Rachel Carson Middle School

Re-Designated IV in 2017

Rachel Carson Middle School • Fairfax County Public Schools • Fairfax County, VA • Gordon Stokes, Principal • 13618 McLearen Rd., Herndon, VA 20171 • Tel (703) 925-3600, Fax (703) 925-3697
https://carsonms.fcps.edu/

2016-17 School Statistics

Community: Suburban Washington D.C., northern VA
Enrollment: 1534
Grade Levels: 7-8
School Schedule: Modified Block

Student Demographics (based on 15-16 school year)
- 35.7% White
- 8.8% Hispanic
- 6.7% African American
- 43% Asian
- 5.8% Other
- 10.9% Economically Disadvantaged
- 8.4% Special Education
- 4.9% English Language Learners

Fully Accredited by VDOE

Results from Spring 2016 SOL tests (from VDOE School Report Card)

Math Pass Rate	93%
Reading Pass Rate	98%
Science Pass Rate	95%
Writing Pass Rate	92%
History/Social Science Pass Rate	99%

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

- "Vision in Progress" statement: offers guiding principles for academic, social-emotional, extracurricular, and community-related planning and actions at the school. Focus on promoting 21st century skills (collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, and communication). Additionally, vision statement creates ideal for celebrating our diverse and innovative learning community.
- Project Based Learning (PBL) is a structure with which the staff has engaged in ongoing professional development. PBL promotes student inquiry, research, as well as voice and choice in their display of learning. Most curricular areas have implemented multiple PBL units. Additionally, performance tasks are a common practice in all curricular areas.
- Panther Time: 30 minute period which meets four times per week. Students use opportunity to receive academic support from teachers. Students can also use time to collaborate with classmates, work on assignments, visit the library, and gather other resources. Teachers use the time to conduct targeted intervention with small student groups.
- Collaborative Learning Teams (CLT) engage in a collaborative learning cycle of unpacking standards, planning instruction and assessment, sharing teaching practices, and reflecting upon student outcomes. Common planning time allows for CLTs meet weekly.
- Multiple elective courses: The elective offerings cater to a wide range of student interests. Over half of the student population is enrolled in a music elective (band, orchestra, and chorus). These programs continually receive recognition of excellence in spring assessments. In addition, many students explore other fine arts by enrolling in art, computers in art, and theatre courses. There is a high interest in STEAM-related courses. Students can take engineering, computer solutions, and digital input courses.

Students also explore cooking, sewing, and healthy lifestyle choices through Family and Consumer Sciences.

- Academic support courses: Teachers, counselors, and administrators analyze different data points to determine if students require additional academic support. For students where particular learning needs are present, interventions such as Read180 and Power Math provide focused intervention during the school year. Frequently, information is shared between core and support class teachers in order to further assist the student. Teachers also use Panther Time and after school sessions to provide additional practice opportunities for students.

Developmental Responsiveness

- Interdisciplinary teams: Teachers from the four core subjects and one school counselor share a group of students. Teams allow for students to have a "home" within the school and find connections with fellow students and staff members. Teachers communicate to create team-building activities and share academic supports. Administrators work with specific teams, which assists with enhancing knowledge of student needs.
- Use of collaborative and interactive instructional technology. Teachers view the use of technology through a blended learning mindset – accessing a variety of instructional practices where different tools are used to achieve learning outcomes. Students frequently use Google Tools to work collaboratively on projects, share their work with teachers, and create original, multimedia presentations. Teachers post assignments and resources on the Blackboard 24/7 platform and through Google Classroom. In many classrooms, students have 1:1 or 2:1 access to laptops or other technology tools.
- Projects that tap into student interest: "Passion projects" – students conduct independent research and complete a presentation for a self-selected topic that relates to a particular content area.
- Support for student developmental needs: School counselors lead small groups designed to target topics such as organization, study skills, effective communication, and academic counseling. Additionally, counselors spearhead a school-wide Wellness Week, depression screening intervention, and bullying and harassment prevention lessons.

Social Equity

- A robust after school program. All students can access a multitude of academic and extracurricular opportunities. Academic supports include working with a teacher for direct support, small group sessions, or Extended Learning Opportunity (where students can complete assignments in a supervised setting). In the extracurricular realm, students can take part in intramural athletics, clubs (chess, art, game making), and STEAM-related clubs.
- Veterans Day program: The Social Studies department coordinates an annual celebration of veterans. On November 11, both active duty and retired veterans are invited to a reception at the school. These veterans also share their experiences with students in small group discussions. Over 50 veterans attended the November 2016 program.
- Parent liaison: This staff member provides resources and supports for families in our community. The liaison can connect families with county-based social service programs and other options in the local community. Our liaison also hosts family events where information is available and communication is provided in multiple languages.
- Student of The Month: Teachers from all teams and electives recognize two students each month for their academic growth and display of positive citizenship at the school.
- National Junior Honor Society recognizes students for their academic excellence. Students inducted into NJHS provide ongoing community service to the school during their 8th grade year.
- Student Ambassador Program: 8th grade students are selected to provide guidance and leadership while acting as a welcoming group and tour guides for visiting students and families. Students who demonstrate leadership qualities, but who do not often take part in official leadership programs, are invited to become an ambassador.

- Restorative Justice Practices: Administrators champion the use of restorative justice as a practice to help students reflect upon situations when disagreements or minor conflicts occur and use this forum to build understanding and reconciliation when possible.
- Mentoring program: Selected students are paired with an adult in the school. This relationship provides the student with an adult with whom they can have ongoing conversations and a connection for academic and social support.

Organizational Support
- All CLTs and departments set SMARTR goals designed to target areas for continued student growth and achievement. Instructional strategies, assessments, and interventions are developed to help students improved in focused areas. Administrators work with teams to implement and refine SMARTR goals.
- The master schedule for the school allows for teachers to have common planning time with both their CLT and interdisciplinary teams.
- Incorporation of staff voice and perspectives into decision making. The school's leadership team is made up of team leaders, department chairs and the school administration. This team meets monthly to discuss and plan for ongoing student needs and school-wide policies. Ongoing professional development is planned by a team of teachers and administrators. Sessions occur during faculty meetings and during county-wide strategic planning days. These learning sessions strive to highlight work being performed by staff members that aligns with our school vision and instructional goals.
- Multiple modes of communication with our community. A weekly e-newsletter is sent home, highlighting important events and deadlines, as well as detailing important occurrences at school. The school's website provides vital information about course offerings, daily schedules, student performance, and helpful links for parents. The school's Twitter feed offers snapshots into the daily life of students and teachers. Parents can view information about their student's grades, course information, and emergency contacts through an online parent portal. Teachers provide continuous updates about grades and assignments through this portal.
- All staff members who are new to the building are paired with a veteran teacher mentor. This relationship provides the new teacher with a point of contact throughout their first year. The mentor can answer questions about procedures in the building and provide another familiar face as the new staff member gets acclimated to the school.
- Parent information sessions: During the school year, a variety of events intended specifically for parents are held. During February, a rising 7th grade parent orientation is held. This evening features presentations from the administration, core and elective department chairs, and student musical performances. The event welcomes parents and provides a host of information about the offerings at Rachel Carson. During the school year, the Student Services department hosts parent coffees. Parents join counselors, specialists, and administrators to engage in learning and dialogue about different topics (student mental health, use of technology, transition from elementary to middle school).