

# VIRGINIA SCHOOLS TO WATCH

## MODEL SCHOOL—VISITOR'S GUIDE

### Rachel Carson Middle School



#### Designated in 2004; Redesignated 2007

Rachel Carson Middle School • District: Fairfax County Public Schools • County: Fairfax • State: Virginia • Principal: August Frattali • 13618 McLearen Road, Herndon, Virginia 20171 • Phone (703) 925-3600, E-mail [affrattali@fcps.edu](mailto:affrattali@fcps.edu)

### 2005-07 School Statistics

Community: Rachel Carson is one of 22 middle schools in the Fairfax County Public School system. Fairfax is the largest school district in the state of Virginia and is the 13<sup>th</sup> largest in the United States.

Enrollment: 1,180 students

Grade Levels: 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>

School Schedule: 8 periods per day - non-block schedule

#### Student Demographics

5% Hispanic  
57% White  
6% African American  
26% Asian  
6% Other  
6.6% Free/Reduced Lunch  
2.95% English Learners

2005 AYP: Fully Accredited

2006 AYP: Fully Accredited

2007 AYP: Fully Accredited

## School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

### Academic Excellence

- Staff selected, not just for their knowledge of content area, but also for their enthusiasm for children and a passion for learning
- Providing necessary support for students in their learning
- Rigorous class offering to include algebra, geometry, foreign language, and gifted and talented and honor offerings
- Applied active reading and writing strategies across the curriculum
- Instructional decisions based on multiple data sources
- Focus on teaching strategies that are research based and have a high impact on student learning – Marzano Strategies, Kagan Strategies
- Teachers encourage the use of many tools to promote a deep understanding of the knowledge, concepts, and skill to be successful, such as portfolios, interactive notebooks, wide array of instructional technology, and Socratic seminars.
- Integrated technology that enhances instruction and prepares the students for future learning and professions
- In conjunction with the FCPS Office of Middle School Instruction, developed a walkthrough observation tool to monitor instruction and identify areas for school improvement
- Extended learning time – Learning Seminars, after-school programs, and Saturday programs

(Continued)

### **Developmental Responsiveness**

- School environment that welcomes students' parents and makes them a part of the learning process
- School Plan that addresses academic achievement, life skills, and responsibility to the community (FCPS School Board's Student Achievement Goals)
- A school counseling staff that is assigned to specific teams as an active member and is responsive to student and staff needs
- Individual Learning Plans to meet targeted needs for identified students, based on math and reading Standards of Learning assessments
- Physical education curriculum that focuses on fitness and health components that lead students to make good choices for healthy lifestyles
- A stimulating elective program in the fine and practical arts
- Required service learning projects that give back to the community and provide students with a sense of ownership and belonging
- Career activities that allow students to make connections with their interests and to set goals
- A myriad of clubs and activities after school five times per week that allow students to explore interests and receive academic support

### **Social Equity**

- Student recognition programs that provide the staff with many opportunities to recognize students' academic growth and positive contributions
- Events and open houses at school that feature student work, presentations, and performances that target all parents to forge strong bonds between home and school.
- Seek opportunities to celebrate all cultures that are represented in our school
- Special Education Department that offers a full continuum of services and has been recognized for their unique teaming classroom strategies and inclusive practices
- Inclusive ESOL where team teaching is integrated in interdisciplinary teams
- "Summer Institute" for students identified as at-risk by feeder elementary schools designed to boost math and English skills
- After-school programs that offer a wide range of activities that attract students with varying interests, such as STEP Team, Model UN, International Club, College Partnership, etc.

### **Organizational Support**

- Interdisciplinary teams modeled on Middle School Philosophy and NASSP *Breaking Ranks* recommendations
- Common group of students for the four core subject areas
- Team of teachers meet twice a week to discuss student issues and build a sense of school community
- Professional Learning Communities – grade-level departments are provided common planning time to agree on content, pacing, data analysis, and common assessments
- Collaborative leadership model which embraces teacher leadership in school planning and decision-making
- Regular consultation and partnering with central office specialists on instructional initiatives
- Students have twenty-five minutes per day to participate in Learning Seminars where they can begin their homework, get support from their teachers, Sustained Silent Reading Activities, and team driven activities
- Support staff (clerical, custodial, cafeteria employees) that take pride in their work and contribute positively to the school climate and learning environment