



DURHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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CONTACT: Dr. Terri Mozingo, Chief Academic Officer
Instructional Services, 560-2027

Drew Sawyer, Principal
Rogers-Herr Middle School, 560-3970

Rogers-Herr Middle School receives prestigious national recognition

DURHAM—Rogers-Herr Middle School is one of only three schools in North Carolina to receive a prestigious national honor for excellence, and the third Durham Public Schools middle school in two years to do so.

Rogers-Herr has been named a School to Watch by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. The organization cites middle schools that display high standards of academic excellence, responsiveness to the needs and interests of young adolescents and commitment to helping all students achieve at high levels. In addition, each school has strong leadership, teachers who work together to improve curriculum and instruction, and a commitment to assessment and accountability in order to bring about continuous improvement.

In 2007, Shepard and Carrington Middle Schools were two of nine North Carolina middle schools to receive the honor. The other two North Carolina middle schools honored this year are Kernersville Middle School in Winston-Salem/Forsyth Schools and West Pine Middle School in Moore County Schools.

“We are very excited about this award. Rogers-Herr Middle School has a very strong and committed staff and so much incredible support from our parents,” said Principal Drew Sawyer. “We work together very hard as a team to ensure that our students receive the highest quality of instruction possible, with the necessary support to make it happen.”

Sawyer attributes Rogers-Herr’s selection to:

- A sharpened focus around expectations for student learning and clear assessments of what they have learned. This includes the utilization of the Riverdeep Instructional Organizer to help in lesson planning, along with quarterly benchmark assessments. In addition, the school’s Core Plus program offers extra support for students who need it.
- A “collaborative culture” among faculty members. Teachers of the same grade and/or subject area meet weekly to plan and strategize. Each grade level has a common, 90-minute planning period.

GOALS for 2007: 95% of third-graders reading proficiently Eliminating the Achievement Gap

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- Developmental responsiveness. Rogers-Herr has a strong program that helps ease the transition for students from elementary to middle school. This includes a separate 6th-grade orientation, along with “Friday Folders,” a creative communication piece that goes home to parents weekly. In addition, counselors and teachers work closely with students throughout their 8th-grade year to ensure that the transition to high school will be just as smooth.
- A strong Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) program. The school has a lead AIG teacher who works closely to support other teachers and students, and in the Core Plus program.
- Support for keeping students in school. Rogers-Herr has a relatively low suspension rate. This is due largely to the “Capturing Kids’ Hearts” program, which builds relationships among teachers and students; a “Positive Referral” system where teachers refer a student to the office for positive behaviors such as showing leadership, helping someone out, improving behavior or grades; and a Positive Alternatives to School Suspensions (PASS) program, in which students who have made poor behavior choices spend their assigned time working on class work, reflecting on the choices that they made, and are counseled on how to make better choices.

“We have always known that Rogers-Herr Middle School was a national model, and now so does the rest of the country,” said Superintendent Carl Harris. “We are extremely proud of Rogers-Herr’s teachers, students, parents, principal and community supporters. The fact that we now have three nationally honored middle schools is a true testament to the realization that our middle school improvement efforts over the last several years are showing great success.”

Launched in 1999, Schools to Watch began as a program to identify middle grades schools across the country that were meeting or exceeding a set of strict criteria for excellence. The Forum developed a Web site (<http://www.schoolstowatch.org>) featuring online tours of schools, as well as detailed information about the selection criteria used in the recognition program.

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform is an alliance of 65 educators, researchers, national associations and officers of professional organizations and foundations dedicated to improving education in the middle grades.

“We’re so proud of the commitment of Durham Public Schools to excellence in their middle schools,” said John Harrison, President of the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. “The hard work is really paying off!”

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