel they have already mastered and move on to new, more challenging goals in math. Students who choose to “compact out” are given a study guide with specific goals from the NCSCOS. Once students are comfortable with the material, they take a pre-test. If students score an “A” on the material, they have proven mastery. Students have a choice in their learning.

### **Developmental Responsiveness**

- Dixon has expanded our advisory class from 10 minutes to 40 minutes. They have named it the E.A.C.H. class (E—EOG Preparation, A—Advisory, C—Character Education, and H—Higher Order Thinking Skills and Healthy Child). During this time frame, we cover reading, vocabulary, walking, brain gym, rules, character education, and advisory team building. At Dixon Middle, E.A.C.H. child matters.
- The PAXTON Action Lab makes connections across several disciplines. Each module incorporates math, science, computer technology, and writing activities which support both the North Carolina as well as National Education Standard Courses of Study. This highly student-centered learning system provides relevance to students in terms of personal interests, important concepts, and real-world problems.

### **Social Equity**

- The school has implemented the AVID program in order to reach those students who have the ability to go on and become successful college graduates if they are properly motivated, and if they are supplied with the necessary success skills, such as Cornell note taking.
- Students have the opportunity to select 3 of their 4 electives. (Health and PE are required of all students.)
- Each team has an incentive program for rewarding student success in academics, behavior, character, and attendance.
- The PTO has developed into a very active organization that supports our academic efforts through monetary and physical support. The organization has donated globes for the entire social studies department. They are currently working on the same project for the science department. The group is also working toward purchasing wall maps for the social studies department. One member has donated a NC map program for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. They are spearheading a calculator drive to equip each student with his/her own individual calculator.

### **Organizational Support**

- DMS is involved in a project called Safe and Civil Schools. The purpose of this project is to enable DMS to develop into a safe, civil, and productive school. To this end, they have selected a Safe & Civil committee who have received extensive training and continue to participate in training

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**Organizational Support (*Continued*)**

throughout the year. This committee then provides training and updates for the rest of the faculty. DMS has developed Guidelines for Success for our school as part of this program. These are guidelines that students, faculty, and staff live by each day. The guidelines are part of the handbook and are posted frequently throughout the school. Students know these guidelines by heart and have developed posters, drawings, and have even written a unique rap about the guidelines.

- Dixon Middle School has made a commitment to ensuring our staff is provided with leading edge professional development in the area of technology. They have an Instructional Technology Facilitator who provides professional staff development in instructional computer programs, technology equipment, and lesson development and implementation for integrating technology across the curriculum.