

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL TO WATCH



Palmetto Middle School

2016 School Statistics

(Source: Enter name of data source for stats listed below.)

Community: City/Urban
Enrollment: 747
Grade Levels: 6-8
School Schedule: Traditional

Student Demographics

8%	Hispanic
84%	White
5%	African American
0.5%	American Indian (Native American)
64%	Free/Reduced Lunch
5%	English Learners



Designated in 2008; Re-Designated in 2011, 2014 and 20167 Palmetto Middle School •
Anderson School District One • Anderson County •
South Carolina • Principal, Barry Knight • 803 North
Hamilton Street, Williamston, SC
• Phone (864)847-4333
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School Web Site: <http://www.anderson1.k12.sc.us/pmms>

School Characteristics and Replicable Practices

Academic Excellence

Recent School Initiatives:

- *Block Scheduling* provides students with additional instructional time for English Language Arts and mathematics. Palmetto Middle School was three years ahead of the game when the Read to Succeed passed mandatory requirements for 90 minutes of instruction in these areas.
- Teachers have received training in all aspects of *technology integration*. In addition to our district's Digital Innovation initiative and monthly training sessions from our instructional technologist, teachers have also implemented web-based programs such as Defined STEM, Waggle, and Gizmos to enhance instruction and remediate/accelerate students according to their specific needs.
- Our *Gifted and Talented* program has been completely revamped to maximize student inquiry through a project-based STEM curriculum under the instruction of a highly trained GTT instructor. With a completely renovated and reorganized classroom and the addition of 30 new computers, students have the latest technology to effectively access information and space for completion of advanced activities and projects such as app creation, coding, and automative systems. *ProTeam*, *Honors Algebra I*, *Honors English I/II Blend*, as well as advanced classes at each grade level, are designed to meet the needs of our academically gifted students.
- All self-contained, resource, and ESL students needing extra support in reading fluency and comprehension were granted seats in the *Read 180* or *System 44* program. Teachers of these classes have been trained in this specialized curriculum as well as goal-setting, progress monitoring, and the use of data to promote student improvement.
- *Production Technology* has become a big focus at Palmetto Middle, as we have upgraded sound and video systems in the auditorium and gymnasium. We have also added two new digital publication classes that give students the opportunity to create, produce, and distribute a daily news show and bi-weekly school newspaper. Additionally, our media center has received a face lift to provide students with a welcoming atmosphere, upgraded technology, and access to the best and most recent print and digital literacy sources.

- *Intervention Funds* have been utilized in a variety of ways over the past three years. Two gender-based after-school programs were created for at-risk students that focused on academic and soft skills in addition to offering a mentoring component. Additional personnel were also provided to teacher to assist them in the execution of differentiated instruction and provide small-group or one-on-one instruction to struggling students.
- Our *Related Arts/Exploratory Program* has been totally revamped to offer updated courses and allow student choice in their electives. Teachers of these classes prepare course descriptions and recruitment videos to share with students before they make their decisions in the spring regarding course selection for the upcoming year.

Refined Existing Initiatives

- *SBG (Standards Based Grading)* is the driving force behind not only what we do, but why we do! Our teachers are solidly behind the concept of holding all students accountable for their learning based on South Carolina College and Career Standards as well as the Profile of the South Carolina graduate. Last year we hosted district and school representatives from Greenville County School District to explain the tenets and setup of our system and assist them in the beginning of their own implementation.
- *L.I.F.T. (Letting Individuals Fine-Tune)*: Identified students are LIFTed weekly based on formative/summative assessment scores, remediation, make-up instruction, and/or teacher recommendation to allow students extra time to master standards currently being taught in the classroom.
- *SSR (Silent Sustained Reading)* Daily, each grade has 15-20 minutes of *Silent Sustained Reading* for self-selected materials; this is an addition to the emphasis placed on reading before school. To enhance our reading opportunities for reluctant readers, we initiated an audio-book session in several

classes in each grade level. This allows the non-reader and slow reader to follow along in the book while listening to the book being read.

- *Second Chance* meets after school on Thursdays and students use this opportunity to retake summative assessments to show proficiency of material. The program is administered by our principal.
- *Academic Enrichment and Study Hall* are programs we have in place to provide assistance to students that have not met the standards. Students performing below expectations on the state assessment and/or classroom objectives are assigned into AE or Study Hall during one related period where they work under the supervision of a teacher to complete assignments and/or practice skills in a web-based program called Waggle.
- *PLCs: Our Professional Learning Communities* have common planning time to develop lesson plans and assessments. These communities also work closely to examine student data.
- Many students show success in areas outside of the traditional academic setting. These students are provided with the opportunity to participate in programs that enhance these skills, including *Advanced Art, Band, Mustang Chorale, Gateway to Technology, and Strings*.

Developmental Responsiveness

The staff at PMS strives to meet the unique and diverse needs of our students. Therefore, the following programs are offered in an attempt to nurture the developmental growth of our students.

- *Guidance Counselors*: Our three guidance counselors serve as adult mentors to students for the three years students are in the middle school. During this time, the counselors build a rapport by meeting with students in a variety of settings. Our guidance department spearheads college and career readiness activities as well as Response to Intervention teams. They also focus on improving students' soft skills such as perseverance, work ethic, and integrity with classroom and small-group

lessons. They lead transition readiness from to and from the middle school by working closely with feeder system elementary schools and high school.

- The *Palmetto Middle School House System* was instituted this year to give students a vertical “family” and offer more opportunities for engagement in school activities. Faculty, staff, and students are “sorted” into one of three houses: Uzwela, Fede, and Cognito. In addition to a schoolwide “House Cup” rivalry and monthly house meetings, the school celebrates each Friday with a different theme, and individual houses offer activities such as service projects, skate nights, and spirit competitions. Our traditional Student Council has transitioned to a “House Council” comprised of three leaders from each house and a tribal council.
- *Beta Club* allow students to participate in leadership roles, make decisions, and invest in the general welfare of the school. These students are extremely influential when it comes to having a positive effect on the school. Over the past three years, our Beta Club has amassed a variety of awards and recognition such as ????
- *Recycling Rangers*: Students with intellectual disabilities and their general-education “PIP Pals” form our *Recycle Rangers*, a group dedicated to keeping our school clean and environmentally friendly as they participate in team building and lifelong learning skills. The school is in the process of submitting a DHEC grant to expand the program and upgrade materials.
- *P.A.L.S. (Partners Assuring Learning Success)* is our character education program. Students meet each month to discuss a variety of topics that are significant and applicable to the needs of our diverse group of students. The Related Arts team prepares break-out sessions that incorporate multiple activities tailored to the unique modalities of learners.
- *Breakfast in the Classroom* provides the nutritional needs of our students and helps accelerate the learning process at the start of the school day.

- *Science Olympiad, Robotics Club, the Olweus anti-bullying program, and the Jason Flatt Law* work collectively to support a curriculum that is both socially significant and relevant to the personal interests and needs of young adolescents. In the spring of 2016, our induction Robotics team won first place at the Vex Robotics World Competition in Louisville.
- The former *Career Action Plan for Students (CAPS)* has been updated to *Plan of Action Toward High School (PATHS)*. This change allowed for a more age-appropriate discussion with students and parents regarding middle school coursework, high school preparation, and career awareness.

Our staff develops alliances with families and stakeholders to enhance and support the well-being of the children, which is a key component to academic achievement.

- At the end of each school year, parents are informed of dates and times for *Registration and Open House*. All parents and students are asked to attend a registration event to complete yearly paperwork and visit representatives from the various support systems within our school. To ease transition, sixth grade students and parents are invited to attend an ice-cream social where they meet teachers, visit classrooms, and practice lockers. Within the first weeks of school, a school wide open house is held where we offer a free hotdog supper, open classrooms, and invite students and their families to tour the school, meet teachers, and get a sample of what's happening in the classrooms.
- The following modes of *communication* are utilized to keep parents informed of student activities: Various forms of social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, school website), Palmetto Praise postcards, telephone calls, e-mail updates, Remind text updates, and progress reports. *Blackboard Connect*, an automated phone call or text message, is also used to notify parent(s) when the need arises.
- *We're All in This Together* – School Improvement Committee / Parent Teacher Student Organization and faculty members are working to create opportunities for parents and the community to become

an integral part of our school life. These groups are encouraged to volunteer, join the PTSO, and become active members in SIC.

- *Palmetto Partners* allows stakeholders within our community to support our school and make an investment in our students by providing donations and/or student incentives. Our PTSO contacts individuals and businesses within our area to explain the program and what we are able to offer in return. We recognize and feature our them as a "PBIS Palmetto Partner" on our digital marquee, weekly updates, student-created thank you, and full page spread in our yearbook.
- In order to develop a sense of community service, students who wish to be recognized as one of our *Palmetto's Finest* are required to conduct ten hours of community service each quarter. Students must maintain a proficiency of eighty percent or higher, receive no demerits, and have less than two absences per nine weeks.
- *Meals On Wheels* is supported by our school by student volunteers. Our students deliver meals each week and this service gives our students an overall feeling 'of doing for others.'
- Through *Beta Club's First Friday Food Drive*, parents donate food and household items for families within our school and community. These monthly food drives generate tremendous responses from parents.
- Our school counselors realize that many girls in the middle school lack a positive outlook and self-esteem, yet longed to be successful in all areas of their life. A *Girl's Night Out* was planned for the following reasons: to give our girls a place just to be themselves, to hear from their peers and mentors, and to spend time with other girls just being girls. During the Girl's Night Out, a service project was completed to let them know that it is always important to give to others. Various speakers talked with the girls about self-esteem and what it means to be a girl on a mission. Our girls really enjoy this night, and is now an annual event.

- *ESPN (E*Extra *S*upport *P*rovided *N*ow) is not a sports channel. It is, however, an opportunity for students having difficulty to be assigned to a study hall classroom to keep up with classwork/homework, organization skills, progress monitoring, and goal-setting.
- *Mentor Anderson* works with the guidance department at Palmetto Middle School to promote the development of our mentoring program by recruiting and training mentors, providing resources and support to mentors, and enlisting community involvement. The goal of this program is to support as many children as possible through positive, real one-on-one relationships.
- *Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools* is an education and sports based strategy powered by an engaged youth community that increases athletic and leadership opportunities for students with and without intellectual disabilities, while creating communities of acceptance for all. Palmetto Middle was named a Project UNIFY school in 2015 and received grant funding to operate special programs within our school.
- *Unified Physical Education* is a class designed for students with a firm grasp on basic sport skills who are interested in developing leadership skills and learning to work with special populations. Students enrolled in Unified PE are paired/grouped with students with intellectual and/or physical disabilities. As a pair, students develop skills in various sports and finish each unit with a tournament.

Social Equity

All students, regardless of learning levels, deserve equal access to highly qualified teachers. Our teachers and support staff are certified and trained to work with adolescents.

- Teachers meet routine for team, grade, and subject area planning. Professional collaboration during these meetings yields more rigorous learning opportunities for our students. Common assessments

are created and modified by the PLC for students being served in special education, ESL, and our gifted population.

- Our children with disabilities comprise thirteen percent of our total population. Mainstreaming, Content Mastery, and Read 180, System 44, ALEKS, and Waggle programs help our special education students achieve success in the “real world.” We strive to see the success of these students in the regular classroom by using mainstreaming techniques.
- To meet students’ particular academic needs, specific instruction is provided in our advanced classes of ELA, math, as well as our self-contained special education classes. In all other academic and exploratory classes, our students are grouped heterogeneously. Teams of teachers tailor the curriculum and lessons to fit the needs of the students.
- Teachers have received training in developing lesson plans using Multiple Intelligences Theory practices: differentiated learning, brain-based learning strategies and active learning. These enriched lessons guarantee that each day multiple tactile styles of learning are incorporated for all students. A variety of assessment techniques is used to determine mastery of standards including: rubrics, projects, tests, note-taking, journaling, portfolios, digital storytelling, reviews and mastery units in addition to formative and summative assessments.
- Our classroom curriculum is aligned with South Carolina College and Career Standards. Our curriculum supports lessons being delivered with innovative techniques and strategies that place special emphasis on brain-based learning - the utilization of music, movement, and color. We rotate our academic schedule on a monthly basis so teachers can better meet the needs of their students throughout the school year.
- The *PTSO* participates in school wide functions such as school dances, fundraisers, and special events. They are also a major sponsor of our PBIS “Palmetto Way” and “House System” initiatives.

Parents support our *BETA* club with fall and spring cleanups on campus as well as First Friday Food Drives.

- Our *Thoroughbred Award*, sponsored by our *SIC*, gives each teacher the opportunity to select a student each quarter, recognizing them for sustained achievement, improvement in academics, or for special acts of character. The Thoroughbred Award winners and their families are invited to breakfast in celebration of their accomplishments.
- Firm, fair and consistent discipline is fundamental to making our school campus safe and secure. Established policies which contribute to a positive school climate are written in the handbook and are communicated clearly to the students and parents. Teachers reinforce these rules and classroom procedures throughout the school year. We have seen a major reduction in discipline infractions over the past two years.
- District and school ESL teachers provide community programs and resources for students and parents. Palmetto Middle is currently allotted an ESL teacher three days a week. This teacher works with our *** identified ESL students, assisting them with modifications to the general curriculum, instruction in Read 180, and as needed, utilization of Rosetta Stone software.
- Our full time School Resource Officer is very visible in the school/community and works hard to become a positive force for all students.
- *Palmetto Partnering Project (P3)* Students involved in Palmetto Middle School's P3 program are paired with a student from either Palmetto High School or Palmetto Elementary School. On P3 days, the ESL teacher and P3 sponsor meet with our students and their partners for reading, writing, and fun activities! The buddies also correspond through emails, letters, cards, and pictures.

Organizational Support

One School, One Vision, Our Success. Palmetto Middle's motto seems to say it all. Our belief in this statement radiates throughout everything we do for our students. Our school family agrees that success is becoming the best one can be; this we seek in all we do.

Palmetto Middle School is a dynamic learning community. To continue at this level, we consistently use self-evaluations for educational improvement and adapt to empower student learning, which requires time and commitment. Dedicated to remaining one of the finest middle schools in the state, we seek and give consideration to positive ideas from parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. Groups like the *SIC* and the *PTSO*, along with the results from the state report card surveys, offer insight and perspective for school improvement. The administration and teacher leaders devote their energies and expertise to facilitating improvement. Our stakeholders are steadfast in leading the district and state in learning innovations and achievement.

A school that holds itself accountable is one that states its objectives, assesses its success, and reflects on its achievements. This year, our theme has concentrated on "Change" in education. The imminent arrival of the South Carolina College and Career Readiness standards have necessitated additional changes in the organizational structure of our school. Some of the changes to note are: *Advanced classes* at all grade level in ELA and math, increased participation in Honors level English I/II and Algebra I courses, *Standards Based Grading Policy*, *back-to-back exploratory* classes, and extended class periods for ELA and math.

At the beginning of the year, administrators meet with teachers to discuss the previous year's test results. Teachers reflect upon strengths and weaknesses, and then set goals for the upcoming year. Data is also used with *MAP* testing and student grades on classroom assessments. One of the most important functions of accountability is the administration's formal and informal observations of classroom instruction. Feedback is immediate, and professional discussions follow.

Palmetto Middle School benefits from the support we receive from the board of trustees, the superintendent, and his staff. School level administrators work hand in hand with the staff to assess current programs and to develop new programs that will benefit our students and help us reach our overall goal.

We recognize the importance of being a part of a larger educational partnership. As a means of becoming more successful, teachers and administrators network with other professionals through membership organizations such as *South Carolina Middle School Association, South Carolina International Reading Association, National Council for Teachers of Math, South Carolina Council for Teachers of Math, The Upstate Consortium through Furman University, and Making Middle Grades Work*. These school leaders return to share ideas so everyone can benefit and grow. Presenting at conferences (*SCMSA, SCCTM, SREB, NASSP, NAESP and NMSA*) is yet another opportunity for teachers and administrators to develop professionally. Sharing their work with colleagues is a challenging and enriching experience.

Our school is a consortium for undergraduates who desire a career in education. We provide these future educators opportunities to observe, tutor and/or student teach at Palmetto Middle in order to prepare themselves to become highly qualified teachers. All teachers new to Palmetto Middle, whether first year or experienced, are assigned a mentor. Mentors help our new teachers face multiple challenges through reflective activities and professional conversations.

Respected as professionals, teachers are given the freedom to experiment with the latest ideas, methodologies, and strategies; they are encouraged to leave comfort zones and take calculated risks to improve and enrich student learning. It is through this educational philosophy that we have been able to implement many of the programs documented in the report and establish our motto: ***One School, One Vision, Our***

Success.

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