

# North Elementary

Knights

## Our demographics

**School principal:** Dr. Linda Blackwell      **Began at school:** 1999      **Years in district:** 16      **In education:** 30  
**Grades served:** K - 5      **Enrollment:** 718      **Economic status:** 59% free & reduced lunch  
**Diversity:** 41.5% White, 40.1% African-American, 13.6% Hispanic, 4.7% Other  
**Number of teachers:** 43      **Classified:** 14      **Administrators:** 2      **Counselors:** 2      **Media specialist:** 1  
**Other:** Nurse, Lead Teacher      **Teachers with National Board Certification:** 12      **Doctoral Degree:** 1  
**Teachers with advanced degrees:** 68%      **Teacher attendance:** 96.4%      **Student attendance:** 96.7%

## Our mission

The mission of North Elementary School is for our students to be responsible, hardworking, life-long learners.

## Our facilities

**Date main building was built:** 1966      **Date of renovations:** 1998, 2001, 2010  
**Square feet:** 91,531      **Number of computers:** 270      **Number of classrooms:** 50  
**Specialty areas:** 3 computer labs, science lab, literacy lab

## Our school programs

- **MPASS** – A math program created to enhance a student's journey in his/her mathematical training by providing students in grades 2-5 with an additional math class. MPASS compliments the mathematics curriculum offered in the regular classroom, introduces mathematical concepts and strategies that are not addressed in the regular curriculum, and gives learners an opportunity to participate in problem-solving activities.
- **CLASSWORKS** – A computer-based program that develops students' reading and math skills by providing computer based activities according to their MAP testing data. Teachers can also assign specific activities that enrich and provide practice to develop the students understanding of specific skills required for reading and math. The software is designed so that each student's training is individualized to meet his or her specific needs.
- **100 Book Challenge** – Classrooms are filled with multicultural books, fiction and non-fiction, at a variety of color levels to match the independent success level for each child in the classroom. This means getting "Just Right" books into each child's hands promoting self-confidence and a love of reading.
- **Literature Circles** – Students in grades two through five participate in cooperative reading groups. Teachers provide the framework, students' interest drive the book titles, and from there learning begins. Student responsibilities within their small group include Discussion Director, Passage Master and Word Wizard.
- **KITE** – Kids Interacting with Text Everyday is a reading program designed to accelerate the development of reading proficiency for our first and second graders who are identified as needing individualized responsive instruction. Daily observation and ongoing formal assessment using the Dominie Reading and

Writing Assessment Portfolio allows the KITE teacher and assistant to closely monitor and meet the reading needs of each student. The fluidity of the program and the careful monitoring of all students by our teachers allow students to enter and leave KITE throughout the school year as we work together to provide the best learning environment for our emergent and early readers.

- **Science Lab** – The lab brings the science standards to life through hands-on experiments using the scientific method for third-fifth grade students. Live animals, including a ferret, rabbit, cockatiel, scorpion, chinchilla, snakes, frogs, fish and others are incorporated into daily activities to enhance the students’ learning experience. Through the use of science kits, along with various stations, experiments, and other hands-on activities, students go to the lab to “participate” in science.
- **Accelerated Readers** – In an attempt to encourage students to read for pleasure, AR celebrations are held each semester. Our last celebration included a trip to Cane Creek Park for a day of backyard games and lunch. Students qualify for these celebrations by reading AR books and taking comprehension tests on them. Students have opportunities to meet the qualifying criteria each semester.
- **Service Learning** – Young people are encouraged to learn, develop, and grow through service to others. We provide time for active participation in ample, organized service experiences. These opportunities provide early life lessons about dependability and responsibility to many North students. Service-learning opportunities include:
  - North Helpers – Fifth-grade students learn about dependability and responsibility by helping teachers and other students. Example duties include: helping specials teachers prepare for the day, helping students take AR tests, updating the school sign, preparing computers in the labs, delivering birthday cards to our students, and reading with kindergarten.
  - Safety Patrol - Fourth graders greet students by opening car doors for car riders each morning.
  - Canned Food Drive - An annual food drive encouraged by a friendly competition between USC and Clemson fans to see which team gathers the most food. Fifth-grade students count cans daily throughout the month of November and package them in boxes. The food is donated to HOPE right before Thanksgiving.
  - Jump Rope for Heart is supported through our physical education teachers. Students jump rope to raise money for this worthy cause.
  - Relay for Life is a school focus. Money is collected over the course of the year. Teachers and students come together to support our booth at USCL and walk in honor of survivors and in memory of our loved ones.
  - Special Friends - Students from fifth grade share special time with our TMD students before school, in art, music and P.E.
  - Lend a Hand - TMD students lead a school-wide recycling program.
  - School Store - Fifth graders manage the school store.
  - WNES - School news anchored by fifth-grade students.

### Our co-curriculum, clubs, athletics

- **Grade Level Author Study** – Each grade level focuses on an author and studies his or her biography. Students complete projects from their favorite piece of the author’s literary work. They also participate in Readers Theater and classroom videos about the author are incorporated.
- **Book Club Read-In** – Fifth grade students read a predetermined text. The media specialist meets with these students regularly to discuss important events and to share their reflections about the district to discuss book themes and to complete culminating activities.
- **A Little Knight Music (Chorus)** – A choral group of approximately twenty grade five students chosen through an open audition. The chorus rehearses each Thursday after school from 2:30-3:30 p.m. This provides quality choral music experiences for our students and the community. The group performs for school functions, sings at Christmas in the community, and participates in the All-County Choral Festival each year.
- **Hooked on Fishing, Not on Drugs** – A fishing program for all grade two students held during the school day. Students learn that fishing is a good individual or family activity. They learn how to take care of their environment, how to fish, about the anatomy of fish, and about pond life. The program includes a fishing trip to a local pond.
- **North's Art Club** – An after-school activity made up of interested grade five students who help enhance the school, make props for North's plays, and complete art projects for the school community.
- **Student Council** – Made-up of twelve grade five students with two representatives from each class elected by their classmates. The students help with Service-Learning projects, school improvement projects, and other school-wide activities.
- **North’s Academic Challenge Team** – Made up of the top four grade five students. At the beginning of the school year, these students are selected through numerous practice rounds on a general knowledge quiz. The Academic Challenge Team represents North in the *I Love Learning* academic challenge event held each year at USC-L.

### Our parents/parent support programs

- **PTA** – Organizes and promotes student learning through fundraising. Fundraising monies are allocated through our PTA Board to enhance instruction.
- **Teacher Appreciation** – Monthly celebrations are planned by parents in honor of teachers’ birthdays and various holidays throughout the school year.
- **Volunteers** – Parents and community members give generously of their time to assist in areas of their own strengths and interests to promote student learning and safety.
- **School Improvement Council (SIC)** – Advisory board who acts as a liaison between the community, school and administration.
- **Parent Volunteer Coordinator** – Serves as a liaison between school and families to encourage all parents to volunteer and participate in family events.

## Our school strengths

- **Fostering excellence** – Our faculty and staff have a common goal to foster excellence for every child in the areas of learning and behavior. That is also the standard we hold for ourselves. Although there is a framework for our school’s policies and procedures, within each classroom we foster and nurture creativity through hands-on activities, paired sharing, and small groups. The teacher is the facilitator of learning.
- **Professional Learning Teams** – We work as a team with our parents and community to meet the needs of each child while supporting and working together. Our teachers and staff are nurturing, creative and resourceful. We collaborate with grade level teams and through vertical teaming. Our Specials teachers who teach art, music, PE, and computer lab coordinate unique learning experiences that complement the general curriculum. Our community and parent volunteers support our school through Junior Achievement, tutoring, mentoring, classroom assistance, attending field trips, and fundraising.
- **Accelerated Reader** – To encourage students to read for pleasure, AR celebrations are held each semester. Our celebrations have included ice cream parties, a puppet show, storyteller visits and a huge end-of-the-year party with games, activities and a giant slide. Students qualify for these celebrations by reading AR books and taking comprehension tests on them. Students have opportunities to meet the qualifying criteria each semester.
- **Study Island** – To support our emphasis on technology, we have implemented an online program called *Study Island*. This program not only supports our students’ interest in technology, it also gives them engaging, interactive lessons and activities that are built around our state standards as well as the Common Core Standards. This program is available for school and home use in the areas of reading, math and science.
- **Literacy By Design (LBD)** – This innovative reading system offers a specific plan for differentiated instruction to ensure that the needs of all students are met. The comprehension component promotes interactive reading that energizes class instruction, enhances oral language proficiency and improves retention of content and vocabulary. The vocabulary component includes a six-step instructional process that allows teachers to teach and reinforce vocabulary terms with success. The phonics and phonemic awareness component helps students build meaningful associations so they can make sense of how to use phonics when reading. The fluency component provides systematic and explicit fluency instruction designed to heighten students’ reading comprehension. The writing component provides daily practice that attends to all facets of writing: genre, process, traits, craft and conventions. This comprehensive, research-based tool is designed to help all students develop into fluent, engaged, successful readers and writers.
- **Writing** – Our teachers meet or exceed all state curriculum standards with particular strengths in the areas of writing and math. We have been awarded the Exemplary Writing Award for 2004 – 2007 and 2007-2010. We participate in writing staff development yearly. All teachers teach the writing process which includes prewriting, writing, editing, conferencing, revising, and publishing.
- **Double-blocked math** – We double-block our math so that every child in grades 2-5 receives two blocks of math daily. The first block of math takes place in the regular classroom where the students participate in standards-based lessons using the EveryDay Math series. A second math block, called MPASS, offers additional math instruction in leveled groups based on MAP and PASS data. During MPASS, a small group of students remains with the classroom teacher and an instructional assistant to receive additional instruction on grade-level content. The remainder of the students combines with students in another home room to attend an accelerated math class with the MPASS teacher. These

students are introduced to mathematical concepts and strategies not addressed in the regular classroom and participate in problem-solving activities.

- **Incorporating media standards** – The incorporation of media standards with grade level standards has improved many curriculum areas. Through the use of technology, our media specialist reinforces the standards classroom teachers are covering. Basic computer skills for our younger students are expanded into research skills for our older students. The media specialist models technology standards and allows students to practice these skills in the computer lab.

### Our honors & awards

- **ESA rating of “A,”** 2012
- **Title 1 Award School for Academic Performance,** 2012
- **South Carolina Palmetto Silver Award,** 2011-2012
- **ADVANC-ED District accreditation,** 2011
- **Increased number of National Board Teachers from 2 to 12,** 2011
- **South Carolina Distinguished Title I School Honorable Mention 2009-2010** for closing the achievement gap
- **Certified as a National Wildlife School,** 2006
- **Grants** – Over \$150,000 grants over the past ten years
- **Exemplary Writing Award,** 2004 – 2007, 2007-2010
- **Red Carpet Award,** 2002 – 2005, 2005 – 2008
- **Dick and Tunkey Riley Award Finalist,** 2003 – 2004
- **Met AYP,** 2002 – 2003, 2003 – 2004, 2004 – 2005, 2005 – 2006, 2007 - 2008, 2008 - 2009, 2009 - 2010.
- **School Report Card Absolute Rating:** Good 2000 – 2001, 2001 – 2002, 2002 – 2003, 2003 – 2004, 2004 – 2005, 2005 – 2006, 2007-2008, 2008 – 2009, 2009 – 2010.