

Wilkerson Middle School

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Constance Burnes, Principal
Trarsha Maddox, Assistant Principal

Dear Scholastic Family,

As the library media specialist at Wilkerson Middle School, I would like to take this avenue to share how your publications have enriched and supported our students during the 2008-2009 school year.

As background let me start by sharing that Wilkerson Middle School serves approximately 300 inner city 6th-8th graders. We are located almost directly in the middle of the city of Birmingham. Over 95% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The majority of our students are being raised in single-parent homes or by someone other than the birth parent. As anyone can tell, our students have many factors working against their success. Despite all of these negatives, our students have excelled! Our test scores are at the top, statewide. We have been recognized as a Torchbearer School for the State of Alabama this past year. As a matter of fact, we are the only middle school statewide that has received this honor. Nationwide we have been selected as a Model School and we were also selected in February as a Nationwide Title I School of Distinction. There were 2 schools selected for this honor at the state level. We are often visited by faculty members from schools with similar demographics, as they want to see what is happening and how we are accomplishing such great things.

As educators we realize that if students are readers, then we have the foundation to build on with academic success. We determined several years ago, after much review, that Scholastic Magazines would offer us the type of reading material that middle school students would not only enjoy, but would help them to increase vocabulary, stimulate higher-order thinking skills, and improve their overall reading comprehension. Our Title I Budget Committee made the decision to purchase Scholastic Math, Science World, Scope, and Junior Scholastic. This purchase obviously came with a pretty significant monetary obligation. The magazines have been worth every penny spent.

Each morning we greet each of our 300 students at the door. Every student must be in complete compliance with the dress code, have their ID badge on, and have their Scholastic Magazines. At the beginning of the school year we issue each student a large 3 ring binder for his or her magazines. We hole punch the magazines for them each week. If they do not have their magazine binder a call is made to the parent and they must bring their "Scholastic Binder". Parents and students alike have learned the importance of having their reading materials in hand. At this point in the year the binders are ragged, torn and overflowing with almost a year's worth of magazines, but they are still being used and still checked each morning. Our students are required to read each morning while waiting on homeroom to assemble and most mornings what do we see in our student's hands- a Scholastic publication!

Thank you for allowing me to share these thoughts. We appreciate the quality of your publications and your obvious concern for providing students with appropriate materials for their grade levels and interests. Keep up the great work!

Sincerely,
Susan Courington
Library Media Specialist and Title I Site Coordinator
Wilkerson Middle School