



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

Durant Road Middle School



Designated in 2003; Re-Designated 2006, 2009

Durant Road Middle School • Wake County Schools •
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2009-10 School Statistics

(Source: 2009 NC School Report Card.)

Community: Suburban
Enrollment: 1075
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Year-Round, Multi-Track

Student Demographics

56% White
32% African American
11% Hispanic
3% Asian

28% Free/Reduced Lunch
7% English Learners

2007 AYP: High Growth, School of Distinction
Met 28 of 33 performance targets

2008 AYP: High Growth, School of Progress
Met 33 of 37 performance targets

2009 AYP: Expected Growth, School of Distinction
Met 33 of 33 performance targets

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

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Durant Road is a large school of about 1200 students that has an unmistakable "sense of smallness." The school is a multi-track, year-round school, and manages to create small learning communities through very strong team identities. The school has received much attention for its success with students, but is not content to be "merely excellent." Every person in the building, from the principal to the teachers, support staff, and custodial staff, are aware of his or her role in making a great place even better for the adults and children there. A sign in the office reads, "*Power is information in the hands of the many.*" This statement is taken to heart here, and is key to Durant Road's ability to sustain a trajectory of improvement.

Academic Excellence

- The number of students performing at level one and two (below state proficiency) has been cut in half over the last three years while the composite score has risen from 86% into the 90's.
- The administration, teachers, staff, and students all demonstrate very high expectations for themselves and others.

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Academic Excellence *(continued)*

- Strong commitment to literacy, with writing across the curriculum very evident.
- Strong, effective use of student-led conferencing.
- As a multi-track, year-round school, there is amazing alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Excellent articulation between elementary and high school with a strong transition plan in place.
- There is a very high level of integration between core and elective classes.
- With the demands of a multi-track schedule, effective use of time is evident.
- Data is examined constantly and is effectively used to drive instruction

Developmental Responsiveness

- Teachers make use of the wealth of second-language students and their families and integrate numerous cultural experiences into the curriculum. English Language Learners are an important part of the school community.
- We asked a number of students whom they would go to for help/support. Students had difficulty identifying ONLY one person--very strong use of support services for students.
- There is a tremendous sense of pride evident throughout the building. Despite the huge number students on campus, the floor were absolutely spotless and there was very little furniture or walls defaced. The head custodian attributes this to "everyone working together--including the kids."
- The school provides numerous opportunities for student exploration (both in class and extra-curricular).
- There is a strong, pervasive Advisory program without an "AA period."
- School-community relationships are strong. Job shadowing, career discussions, and other activities are regular occurrences and built strong public support.
- Despite the inherent difficulties given the size of the school and the distance some families must travel, Durant Road conducts well-attended "parent chats" on the team level.

Social Equity

- Each child in the school feels genuinely valued and a participant in the educational process. There is an extraordinarily high sense of ownership by all students.
- The culture of the school is one that recognizes and celebrates civility. They reward what they value.
- Students used multiple approaches to demonstrate subject mastery in both core and elective classes.
- Learning Styles Inventories are not only given, but also used to develop lessons and meet needs of students.
- Strong Algebra program that provides access for many students of all races/genders.
- Excellent use of teaming to create a identity of "belonging" and "smallness" in a huge school.
- The school has welcomed with open arms students from many countries speaking dozens of languages. Diversity is treated as a real strength here.

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Organizational Support

- There is phenomenal level of organization and leadership evident at all levels of this school--from students to the principal. Everyone knows, and can articulate, the vision of the school.
- Strong business alliance fosters partnerships with business/community not based on financial gifts to the school.
- There is a tremendous sense of accountability for student performance on standardized tests, with ALL students growth and performance disaggregated and analyzed, and used to plan lessons. Students, teachers, teams, and administration are not satisfied with simply "making growth." Despite this awareness, Durant Road is not a school driven by the test.
- Communication is very effective, with very strong use of web pages and e-mail lists. Homework and assignments may be regularly found on well-designed team web pages.
- Professional development is part of the culture. Teachers report that they feel left out if they don't present at conferences, pursue advanced degrees, or National Board Certification. "It's just what we do here. We always want to do our job better."
- Outstanding use of architectural design. The facility is incredibly efficient in design and operation and has been nationally recognized for its state of the art design.
- Communication from school to parents/families is exceptional. Strong use of e-mail lists and web pages is evident. Families who do not have Internet access at home frequently use their computers at work to check up on what's happening. Those who cannot go online receive paper copies of announcements/newsletters.
- Mentoring programs, "e-mentoring" and partnerships with local colleges and universities strengthen the overall program.