



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

John Griffin Middle School



Designated in 2004; Re-Designated 2007, 2010

John Griffin Middle School • Cumberland County Schools
• Cumberland County • North Carolina • Mike Mangum •
5551 Fisher Road, Fayetteville, NC 28304 • Phone (910)
424-7678 • E-mail mmangum@ccs.k12.nc.us • Website
<http://www.jgms.ccs.k12.nc.us/>

2009-10 School Statistics

(Source: 2009 NC School Report Card.)

Community: Urban fringe of a small city
Enrollment: 1394
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Traditional

Student Demographics

50% White
40% African American
8% Hispanic
2% Asian
1% Native American

35% Free/Reduced Lunch
5% English Learners

2007 AYP: School of Progress

Met 26 of 29 performance targets

2008 AYP: High Growth, School of Progress

Met 27 of 29 performance targets

2009 AYP: Expected Growth, School of Progress

Met 29 of 29 performance targets

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

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

John Griffin Middle School is located in the North Carolina Sandhills in a residential neighborhood in Fayetteville. This school of almost 1400 students has a very diverse residential population and does not bus its students. It also has a very diverse faculty and staff.

Academic Excellence

- The school is incredibly strong in student celebrations for meeting numerous academic standards. Photos of recognized individuals and teams were abundant.
- Each classroom had clear goals and objectives posted and reflected in student work.
- Reading and writing were evident in ALL core and elective classes, with a variety of engaging strategies used to foster interest and student interaction.
- Expectations are very high, and discipline is tight, yet there is no evidence of a "test-driven" or oppressive atmosphere. In fact, there is a tremendous sense of collegiality and a very positive school climate.
- Teachers meet regularly to discuss student performance. Each student's progress is benchmarked and reported weekly, with monthly department and grade-level meetings to ensure student success.

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Developmental Responsiveness

- There is an usually civil environment and culture in action here. Students are uncommonly friendly and polite to each other and to the adults in the building.
- There were a plethora of instructional strategies in evidence. The students clearly understood what was going on, and responded appropriately, and it is clearly the way things occur on a daily basis.
- Classes had a definite "real-world" flavor. All teachers had a high level of integration evident in student work on the walls as well as in the observed lessons.
- Students describe (and photos reflect) numerous opportunities for exploration through enrichment and clubs before, during and after school. The principal reports that the school is "pretty empty on Sundays, but that's about it."
- There is an active Principal's Advisory Committee that has utilized student voice and input to make several changes in schedule and activities. The student council is strong.
- Volunteers are often in the building, and families and the local business community are frequently engaged in school activities. For example, at the beginning of the year, an activity bus is parked out front on "Back to School" night with a "Fill the Bus" challenge issued. The community brings in enough supplies to fill the bus-the contents of which are disbursed to the various teams.
- Students have numerous clubs and teams, and a no-cut "Pep Squad". Students on the Forensics Team (joined by application) prepare and produce the morning video announcements.

Social Equity

- There are clear-cut and well-understood expectations for everyone in the building. The faculty is dedicated to success for EVERY student.
- All students voiced the same positive feelings about their school. There is a fair amount of socioeconomic diversity, with clear evidence of some "haves" and "have-nots." There was a pervasive attitude throughout the school of RESPECT towards all.
- On a parent "Shadow Day," the school had over 350 parents in attendance.
- In the past, we have considered one characteristic of an effective inclusion program to be the inability to pick out the special ed. students. Not only could we not determine the students, we also could not tell which TEACHER was the inclusion teacher.
- "Students are very comfortable discussing their school. Mutual respect is clearly evident.

Organizational Support

- The staff reflects the racial/ethnic diversity of the community with tremendous racial diversity. It has a number of teachers who have come from other parts of the country (and two international teachers) to be a part of its faculty. There are few lateral entry teachers.
- There is a strong School Improvement Team (headed this year by an elective teacher), with a strong committee structure in place.
- There is a very high level of accountability for the adults and students in the building. EVERY student has a portfolio that goes home weekly benchmarking progress toward quarterly goals.
- Every child in the building knows his or her goal scores, yet not one student expressed anxiety about it. When asked why, we were told, "We don't worry about it because the teachers will work with us to make our goals."