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McNair Middle wins national honor

Group awards magnet school for its efforts

BY KATE BRENNAN
FLORIDA TODAY

McNair Middle Magnet School in Rockledge recently earned a national award for its innovative teaching strategies, student achievement and desegregation efforts.

Magnet Schools of America, a national organization, recently named McNair a "School of Distinction" and will honor the school at its annual conference in Las Vegas in May.

McNair is one of five magnet schools in Brevard County and the first to receive a national award for its magnet program. The 476-student school specializes in performing arts, math, science and technology and accelerated academic programs. It has received an A from the state for the past three years for students' performance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test.

"It's a bragging right and certainly a really good one," said Patty Martin, director of magnet schools for Brevard Public Schools. "It means they've done very, very well in all the criteria that magnets set forth."

McNair, together with Cambridge, Endeavor and Golfview elementary schools, is in its last year of a three-year, \$6 million federal grant to expand magnet programs.

Magnet programs began in the 1960s as an alternative to the busing of students under court-ordered desegregation. By offering innovative programs not available at every school, magnets hope to achieve diversity



Malcolm Denmark, FLORIDA TODAY

Top honor. McNair Middle Magnet School in Rockledge recently was named a "School of Distinction" by Magnet Schools of America. McNair, with 476 students, is one of five magnet schools in Brevard County and the first to receive a national award for its magnet pro-

gram. Back row, from left, are magnet coordinating teacher Kathy Lott, Principal Rosette Lipscomb-Brown and magnet coordinating teacher Cari Kupec. Front row, from left, are students Sarah Telesca, Jasmine Jordan and Freddy Fernandez.

and boost enrollment by attracting majority students to schools with high minority populations.

Before receiving the grant in 2004, McNair was experiencing a declining enrollment with about 350 students, about 70 percent who were minorities. Since then, the seventh- through 12th-grade school has increased its student enrollment by more than a third and nearly balanced its minority-majority ratio.

In fact, more students applied to attend McNair next year than there are openings, creating the school's first waiting list - a very encouraging sign, said the school's principal Rosette

"We're thrilled here at McNair. I'm still pinching myself to make sure it's real."

*Rosette Lipscomb-Brown,
McNair principal*

Lipscomb-Brown. Nearly 200 students applied for an estimated 134 openings, mostly in the seventh-grade.

"When we work together to a common goal, we usually get great results," Lipscomb-Brown said.

The grant has helped the school convert a classroom into a dance studio, with mirrored-walls, padded flooring and exercise bars. It has also helped pay for two new teachers, a new school marquee, decorative murals, classroom technology, campus gardens and student trips to local theatrical performances.

Lipscomb-Brown said the award is a tribute to the teamwork of the school's dedicated teachers and staff.

"We're thrilled here at McNair," she said. "I'm still pinching myself to make sure it's real." ■

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Fast fact

Of the more than 1,800 magnet schools or magnet programs nationwide, Magnet Schools of America named about 5 percent or 90 either "Schools of Excellence" or "Schools of Distinction" last year, according to a letter McNair received from the organization.

Online

For more information about Brevard Public Schools or the county's five magnet schools, visit

floridatoday.com