



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

Rugby Middle School



Designated in 2003; Re-Designated 2006, 2009

Rugby Middle School • Henderson County Schools •
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2009-10 School Statistics

(Source: 2009 NC School Report Card.)

Community: Rural
Enrollment: 847
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Traditional

Student Demographics

90% White
6% African American
3% Hispanic
1% Asian

28% Free/Reduced Lunch
3% English Learners

2007 AYP: School of Excellence

Met 16 of 17 performance targets

2008 AYP: High Growth, School of Distinction

Met 18 of 19 performance targets

2009 AYP: High Growth, School of Distinction

Met 21 of 21 performance targets

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

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Rugby Middle School is located in western North Carolina just south of Asheville. This school of about 850 students is on a plateau between the Blue Ridge and Smoky Mountains, and is an important part of the Hendersonville community.

Academic Excellence

- The student literacy magazine had over 800 entries for the last issue--more entries than the school has students.
- High standards are evident not only for performance on End of Grade and End of Course Tests, but also for personal and academic growth in ALL areas.
- There were numerous examples of shared inquiry, Socratic dialogue, differentiated instruction, and multiple intelligences observed on all teams.
- It is clear that the staff believes in doing whatever is needed to help kids succeed. Enrichment and remediation happen before school, after school, and on Saturdays. Sunday morning is about the only time no one is in the building.

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Academic Excellence *(continued)*

- Teams are strong and cohesive, with an exceptional concern for the involvement of exploratory teachers-none of us can recall seeing a stronger exploratory program for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders.

Developmental Responsiveness

- Rugby takes meeting its students' needs seriously. All students are eager to talk about how good their school is, and how much they enjoy being there. The school feels warm, safe, and inviting.
- Referrals to guidance/support services are numerous. The teachers really know their kids, and all students responded with a multitude of names when asked, "Whom would you go to with a problem?"
- The school is closely tied to the community, and is involved in many service projects-often at the initiation of the students. Candlesticks were being made in shop class for the battered women's shelter, boxes of goodies were being prepared (along with some nice writing that the students didn't seem to realize they were doing) for the "old folks' home," box tops, pop-tops, etc. were also being collected. We saw close to a dozen activities that tied the students to their community.
- As mentioned before, one of this school's great strengths is the way it provides for genuine exploration and real-world connections.
- Student leaders routinely call on local businesses, and the business community responds.
- Clubs and sports abound at Rugby. There is a "no-cut" policy for some sports, and a "fifth quarter" to increase participation.

Social Equity

- There are clear-cut and well-understood expectations for everyone in the building. The faculty is dedicated to success for EVERY student.
- There is a pervasive attitude throughout the school of respect for all, not just tolerance.
- Parents constantly come in and out of the building, and express that they feel welcome.
- The school recognizes achievement, but also celebrates growth, character, and achievement in non-tested areas.
- Student voices are heard and valued through a VERY strong student council. There is discussion regarding involving students on the School Improvement Team.
- Discipline issues are, in the overwhelming majority, taken care of "in-house" by individual teachers and teams. Office referrals are scarce, and on our second day, we finally found one student in In-School Suspension. Teachers referred to their belief in "taking care of their own" and were reluctant to refer students to the office. Teachers meet frequently with students, and go directly to parents with many issues/concerns.

Organizational Support

- Shared leadership is clearly evident at Rugby. Teachers, staff, and administrators do whatever is necessary, with many people taking charge at appropriate times. The list of "key contacts" for various programs/events at Rugby was two pages long, and included administrators, teachers, staff, and students.

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Organizational Support *(continued)*

- The School Improvement Team is strong, properly selected, and includes two parents. In addition, the administration meets regularly with their "Parent Advisory Council" comprised of parents of 6th, 7th, and 8th graders.
- Rugby is definitely a "community of practice." As one team member put it, Rugby "goes beyond rhetoric to reality."
- One of Rugby's great strengths is that it refuses to let high-stakes testing get in the way of a rich teaching and learning experience.
- The staff reflects the racial/ethnic diversity of the community, and has a number of teachers who have come from other parts of the country to be a part of its faculty.