



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

Mint Hill Middle School



Designated in 2006; Re-Designated 2009

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2011-2013 School Statistics

(Source: 2008 NC School Report Card.)

Community: Suburban
Enrollment: 1232
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Traditional

Student Demographics

51% White
27% African American
11% Hispanic
3% Asian

42% Free/Reduced Lunch
12% English Learners

2006 AYP: School of Distinction

Met 27 of 29 performance targets

2007 AYP: High Growth, School of Distinction

Met 29 of 29 performance targets

2008 AYP: High Growth, School of Progress

Met 32 of 33 performance targets

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

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Mint Hill is a "bedroom community" in the Matthews area east of Charlotte. The school is exceptionally well run from top to bottom, with effective leadership at the office and classroom level, and strong support from central office. It is difficult to engage in a visit from an objective viewpoint because visitors keep finding themselves drawn into the lessons they are observing. Visitors to Mint Hill leave with many, many ideas about how to strengthen their own programs and practices.

Click [here](#) for a PowerPoint presentation on the school from the Closing the Gap Conference.

Academic Excellence

- We can't tell the ability level of the classes, "good to great" is evident across the board
- Vertical & horizontal articulation is evident in departmental and subject-area meetings
- Use of Bloom's Taxonomy is evident in all assignments, strong use of word walls, station teaching, integration of technology, multiple wireless labs, cooperative learning, science labs, and more
- Authentic assessment is the norm, and students use and understand rubrics

(Continued)

Academic Excellence *(continued)*

- Tutoring sessions are offered before and after school and even on Saturdays
- All teachers were teaching different novels, and students have much choice and voice in assignments
- Teachers have very, very high expectations for themselves and their students

Developmental Responsiveness

- Student work and club/sports announcements are everywhere. This is clearly the students' school, and their presence is everywhere
- Students performed a wonderful welcome skit/musical that was written and directed by their own class. Students are able to articulate clearly why the school is a STW
- In every class we observed regular movement between tasks (no 90-minute lectures) and each class engages students in a variety of activities
- Students have many opportunities to voice their opinions and concerns. There are over 80 students in the Student Council--which is set up to be inclusive and is quite effective
- There are many activities and clubs to engage students regardless of interests

Social Equity

- The school has a list of "Non-Negotiables." Chief among them is "All students are scholars." This is deeply embedded in the school culture
- Classes are rigorous and challenging for ALL students
- The staff of the school is diverse and reflects the makeup of the students
- The school has multiple forms of student behavior management and does not "warehouse" students in In-School Suspension
- Students and families are clearly a part in planning the direction and vision for the school

Organizational Support

- "Good to Great" is found throughout the building. Their mission statement is posted on every hallway
- Vision is not top-down, but is shared. There is much individual autonomy within well-defined structures
- Administrators engage in periodic 4 min. walk-throughs of classes to look for specific criteria. This is done with a "coaching," not "Gotcha!" spirit
- Parents and the community are not just welcome, they are expected to be part of the team in planning for student and school success
- Assessment is well-organized, and there is frequent benchmarking to check student progress