



NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOLS TO WATCH

MODEL SCHOOL—VISITOR'S GUIDE

Reid Ross Classical School



Designated in 2004; Re-Designated 2007, 2010

Reid Ross Classical School • Cumberland County Schools
• Cumberland County • North Carolina • Margaret
Sessoms, Principal • 3200 Ramsey Street, Fayetteville,
NC 28301 • Phone (910) 488-8415 • E-mail
mseessoms@ccs.k12.nc.us • Web Site
<http://www.rrcs.ccs.k12.nc.us/>

2009-10 School Statistics

(Source: 2009 NC School Report Card.)

Community: Urban fringe of a small city
Enrollment: 763
Grade Levels: 6-12
School Schedule: Year-Round

Student Demographics

62% African American
32% White
4% Hispanic
2% Asian

44% Free/Reduced Lunch
3% English Learners

2007 AYP: School of Progress

Met 22 of 25 performance targets

2008 AYP: School of Progress

Met 22 of 25 performance targets

2009 AYP: Expected Growth, School of Progress

Met 25 of 25 performance targets

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

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Reid Ross Classical School is located in the North Carolina Sandhills in the city of Fayetteville. The school of 845 students has a very diverse residential population and does not bus its students. It also has a very diverse faculty and staff with little turnover. The achievement gap has closed significantly, with the typical gap from 0 to 5 points. The most unusual thing about Reid Ross is that it houses separate middle and high school programs—each of which augments and supports the other.

Academic Excellence

- There is a weekly growth test for each child that is teacher created and based on the curriculum standards. Every student charts individual performance, and class performance is also charted.
- When asked about the pressure to perform, one student replied, "It's like washing your hands... it's automatic and no big deal." The principal passes out each class' test results.
- Students understand what they are being taught, and how it fits into the larger picture.
- Students have tremendous support in achieving, with students and teachers in the building from 6:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m.
- Having the high school staff meet regularly with the middle school staff, there is tremendous vertical and horizontal articulation.

Developmental Responsiveness

- There is an unusually civil environment and culture in action. Students are uncommonly friendly and polite to each other and to the adults in the building. There is an intense drive to succeed, but it plays out like a team where each member is exhorted by the others to be their best. At this school it is cool to be smart.
- The school has uniforms, which is an effective leveler between "haves" and "have not's," but it must be noted that the uniform requirements (no jeans, no sneakers, etc.) are sufficiently broad enough to allow for individual style. The wearing of uniforms was a complete non-issue to students.
- There is a tremendous use of the arts throughout the school. Students even perform at local weddings!
- Teachers do an exceptional job of making connections across disciplines. One of the finest lessons we've seen in some time on the elements of writing occurred in the social studies class studying NC History.
- There is strong and vocal student council, who has taken ownership of, and pride in, their school.
- Parents and the community are integral parts of the school's every day function.

Social Equity

- While there is an ISS, it is seldom used and the teacher is really a "floater" who helps score the weekly tests. Teachers very clearly feel a need to "take care of their own," and have a long train of interventions before a child is written up and sent to the office.
- Everyone in the building, including support staff, custodians, cafeteria, etc, is committed to high achievement for EVERY student.
- The staff is very diverse, and reflects the student population.
- There is a community service requirement at each grade-increasing in hours from 6th to 12th grade. Service is part of the culture of the school.
- There is a high level of inclusion for special needs students. Gifted students also are accelerated. Honors and regular classes are taught together, with honors students having an additional project requirement.

Organizational Support

- There is a very clear sense that everyone in the building knows and articulates the vision of the school.
- The principal is a visionary leader, but does not exert control in such a manner that the school couldn't continue in her absence. She is collaborative, and her staff is fiercely loyal, as are her students and parents.
- The school is a community of practice. The staff presents regularly both within the state and region, and nationwide.
- The faculty is not only diverse; it is also international in scope.