Area high schools ranked in state's best

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

Three Oconee County high schools and two from Pickens County have been ranked among the 100 best public high schools in South Carolina by Niche.com.

Daniel High School was ranked ninth, the highest among the five schools, followed by Walhalla (28th), Tamassee-Salem Middle and High (61st), Easley (63rd) and Seneca (98th).



Niche stated in its announcement this week the ranking provides "a comprehensive assessment of the overall experience at public high schools."

Factors considered in the ranking were grades given for academics, health and safety, student culture and diversity, survey responses, teachers, resources and facilities, extracurricular and activities and sports and fitness.

Daniel, with an enrollment of 1,021 students, has 72 percent of its students who are considered proficient in math and or reading. Niche reported the school's average SAT score was 1790, which was above the national average of 1750, and ACT score of 30, higher than the national average of 26.

The school has a graduation rate of 83 percent, above the national average of 81 percent. Seniors responding to a survey of the school issued comments ranging from how the "school spirit is unbeatable" to "the school provides a safe environment for students and faculty and deals with any issues among students" to "really good extracurriculars" and "great academic programs."

Responses from recent alumni

SEE SCHOOLS, PAGE A5

SCHOOLS: Also received grade

FROM PAGE A1

surveyed ranged from commending a staff that "never act above you and truly want the best educational experience available" to how most teachers at the school "are very creative with their lessons."

Daniel principal Josh Young said he was pleased with the high ranking received by the school.

"I think that any honors like these are another tribute to the hard work our students and teachers put into helping everyone reach their potential and accomplish great things," Young said.

Walhalla, which has 958 students, has a graduation rate of 82 percent, which is above the 81 percent national average. The school's average SAT score of 1730 is slightly below the national average, and the ACT score of 26 equals the national average.

A whopping 91 percent of students surveyed said they would attend the school if they could do it all over again. When asked what are the best things about the school, 100 percent of the students polled said it was receiving "support from everyone to get through the four years."

Walhalla alumni responding to the survey issued responses that included how "the administration at the school really care about the success of the students," "the school has a very good impact on the students" and that "teachers and administrators are very involved in the students lives and in all of the extracurricular activities" with students "being held to a very high academic standard."

Steve Garrett, principal of Walhalla, said he is "very proud to be part of such a wonderful school community."

"I can honestly say that Walhalla High School has some of the best students I have had the privilege of working alongside," said Garrett, who is in his first year at the helm.

Tamassee-Salem Middle and High School serves 277 students in grades 6-12. The school has an average graduation rate of 84.5 percent.

High school seniors surveyed said "the administration is very fair in listening to the students" and while the school is small "it feels like a family and everyone cares about each other."

"Tamassee-Salem Middle and High School is grateful and humbled to be recognized in this select group of public high schools in South Carolina," said principal Steve Moore.

Seneca High School, ranked 98th, has an enrollment of 973 students. The school's graduation rate of 80 percent is slightly below the national average. While the school's average SAT score of 1550 was below the national average, its ACT score of 25 was only slightly below the national average of 26.

Comments from high school seniors responding to the survey ranged from the sports programs being "one of the best around" to "all the teachers are there to do their job." Seniors stated that they had made "amazing friends" throughout their high school experience, that the social scene is good, that the school "offers plenty of extracurriculars for student," and there is "tons of diversity."

"It is always an honor when the faculty and students can be recognized for their hard work and dedication," Seneca principal Cliff Roberts said.

The schools ranked in the top 100 also received a grade by Niche. Daniel received an A, Walhalla got an A-minus, Tamassee-Salem Middle and High received a B, and Seneca garnered a B-minus.

goliver@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6687
Follow on Twitter @JournalGO