

Essex Elementary School

Superintendent Sylvester Small

Principal Charles D. Jones

Case Study Report Highlights: Essex Elementary School

Providing Leadership that Results in Continuous Improvement

- **Collaborative Leadership** – In his first year as principal, Mr. Jones has established rapport with teachers by encouraging them to continue effective practices.
- **Experienced and Collaborative Teachers** – Most of the school's teachers have 20-plus years of experience, and 71 percent of the faculty hold master's degrees. The district and school support collegial planning and observation of teachers.

Creating A Culture Where Each Individual Feels Valued

- **Committed Staff** - The staff and faculty at Essex are expected to stay actively involved in promoting the well-being of students. Teachers show an interest in children by following their progress to higher grades, considering their needs when not at work and stressing activities that build self-esteem.
- **Small School with Foreign Language Focus** - Essex is smaller than most schools in Akron. None of the classes has more than 23 students; pullouts further reduce group size. It is the only elementary in the district that offers foreign language instruction; the school requires all students to study Spanish or Japanese.
- **Efforts to Involve All Students** - The school previously emphasized Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. Now, the principal promotes differentiated learning, and students performing below grade level receive intervention. Teachers regularly use flexible groups and adapt their instruction to the needs of students.
- **High Expectations** - All staff communicate high expectations to children. As part of the *100 Book Challenge* <http://www.100bookchallenge.com/>, children are urged to read 400 lines (15 minutes equals 1 line) each school year. Students learn to organize their work using daily planners. Teachers regularly inform students about their performance and progress.
- **Strong Discipline** - Essex uses the *Quality Tools* discipline plan developed by Ryan Delaney, which clearly specifies actions when students disrupt learning. *Character Counts* <http://www.charactercounts.org/> is used by the fourth and fifth grades; peer mediators help resolve student conflicts.
- **After-school Programs** – Essex offers after-school enrichment activities throughout the year. The classes make it possible for students to pursue interests in science, photography, cooking, art and fitness. Bus transportation is provided.

Designing Instruction to Ensure Every Student's Success

- **Reading Program** - Most Essex teachers work from the district-selected Harcourt series. They supplement primarily with the *100 Book Challenge*, in which students do 30 minutes of independent reading at school and 30 minutes at home. Parents are trained on how to monitor and report their children's reading.
- **Use of Data to Target Instruction** - The school psychologist leads an effort to test all students with the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as well as other measures of reading and math fluency three times a year; results are used to determine which students need intervention. The progress of these students is monitored weekly, with testing facilitated by the school's speech therapist and students from Kent State University.
- **Intervention** - The Instructional/Behavior Assessment (IBAT) Committee meets weekly to identify students who may need assistance. Essex has three part-time Title I teachers who provide students with intervention. What's more, parents can arrange for free tutoring through the OhioReads grant, staffed by community volunteers. There is also an after-school tutoring program. And by the end of the school year, students who have not reached grade level are required to attend summer school.
- **Special Education** - All special education students are typically taught by one teacher at each grade level.
- **Incentives** - Students receive rewards for progress on the *100 Book Challenge*. Teachers give small incentives.

Providing Rigorous Instruction Aligned to Standards

- **Attention to Standards** - Teachers use a wide variety of teaching strategies to achieve the standards of learning.
- **Professional Development** – Through professional development offered by the district and school, teachers learn ways to apply the standards and enhance their classroom effectiveness. Observing master teachers has been especially useful.
- **Grants** - Teachers have successfully pursued small grants such as one providing Palm Pilots for a fifth-grade class. The school's student activity fund covers most teacher requests and may be used to continue *OhioReads* activities.

Engaging Parents and Community to Support Student Success

- **Parent Involvement** - Essex has a core of parents heavily involved and supportive. Teachers have ongoing communication with parents and the *100 Book Challenge* has further spurred parent participation.
- **Major School Challenge** - Essex is scheduled to be closed within the next two years, as its size (fewer than 350 students) makes it ineligible for state school renovation funding. Parents and the community will likely protest.

INTRODUCTION

The Akron City School District is one of 21 urban districts in Ohio. Serving more than 27,000 students, Akron City Schools has demonstrated substantial academic improvement in the past two years. For the 2004-05 academic year, it achieved a rating of *Continuous Improvement*, thereby moving it out of *Academic Watch*.¹ District staff attributes the gains to:

- higher expectations for student success;
- a strong focus on building improvement plans;
- measurable reading and math goals throughout the year;
- a districtwide focus on reading content areas;
- focused professional development and data-based decision making;
- extensive curriculum training for principals;
- constant review of student progress during the year;
- a strong collaboration with the community;
- standards-based language arts texts; and
- intervention programs.

All of these characteristics are evident at Essex Elementary.

Akron City School District Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
District Rating	Academic Watch (5 out of 18 indicators met)	Continuous Improvement (3 out of 23 indicators met)
District Enrollment	28,097	27,166
Schools	Elementary Schools: 40 Middle Schools: 10 High Schools: 8	Elementary Schools: 39 Middle Schools: 10 High Schools: 8

Essex Elementary School Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
School Rating	Continuous Improvement (4 out of 7 indicators met)	Continuous Improvement (6 out of 9 indicators met)
Enrollment	274	255
Grade Levels	K-5	K-5
Average Expenditure per Pupil	\$9,710	NA
Low-Income percentage	47.8%	100.0%
Percent racial/ethnic minority	73.9%	73.3%
Students with Disabilities	13.4%	12.1%
Student Attendance Rate	95.8%	95.9%

Essex Elementary is located in the northwest corner of Akron. The immediate area has a population of about 25,000, with 8 percent of families with children under age 18 living in poverty. The city of Akron has a much higher rate of poor children (45 percent). Approximately a third of the Essex students enter through open enrollment, resulting in service to a diverse student body, ranging from those whose parents are professionals to those living in the inner

¹ From report on Akron Public Schools' Web page, "Akron Public Schools earns Continuous Improvement status" <http://www.akronschools.com/default.html>.

city.² One teacher noted the benefits of this mix: “I’ve taught inner city before and you don’t have role models in your classroom to succeed and get to college. This way the role models are here.” In 2004-2005, all Essex Elementary students were classified as economically disadvantaged. Unfortunately, as a result of its small size (fewer than 350 students) and the age of the building, the district has tentatively scheduled the school to be closed within the next two years.

An interesting feature of Essex Elementary is that it is Akron’s only school with an emphasis on foreign language education. Kindergarten students take a half year of Japanese and half year of Spanish. In first grade, children may choose to focus on one foreign language throughout subsequent grades. The upper grades at Essex have 30 minutes and the lower grades have 20 minutes of foreign language instruction daily.



Essex Elementary School Teacher Profile		
	2003-04	2004-05
Teachers	21	21
Average Teacher Salary	\$54,797	\$54,994
Percent of Courses Taught by Certified Licensed Teachers	100%	100%
Teacher Attendance Rate	94.8%	94.9%
Average Years of Experience	17	20

The school originally was charged to serve the hearing impaired. Consequently, all classrooms were set up with microphones and tape recorders. Teachers have learned that amplifying sound is helpful to all students, so the school relies on this equipment, and recommends that teachers use it at all times. Everything the teacher says is recorded, so students can listen to the tape if necessary. Teachers also have hand-held microphones for students to use when they present to the class.

Staff members attribute the increase in students’ reading performance to an OhioReads Grant and *100 Book Challenge*, a program in which students are encouraged to read 400 lines of text each year. They also noted that parent and community involvement has been an important factor in the school’s progress. Apparently, the school faced the threat of closing about 10 years ago. In response, parents and the community became more involved and established greater ownership of the school. In addition, the school has had strong leaders throughout this time who brought in more innovative practices, including the *100 Book Challenge* and focus on multiple intelligences, as well as additional funding of programs and professional development. Essex also has begun doing extensive analyses of test data and identifying the areas in which students need intervention. These improvements have inspired staff and parents to consistently emphasize reading. This report provides details on how these and other activities have contributed to students’ increasing levels of achievement.

² Open enrollment means that any child in the district can apply to Essex Elementary. Parents/guardians must submit the required paperwork by the annual deadlines. Students must be officially accepted before they may enroll. If there is limited space in the building or grade level, students are selected by lottery to fill available spaces.

SCHOOLS OF PROMISE AND THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROCESS

The Superintendent designated Essex Elementary a *School of Promise* as a result of student performance on third-grade achievement and fourth-grade proficiency tests in reading in 2003-2004. Eighty-two percent passed the new third-grade achievement test in reading and fourth-graders demonstrated notable improvements in reading. The percentage of students passing the fourth-grade proficiency test grew to 83 percent – a gain of 17 percent from the previous year. In math, fourth-graders showed modest improvement, moving from 59 percent to 65 percent over the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 school years; however, the school did not meet the state standard of 75 percent in math for fourth grade in any year and only 57 percent of third-graders passed the new third-grade achievement test in 2004-2005.

Although students surpassed the 75 percent state minimum in the third-grade and fourth-grade 2004-2005 reading tests, the school's minority students fell below 75 percent in fifth-grade reading, resulting in the school's loss of *Schools of Promise* recognition. However, since the school was so close to qualifying, and considering its strong reading program, it is possible that Essex Elementary will be able to regain its place as a *School of Promise* in reading for 2005-2006. Clearly, the school will need to do substantial work in math; this is further confirmed by students' poor performance on the third grade achievement test.

Out of 68 *Schools of Promise* elementary schools in 2003-2004, Essex was one of four schools randomly chosen for this case study by Institutional Research Consultants (IRC). The focus in this study is the school's reading program, but the research team also observed math classes and asked teachers about their math instruction. During the two-day case study visit, the researchers observed 11 of the 13 kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers who taught reading and math. The research team was able to interview all 13 teachers. An interview and observation also was done with one of the Title I teachers, and two additional Title I teachers participated in a group interview. The team also interviewed the principal, the school psychologist and the Speech Therapist. In addition, one researcher observed a Japanese language class and an IBAT (Instructional/Behavior Assessment Team) meeting. The team conducted two single-sex focus groups with students, five males and five females. Finally, the researchers completed telephone interviews with three parents. A total of 32 people were interviewed, 13 teachers were observed and 15 teachers completed the case study survey. The table on the following page outlines all research activities.

Essex Elementary School: Case Study Research Coverage*

	TOTAL	Interviewed		Observed		Returned Survey	
	N	N	N	N	%	N	%
Teachers							
Pre-K – Grade 5	13	13	100.0	11	76.9	13	100

Other Interviews and Surveys		
Principal		1
Parents		3
Students (Two Focus Groups)		10
Other Interviews and Observations		
Title I Teacher		1
Other Interviews		
Title I Teacher		2
School Psychologist		1
Speech Therapist		1
Other Observations		
Japanese Classroom - Observation		1
IBAT Meeting - Observation		1
TOTAL INTERVIEWS		32
TOTAL TEACHERS OBSERVED		13
TOTAL TEACHER SURVEYS		15

*Conflicts in schedules prevented the observations of all 13 teachers.

This report is organized using the “Five Lessons Learned” identified in earlier *Schools of Promise* case study research.³ These lessons emphasize the importance of instituting strong leadership, establishing a school culture that values individual students, designing instruction to ensure student success, providing rigorous instruction aligned with the standards, and engaging parents and the community to support student success. Essex Elementary has evidence of many of these components, and this report highlights some of the ways the lessons are being realized in its day-to-day operations.

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

This is Charles D. Jones' first year as principal at Essex Elementary. A former assistant principal at a middle school and special education teacher, this is his first position as a principal. Although he is a new principal, he previously lived in the community and his daughter attended Essex Elementary prior to his becoming principal. Thus, he is highly familiar with the school and surrounding neighborhood. He seemingly has made the transition smoothly. Teachers spoke well of him, especially appreciating the way he treats them as professionals and encourages them to continue what they were doing before he came on board. Their comments included:

³The *Five Lessons Learned* emerged from the case study research conducted by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in 2001-2002 (see http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement_gaps/Schools_of_Promise/5lessons.asp) There is also evidence of the use of practices that corresponds to the Framework of Practice that ties the *Five Lessons* to research on effective schools (see http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement_gaps/schools_of_promise/FOP.asp).

He's new this year and we all like him. His idea was that things are working well and he took time to get to know us and made a few changes, but nothing drastic. Hopefully, there will be some more changes next year, but it's been a very smooth transition.

We have to have nice strong leadership – a supportive principal who works among us and empowers teachers and allows teachers to play a part in pointing out things they feel would help to improve the school.

The principal keeps everyone focused on the task. He is very knowledgeable. He pushes parent involvement and community involvement. He calls students at home to see if they're reading. Kids like that. He makes it a point to let them know he cares. As a principal, it is important he is around and seen. He knows the children by their names. He is always outside, always available. That means a lot to students. He cares about them and wants them to be successful.

I think that it goes to the top. A school's instructional leader must model what's right for kids and have a working knowledge of what is to be taught in each grade level, and then, in a very professional, caring manner, convey that it needs to be done consistently, without threatening, and ask: 'What is the purpose of this lesson? If this lesson doesn't have a purpose, it's wasting time.'

Since Essex became a *School of Promise* under the former administration, the principal's activities are designed to facilitate and build on the strategies in place that are apparently working. He does walk-throughs every day. He monitors students' test scores, encourages teachers to also look at these data and regularly talks to them about student performance. The principal facilitates teacher planning and provides substitutes for them if needed. He also relates well to children and conducts activities to show he cares about them. For example, he wears a sign on his chest that says how many lines students need to read every week for the *100 Book Challenge* program; he puts signs up in the hallways to inform students of the number of books they have read; and he calls three students every night to check if they are reading.

Both previous principals were described as being exceptionally strong and responsible for bringing in such programs as Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, the Venture Capital Program, Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation Program, the *100 Book Challenge* program; establishing the Instructional/Behavior Assessment (IBAT) Committee; and offering good staff development programs. Teachers said the three most recent principals also communicated high expectations for the students, which helped encourage good student behavior. In addition, they attributed instructional leadership as key to the staff's dedication and overall good feeling about the school.

Highly Experienced Staff Committed to School

Essex has an experienced staff. Essex's teachers averaged 20 years of teaching experience and more than half (64 percent) had been at the school a minimum of six years. A high percentage (71 percent) has a master's degree in education. They think well of the school and enjoy working with each other, the principal, students and parents. Teachers emphasized that they are open to learning new things and welcome innovation. The school has introduced several new programs in the past few years. Teachers have participated in the corresponding professional development and adapted their instruction accordingly.

Collaborative Working Relationships

Teachers value the close and collaborative working relationships encouraged by school leadership. They expressed that staff unity contributed to their ability to make progress towards the school's mission and goals. They have more opportunities for learning from each other than is available in most schools. They regularly share materials and ideas, which includes informal mentoring of Entry Year teachers and exchanges with colleagues teaching higher grades to ensure they are appropriately preparing their students. Teachers are encouraged to observe one another or teachers in other buildings. One interviewee elaborated: "If a supervisor comes around and sees a technique that's really cool and would reach a lot of students, he or she might say to another staff member, 'Why don't you take a half day and visit? Sit in that teacher's classroom and pick up some of those techniques.'"

Several mentioned that the school's small size is also a factor, as it is a friendly, supportive environment in which teachers help each other and are there for the children. Two first-grade teachers share a position. All teachers, including special education and Title I, collaborate and coordinate their activities. Since they cannot meet together to plan, teachers share information the best way they can, which is often through notes or casual exchanges during lunch.

If needed, substitutes are provided to cover their classes. During the 2004-2005 school year, the district paid teachers for 10 hours of collegial planning that took place after school. In the upcoming year, this will be reduced to five hours. Many teachers stay late daily and most do substantial joint planning that goes beyond the paid time. They pointed out they plan when they can and they work together to ensure each grade level class has similar experiences. They use the district curriculum guide to organize their activities. One teacher clarified:

Everybody tries to be on the same page, to stay together, to work together. It's not always like that in every building even though Akron wants things to be more uniform and is trying to get everybody on the same page in terms of teaching. You won't be in your own room doing your own thing anymore. We do collegial planning three to four times a year. That helps us to stay together and on the same page.

The school has monthly staff meetings and six staff development sessions each year. Some meetings are turned into staff development sessions. Local professors and building teachers provide staff training. According to one teacher:

There are so many staff members who are excellent role models and educators. As colleagues, we network, help one another, share ideas. Many of our staff in-services are led by staff members. They stay current on educational trends. They are well educated, with master's degrees and beyond. They have a passion and a joy for teaching, and I think it shows. It's contagious.

Teachers also attend district professional development workshops and conferences, often going together as a group.

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

Teachers described Essex Elementary as a “child-centered” school in which the professional working environment benefits children. They often used the word “love” in expressing how they feel about the students and their jobs. They also stressed that the “total staff,” including those in the office, library and other areas of the building are similarly concerned about the well-being of the students. Principal Jones recalled: “I told the staff we are all here to do one thing – to educate kids. The custodian, the nurse, the secretary – we all have something to offer. The secretary teaches reading.” Teachers described their students as “eager to come to school.” Staff has tried to make the school a comfortable and safe place in which children feel good about being there.

Staff Committed to Students

Teachers emphasized how much they care about the children and continue to follow up with them even after they have moved onto the next grade. One third-grade teacher explained:

This staff is not one to say, I’ve had this grouping of children this year and once they move on, that’s that. There’s a caring atmosphere. They recheck on children, asking, ‘How is so-and-so doing, did they get the glasses that they needed? If I can be of any help, just let me know.’ They make themselves part of the team. We use one another as resources and we really care about these kids. If they are no longer in our classroom, it doesn’t matter.

They also think about their students outside of school. A second-grade teacher highlighted this:

I give 100 percent. We don’t have a lot of tolerance for people who give less. It takes a lot of extra hours at home and at school. My students are never off my mind. If I go shopping or on vacation, I bring back something I can use in the classroom. It’s so much fun to see a light go on.

Other teachers emphasized how they have various activities such as “Student of the Week,” to make individual students feel important and build self-esteem.

Small Classes

Teachers have relatively small classes. The average class size at Essex Elementary is 19 students. None of the classes had more than 23 students. In addition, as a result of the pullout programs for special education and Title I, teachers often had fewer students in their classrooms.

Specific Efforts to Address Needs of All Students

About six to eight years ago, the building introduced the philosophy of Howard Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences through professional development for teachers. The current principal is no longer stressing Multiple Intelligences, but instead is pushing differentiated learning. This model overlaps to a great extent with its predecessor, with instruction tailored to the needs of the children. The school offers intervention to students not performing at grade level. Teachers also use flexible groups and adapt their instruction frequently in an effort to help students understand and progress.

High Expectations

The staff gave several examples of establishing high expectations for students.

- The *100 Book Challenge*
- Teachers assign homework for students to log in their daily planners, helping them stay on top of all activities and upcoming tests.
- Teachers have parents sign tests to ensure they are aware of students' progress. They also have students repeat work if assignments are not neat or complete.
- Teachers share information with students about their performance, making students aware of expectations and what they need to do to exceed them.

A first-grade teacher has a practice of saying to the children as they enter the classroom, "Good morning, why are you here today?" Each child responds, "To listen and learn." This practice helps set the tone for the day and encourages the children to be responsible for their own learning. Another teacher explained that the small size of the school also contributes to the high expectations for all students, "I think the community feel of the school – that all kids know every teacher and all teachers know every kid – contributes to the high expectations."

Strong Discipline

The school uses the *Quality Tools* discipline plan developed by Ryan Delaney, principal of Taft Elementary in Ashland, Ohio. The underlying foundation of the plan is that it is not acceptable for students to disrupt student learning. Classrooms use a color-coded wheel in which students have markers that advance through a series of colors when they do not follow classroom rules. Each color corresponds to a specific consequence. Everyone in the building follows the plan, including the special education students, and the rules are applied consistently. Teachers inform parents of their children's behavior throughout the week. The school has few students who are sent to the office.

Teachers also use conflict resolution to help resolve disagreements between children. A first-grade teacher explained how this works: "We sit down as a group, away from the other children, and the quarrelling children have a little meeting. We discuss what's bothering them, we shake hands, we talk about it, and maybe we'll regroup at a later time to talk more. It really works well. Everybody works well together here."

For the fourth and fifth grades, teachers also use *Character Counts* <http://www.charactercounts.org/> which has the following "six pillars" as its basis: *trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring* and *citizenship*. Students are not allowed to *put down* each other. As part of this program, the school has peer mediators to assist with conflicts between students. The program is managed by one of the teachers.

After-school Programs

The school offers a number of after-school enrichment programs throughout the school year. Classes cover a diverse range of topics including science activities (Mad Scientist), hobbies (digital camera and cooking classes), crafts (primary crafts, scrapbooks and knitting) and fitness (soccer skills, jump rope and wellness). Each lasts four to six weeks and provides opportunities for students to develop individual interests. Students sign up for their preferred extended-day class. There is a \$5 registration fee. The school has arranged for after-school transportation by bus.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) is focused on reading and math, and staff consistently stressed that Essex's major goal is to develop students' reading and mathematics skills. Additional related areas of emphasis include helping students develop their writing, reading comprehension and listening abilities. In addition, teachers strive to instill the following in students: value of school attendance, healthy self-image, self-motivation, discipline, cooperation and the importance of hard work. They also want children to develop a love of books and to enjoy math.

The school pushes reading in everything it does. The district adopted the Harcourt series as its official reading series in the 2003-2004 school year. Previously, Essex was using Balanced Literacy as its baseline series. Interviewees revealed that the OhioReads grant and the *100 Book Challenge* have likely been major factors in the children's improved performance. Both provide additional supplementary resources in fiction and nonfiction. As part of OhioReads, volunteers come to the school and do one-on-one reading with at-risk children. The *100 Book Challenge* is a monitored, independent reading program described in more detail below.

This section provides an overview of the key elements of Essex's reading program, specific grade-level activities, and other aspects impacting the school's overall instruction.

100 Book Challenge

The 100 Book Challenge <http://www.100bookchallenge.com/> is a leveled independent reading program that is monitored. Teachers use pre- and post-tests to determine each student's reading level and progression to the next level. The program consists of supporting activities for each book. All students take part during the school year and the program also is offered during the summer. Forty-eight district schools (84 percent) participate in this program. A former principal first brought it to Essex; it was later reinforced by the district director of elementary education in Akron. The district has provided several professional development sessions on the program.

The 100 Book Challenge has been in place at Essex Elementary for three years and has become part of the school's culture. The program consists of 30 minutes of reading in school and another 30 minutes of reading at home each day. Students read books at their individual levels and they learn to look for specific things (e.g., adjectives, nouns or verbs) as they read. They also learn what to do if they come to a word they do not know. The students get a credit of one line for every 15 minutes of reading. They sign on the line and write the title of the book. However, if the student is not able to answer basic questions about the reading, the teacher will not sign the line. Each student is expected to read 100 lines per grading period and the building goal is 400 lines for each student per year.

Parents are also involved in encouraging their children to read. For the 30 minutes of reading at home, an adult has to indicate they watched or questioned the student. Ideally, parents should ask the child questions about his or her reading to confirm understanding. Given the important role parents have in program implementation, the school explains the program at a scheduled "parent night."

Teachers attribute much of students' growth in reading to *the 100 Book Challenge*. One fifth-grade teacher discussed the process and how she tailors it for her students:

After we had it really well in place, we started to see growth. These kids are reading 30 minutes a day at the very least. I don't think that you'd get that if you left them alone on their own to read. They get half an hour in school and half an hour at home at their just-right level. When you read at your just-right level and you're moving up, it increases your reading – it's totally linked to comprehension and fluency.

Teachers summarized the program's impact on the children with one word: *incredible*. The principal noted that quite a few students have read over 1,000 lines and more students are reading at lunch.

Kindergarten

The kindergarten teachers use the Harcourt textbook for language arts. They supplement with leveled readers designed for independent guided reading and small groups. One of the teachers explained how she is making an effort to bring more nonfiction books into the system:

I'm trying to build more science and social studies-themed reading lessons – to integrate things all together. In kindergarten, that's good because I can bring themes in that way. The children really seem to enjoy the nonfiction. They don't enjoy the stories from the language arts kit as much as nonfiction stories about fish or the ocean. They were like sponges to get the information. In the past, kids might have been bored if you said there are 365 kinds of fish, but these students were fascinated. We did a word web about insects, and I was in awe of what they knew.

Teachers demonstrated comfort in adapting their curriculum to the needs of their students.

First Grade

This year there are three first-grade classes compared to only two classes in the prior year. Teachers appreciated the reduced class size, as they could accomplish more with a smaller group. All first-grade classrooms have the same course of study and teachers emphasized they expose the children to a wide variety of activities and approaches, which they view as a factor in students' high achievement. First- and second-grade teachers use the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) to determine students' reading level. One first-grade teacher described her approach:

I do a lot of phonics with the kids. They do the word walls, word families, and work on beginning, middle and ending sounds. And we do shared reading on the carpet together with the big book. We do the guided reading and reading groups in the textbook, and we have a tape that goes along with each story. It really helps the auditory readers. I turn the tape on and we read along with the tape. We read the story aloud. We do something called interactive writing where the kids come up and share the pen. They'll write a sentence in their own handwriting and then we correct them if there's a misspelled word. We work together on that. We'll do word-building skills using word families. I use that with a pocket chart and letter cards. I use a dry erase board a lot. They love that. So it's not all paper-pencil, which gets kind of monotonous. I do a lot of creative writing in their journals, with story starters and with picture prompts.

Second Grade

Second-grade teachers noted that the new Harcourt reading series has numerous useful components, but that the most difficult task has been fitting it all in. The teachers decided to make the *100 Book Challenge* the top priority, and then fit everything else around it. Similar to the first-grade classes, teachers often use flexible groupings of students and have them do activities in pre-assigned centers, which include writing, computer, manipulatives, puzzles and books. Second-grade teachers spend the majority of the day doing reading and language arts, followed by math. They spend at least 30 minutes a week on science and social studies.

Third Grade

Both third-grade teachers focus on reading/language arts. One explained how she integrates other subjects throughout her instruction, uses dialogue to engage students and utilizes themes:

I'm a big fan of literature-based instruction. I decided years ago that literacy instruction was way too segmented, and I wanted to find literature-based materials where I could incorporate all academic disciplines in that core unit. If it doesn't integrate, it doesn't have the full meaning, I don't think that the children will own it. I do timelines whenever I present something. I like to incorporate science, social studies, math — all subjects. I discovered many years ago that if you make it a core unit and incorporate all of those disciplines ... it had real meaning [for students]. In recent years, I've noticed that's what our adopted reading series has started to do – cross curriculum connections. I hadn't seen that until recent years. That's why I developed my own. I have multiple copies of many chapter books for which I've developed packets. I like to get it meaty enough where there's some dialogue that goes on between characters so that when we have our practice reads and then read aloud, we can get into character. They really get into it.

Both teachers use the Harcourt textbook in its entirety (although they supplement with activities such as the thematic units described above), so students are prepared for the assessments given three times a year. In their opinion, one of the best aspects about the series is its inclusion of supplemental books at each level, enabling children to experience success with the same story at their level. Teachers were pleased with the way the series made it possible to meet children's individual needs. When the teachers have opportunities, such as around holidays, they bring in additional materials to further stimulate student interest.

Fourth Grade

The fourth-grade teachers interviewed for this case study like the nonfiction coverage and spelling lessons with each story in the Harcourt series. However, one would have liked more nonfiction. Explaining the importance of students' increased exposure to nonfiction, one teacher pointed out, "We have analyzed the data from Ohio Proficiency Tests (OPT) in the past and it has shown that nonfiction extends meaning, and is generally one of the most difficult areas for teachers to address."

Fifth Grade

Both fifth-grade teachers described the limitations of the Harcourt series for their classes. One is using the textbook and supplementing extensively with materials such as mini-units on parts of speech to help students learn how to identify the parts of speech and develop good writing techniques. He noted that the class critiques stories in the textbook, many of which, he alleges, provide good examples of bad literature. This teacher also reads novels to the students throughout the year and then shows them the corresponding movie. The class discusses the differences between the two. He also has three groups reading a novel appropriate for their level. This teacher enjoys using technology and succeeded in getting district grant funding for the purchase of a classroom set of Palm Pilots. He participated in training at Akron University and described how students are using this tool:

We have used them to measure oxygen levels in our eco-columns, which led to some good experimentation. Our fish were dying and we found that the oxygen levels were too low. The students had to brainstorm about how to address that. We also use them to keep our science log and do other science activities; students take their spelling tests on them, and then they play games. They think they're getting away with something when they play chess and Yahtzee. I don't mind if they're doing that once they finish their work. They don't notice that they're doing math.

The other fifth-grade teacher has three reading groups in her class and students have a choice of three books at their level. The students as a group choose the book they want to read.

Both fifth-grade teachers stressed their main goal is to prepare students for a smooth transition to middle school, especially helping them learn to be more responsible. They indicated that overcoming poor attitudes, a lack of confidence and socialization skills were the major barriers. One of the teachers agreed that the Pillars of Character program has been helpful, and he has seen good results from it. They also want their students to be more adaptable to a variety of teachers and situations, learning to exhibit appropriate behavior and get along with others.

Small Groups

All the grade levels utilize flexible grouping. Some students may be together for a day or two and others (such as those in a group reading a novel) may be together for an extended period. Sometimes children work in pairs, and for other projects, the entire classroom is split into groups. The number of children in each classroom is reduced by the fact that a number of children are in pullout programs. The special education students work with the special education teachers; students who are reading below grade level receive tutoring from a Title I teacher.

Use of Data to Target Instruction

The school psychologist leads an effort to test all students with Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) as well as other measures of reading and math fluency. At first, Essex used only the assessment system that accompanied the textbook, but now Akron is using DIBELS districtwide. Testing occurs three times a year and school psychology students from Kent State University assist with the testing.

This is the fourth year of the assessment system. The school psychologist developed the school database with the principal. They determined what they wanted to include in it, made a commitment to keep it up for three years, and systematically review the results and findings so the project is directly useful to the school. As the principal pointed out, "It's not just collecting data – it's what we do with it."

The school psychologist analyzes the data and plots the DIBELS results against pass rates on the OPT. Using these graphs, he can show teachers and parents that students who fall within a certain range of reading fluency have a certain percentage chance of passing the high stakes test. He said, "It's when we tied the results to high-stakes testing that staff really sat up and took notice."

He provides teachers with lists of students who would benefit from intervention, communicates results to parents, and helps monitor the progress of students who are receiving intervention. While all Akron schools are using DIBELS for fluency, the majority of schools and the district itself are not using the data for planning and monitoring intervention. He explained the difference with Essex, "This building has enough people believing in the system that I am able to monitor and intervene as opposed to assess and identify." A teacher highlighted the benefits: "We use all of the psychologist's data to drive instruction. He's good because he'll break down data for us and say, 'OK, these are kids in trouble and we need to do something.'"

The school psychologist and the speech-language pathologist are on-site two days a week. In addition to working together to collect assessment data and distribute information, they also help in the weekly monitoring of student progress using DIBELS. All students on the concern list are tested weekly to monitor their progress. While all are not yet on grade level, they are meeting their goals and are showing improvement in reading fluency.

According to staff, the school psychologist is good at breaking down the results and showing teachers where intervention is needed. He provides quick turnaround; for example, on testing done in the morning, he has results ready by noon. He also has presented the information to the staff as a group and has shared individual student data with parents, including grade level averages for comparison purposes). One teacher described how sharing such information can help parents see their children's progress:

I use the fluency data at interim and report card pick-up. It's a great way to communicate with parents, to show them that even though their children may not be where we want them as far as a letter grade, they are improving. I share it with the kids too. I have one child who is repeating a grade and his fluency has grown by leaps and bounds, and he can see that. His grades are not wonderful, but he's improving.

Teachers primarily use the data for identifying which students to pull out for the Title I reading. The data helps them organize students into reading groups based on their level. The groups are flexible and student groups get reconfigured as follow-up retesting shows progress by individual students. A teacher further explained this process:

The data the psychologist provides are excellent. What we do is take a total picture of each child and then of the class, and we chart it. We can actually predict the success or failure of these students before they enter our classroom. Therefore, the intervention is already in place. The children have been tested and identified. DIBELS has been a great help to us. If students are new to the building, we do an assessment and get them into intervention right away.

Teachers also make adjustments based on the children's daily work. Teachers test students often and make modifications in instruction based on the results.

The principal pointed out that "the data really helps us keep on track and we look at the classes to see if one is going up as much as others." He publicly posts the data on the bulletin board to

inform people of how all the classes are doing. He follows up with the teachers whose scores are not in line with the performance of other classes at the same grade level, asking if they are “differentiating the instruction the way it should be?” In this way, he makes teachers accountable for how their students are performing and expects them to make adjustments if their class is not progressing. In interviews, teachers made only positive comments about this process, indicating that it was useful and beneficial for the children. The principal explained that he is the only one that gets the total school results.

The school also has peer tutors work with students. For example, fifth-grade students use flash cards to do a brief five- to 10-minute tutoring session with first-graders on sight words every morning. No time is taken from the school day for this activity, but the younger students receive extra encouragement and benefit from the model provided by older children. The school psychologist trains and provides scripted interventions for the peer tutors to use. He also shares a scripted five-minute intervention (a DIBELS product) with parents that outlines activities to overcome struggles with phonics and oral fluency. Each script is tailored to the individual child’s DIBELS results.

The school psychologist is in the process of developing additional interventions. For example, he noticed that at grade three, students, especially African-American males, start falling behind. He and the principal developed a summer intervention in which they took the *100 Book Challenge* into the neighborhoods during the summer. They were hopeful that this activity would keep kids reading and motivated throughout the summer, and continue to reinforce the importance the school places on reading.

Intervention

The Instructional/Behavior Assessment (IBAT) Committee meets weekly and discusses students whose names have been submitted by teachers. Committee members include the principal, four teachers, the school psychologist, speech pathologist and speech student teacher. The teacher that submits the student’s name attends and parents are invited to the meeting. The committee discusses possible interventions and then makes recommendations. Primary interventions include assignment to the Title I pullout program or to special education.

Kindergarten through fourth-graders whose reading skills are weaker than other students are pulled out for 35 minutes of tutoring (a mix of one-on-one and small group) four days a week with a Title I teacher. There are three part-time Title I teachers who are at the school four days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m: one is assigned to first grade; a second Title I teacher is dedicated to kids in kindergarten and second grade; and still another has third- and fourth-graders. Each of these teachers supplements the material being taught by the classroom teacher. All Title I students are pulled out of their regular class during the day, but some are with the regular classroom teacher during the reading period. Teachers noted they schedule pullouts to take place so students do not miss instruction for which they cannot make up.

The Title I teachers work closely with the classroom teachers, who provide written instructions about what material to cover. This is incorporated into the Title I teachers’ own lesson plans, which also use the Harcourt series and corresponding support material. Staff who participated in the district training showed the Title I teachers how to use the new materials. Referral of students to Title I is based on a combination of teacher recommendations and the students’ performance on assessment tests. One Title I teacher noted, “We also based it on an intervention philosophy – that if you wait a year or two, it’s too late.” The school strives to intervene and bring students up to grade level as early as possible. By fifth grade, almost all children are reading at grade level and the few that are not have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and continue to work with the special education teacher. Title I teachers strongly believe

that the pullout program is more effective than competing with the distractions of their regular classrooms.

Many Title I students also are assigned to an OhioReads tutor. In this program, community and business volunteers visit the school to do one-on-one reading with at-risk students. In addition, the school has an after-school tutoring program. All students who are not performing at grade level in reading are required to attend summer school. It is free for students and takes place at Essex, but parents must provide transportation. Teachers also send home workbooks and books for all children to use during the summer.

Special Education

The two special education teachers work with students who have IEPs. One has kindergarten through second grade, while the other works with students in grades 3-5. The teachers also will take students without IEPs if they need to work on a skill that can be addressed within special education. If at all possible, the school assigns all special education students within a grade to one teacher. This facilitates coordination between the special education teachers and regular teachers. The arrangement also makes it possible for the special education teacher to team-teach with regular teachers. For example, the special education teacher team-teaches with one of the fourth-grade teachers. The regular teachers also do additional supplementary activities.

Other Services

The speech therapist is very involved with the school even though she is only present two days a week. She spends a lot of time with the school's classroom for autistic children, which has four students and four adults. In addition to the speech therapist, an occupational therapist provides services to these students. Through a community program funded by Catholic Services, the school used to employ a counselor and social worker; funding cuts eliminated those positions

Incentives

The school gives students incentives, but staff members are careful not to overdo them; indeed, the goal is to self-motivate students. For example, the *100 Book Challenge* is managed by a company that sells associated prizes. When schools start the system, the company encourages the distribution of prizes. The school made the decision not to buy a lot of prizes. As one teacher said: "We wanted the students to read for the sake of reading and not for a bouncy ball. So we don't buy those and we don't give them out. And our students read for the sake of reading!" However, the principal does give prizes for every 100 lines read and the school has a pizza party at the end of the year for those completing the school goal of at least 400 lines.

Teachers occasionally give small treats such as pencils to students who demonstrate good behavior over an extended period or do exceptionally well on tests. The second-grade teachers have classes compete on timed tests and high scoring students get treats. Students who pass all parts of the fourth-grade proficiency test are taken out for a special lunch.

Retention

The decision to retain a student involves the parents, teacher and principal. If at all possible, children advance with their class, but they must meet all requirements. Struggling students receive intervention services from the beginning of the school year onward to bring them up to grade level. When Essex does retain a student, the principal prefers to place that child with a different teacher.

PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

Teachers use a wide variety of instructional strategies such as centers, webbing, advance organizers, sticky notes to record comments, microphones to project their voices, flexible groupings, Book Club, Palm Pilots, Four-Blocks and Power Writing. One observer gave the following description of one obviously effective class:

The teacher used excellent teaching strategies. She was fully engaged in the lesson and had an interested and excited demeanor. She led the class in discussion, modeled fluent reading, and gave a comprehensive introduction to the novel and expected activities. The class moved at a fast clip and she did not waste any time. Students were on task and interested in the work.

Essex Elementary teachers gave examples of how they often went beyond basic expectations as part of their attempt to address the needs of students. For example, one third-grade teacher described teachers' efforts to cover the standards in their curriculum:

We're very knowledgeable about the state standards spanning three grade levels. We know what they should have covered, what they need to have covered for the current grade level, and what they're going to cover in the following year. We had a lot of staff in-services about state standards and reached a consensus as grade-level teams on what to target for improvements. We decided we also needed to be familiar with what's outside of our grade level. All of the teachers work with the same philosophy.

At the beginning of the school year, teachers meet in grade level teams and use the achievement and proficiency test results, the initial assessment data for the school year, and the board's curriculum guide to inform their lesson planning.

Professional Development

Teachers agreed that the district provides excellent professional development, as one teacher attested, "Akron offers the best professional development of any district I've heard of." Examples of in-services that have been particularly helpful include those on the standards and the new Harcourt series. In addition, teachers mentioned training from years before on multiple intelligences, minimizing classroom distractions and the Central Elements of Instruction (CEI) as having had a major impact on their instruction.

Monthly staff meetings also provide a chance for professional development. Teachers appreciate the school's activities, mentioning recent training on differentiating instruction in reading and math, cross-curriculum instruction, the Developmental Reading Assessment, power writing and sessions on reading led by a Kent State University professor. A teacher highlighted the value of these: "Staff in-services here at the school have had more merit than programs I have attended outside this building. I went to a conference in May. I didn't walk away with anything new, but I walked away enlightened by the fact that this school is so advanced." The principal asks the teachers for input on in-service topics they want to see offered at the school.

Others said the opportunity to visit classrooms has been tremendously beneficial and they have learned much by observing "master" teachers at Essex as well as at schools districtwide. These are highly experienced teachers who have been identified by their peers as a helpful resource who model effective instruction. One interviewee noted: "Sometimes you get tunnel vision. You're with your kids all day, and you forget you can do things in a different way."

Grants

One of the major grants benefiting Essex Elementary has been the OhioReads grant. This has paid for additional reading materials and a coordinator. The coordinator keeps track of the books, recruits volunteers from the community and local businesses, and schedules the volunteers to do one-on-one supervision of student reading.

Over the years, proceeds from fundraisers have gone to a student activity fund. The principal generally will use this money to buy items requested by teachers. And even though the school will lose most of its OhioReads grant money in the upcoming year, student activity funds will make it possible to continue the program.

A few teachers have successfully pursued grants for specific activities. For example, one fifth-grade teacher applied for a distinct technology grant and received funding for a classroom set of Palm Pilots. Former principals also helped to bring several grant-funded projects to the school.

Student Performance

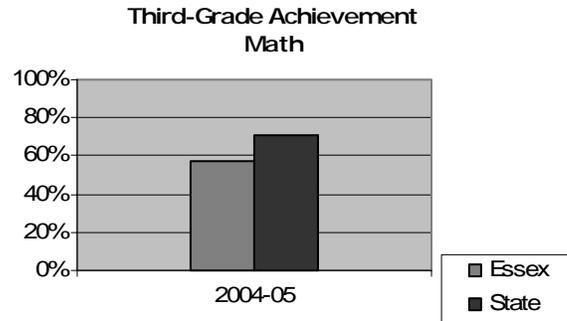
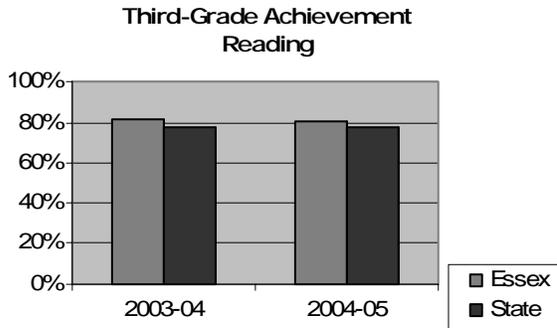
Teachers said they are glad that state testing requirements now impact grades other than fourth. They say it has helped all teachers to understand more fully the expectations and preparation of their students. They especially are putting more focus on writing. Since the school has developed its extensive assessment process, teachers say they can predict which students will likely have difficulty with the OPT as early as second grade. They are using the Title I program to intervene as early as possible so student performance on state tests continues to be high. Staff also repeatedly mentioned the impact of the *100 Book Challenge*, explaining that students are now reading every day and reading is the basis for success in all subjects.

Teachers pointed out that student' scores have increased over the years, but given the dip in their 2002-2003 reading performance, there is clearly not a "magic formula." Overall, they attribute the rise in reading scores to daily emphasis on reading, systematic analysis of test data and immediate intervention. Essex Elementary students' performance on the fourth-grade proficiency test improved dramatically in 2003-2004. The 83 percent pass rate for that year exceeded the state average of 70.8 percent.

Fourth-grade students continued to demonstrate a high level of achievement in reading in 2004-2005. Third- and fifth-graders also exceeded the state target of 75 percent for passing the new reading achievement tests. Unfortunately, the school lost its *Schools of Promise* status in reading because its minority students failed to meet the minimum criteria on the fifth-grade reading tests. In addition, the reading scores of African-Americans (71.4 percent) and males (73.7 percent) was consistent with the school's finding that African-American males' reading DIBELS scores declined noticeably beginning at third grade. While gender is not a consideration for *Schools of Promise*, this remains an issue that the principal and school psychologist already had begun targeting for additional intervention, especially through the school's summer reading activities. Thus, the school is taking proactive action to raise the reading scores of all minority students and return as a *School of Promise* in the 2005-2006 school year. Fourth-graders also improved in math, increasing 59 percent to 65 percent proficient, but neither the fourth-graders nor third-graders have met the state minimum requirement of 75 percent in math.

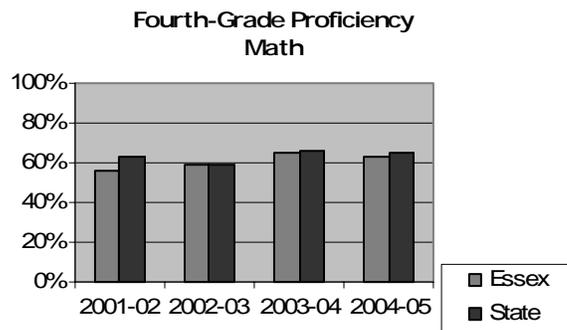
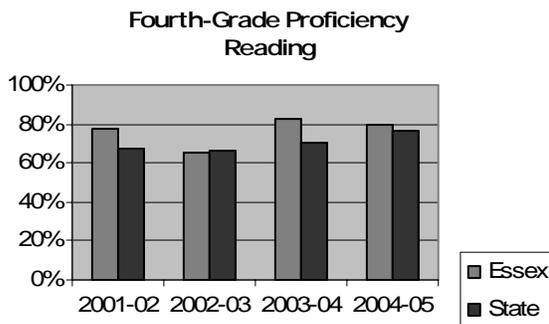
Essex Elementary School vs. Ohio⁴ Third Grade Achievement Test Results

	Reading		Math	
	Essex	State	Essex	State
2003-2004	82.0%	78.2%	NA	NA
2004-2005	81.1%	77.3%	56.8%	70.4%



Essex Elementary School vs. Ohio⁵ Fourth-Grade Proficiency/Achievement Test Results

	Reading		Math	
	Essex	State	Essex	State
2001-2002	77.6%	67.7%	56.1%	62.9%
2002-2003	65.9%	66.3%	59.1%	58.6%
2003-2004	82.6%	70.8%	65.2%	65.8%
2004-2005	79.6%	76.6%	63.3%	65.5%

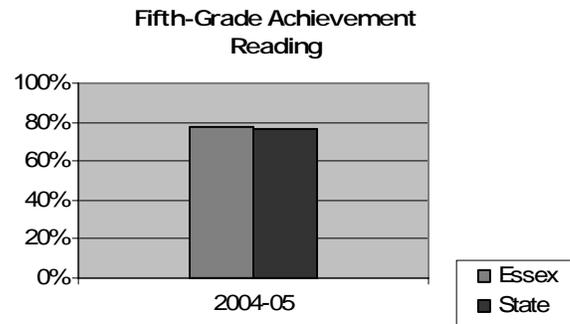


⁴ Data Source: School and State Report Cards

⁵ Data Source: School and State Report Cards

Essex Elementary School vs. Ohio⁵ Fifth-Grade Achievement Test Results

	Reading	
	Essex	State
2004-2005	77.5%	76.9%



ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

The features about Essex Elementary that drive so many parents to choose it are 1) its foreign language program and 2) the school's overall success. Essex has a high level of communication with parents; teachers talk frequently with parents at parent-teacher conferences, at report card pick-up, by telephone, by e-mail and at school events. The school offers a unique tool for helping parents help their children: a comprehensive videotape featuring tips for succeeding in school. What's more, teachers send notes and newsletters home frequently. Some even send home a daily or weekly folder containing student work that must be signed by a parent. Others reward students for getting their daily planner signed by parents. Additionally, the school hosts a Game Night in which the kids play games in the gym, while parents go to workshops about curriculum, assessment and ways to help their children. The school also had a session in which staff provided training on the *100 Book Challenge* program. Teachers think this ongoing reading activity has helped increase parental interest and involvement.

Parents are supportive, thanks in part to the effort of a former principal to welcome parents and their involvement in school programs. Parents host coffee gatherings, serve on the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO), volunteer their talents, plan parties and fundraising events and participate in student activities. The first grade enjoys a Thanksgiving feast for which parents prepare all the food. The students are aware that their parents are involved. Parents seem to participate in almost everything except for tutoring. Still, like other schools, there exists a parental contingent that has little if any involvement. One third-grade teacher, for example, mentioned that she had only met personally with half of her students' parents.

Interviewed parents were especially pleased with their children's educational experience at Essex Elementary. Comments included:

The language program is a strong one. The small classes are good. There is parent involvement and respect from the teachers. The school has worked hard to close the diversity gap. The school has gone above in reading and in math.
(Parent of kindergarten student)

I love the reading programs. From what my seventh-grader has done (she attended grades kindergarten through fifth at Essex), it's the standards that the teachers hold. Each teacher has a requirement and if students are not reaching that requirement they make you [parent] aware. The teachers make you aware of any problem whatsoever. They make you aware of everything going on in the school.
(Parent of a second grader)

I'm really surprised at the level of expectation in math. It's beyond what I thought. They're working on addition and subtraction to the point of subtracting three numbers. They're not borrowing yet. And they're solving word problems. To say that first-graders are doing word problems, I find it surprising. *(Parent of kindergarten student and first-grader)*

Interestingly, these parents shared positive comments about the math program despite the fact that the school's test results in math are poor. The school may need to do more to educate parents about this and encourage them to do math-related supplemental activities at home. The school has been quite successful in getting parent involvement in the reading program. Getting parents more involved in supporting math instruction could make a difference with students' math performance.

The school also invites grandparents and the community to its programs and events. The OhioReads program further contributes to the school's connection with the community. Local businesses such as FirstEnergy encourage employees to volunteer at the school. Parents also volunteer their time to work with OhioReads.

SUMMARY OF “LESSONS LEARNED” SPECIFIC TO ESSEX ELEMENTARY

Essex Elementary has steadily improved students' reading performance. The *100 Book Challenge* program has most likely had a major impact, as students are reading on a daily basis at school and home. Additionally, the extensive testing and data analysis directed by the school psychologist are helping teachers determine which students need intervention. Furthermore, Essex has numerous one-on-one tutoring opportunities for at-risk students, including with Title I teaching staff; a peer tutor, the OhioReads tutor and after-school tutoring. Together with their principal, teachers enjoy working as a team and sharing effective practices. Professional development is an important part of monthly school meetings. Teachers are encouraged to attend district in-service trainings and observe experienced teachers. The foreign language program makes the school unique and exemplifies to students the value of communication skills. Essex is making progress. Unfortunately, at the time of the *Schools of Promise* case study, it was scheduled for closing within the next two years, as its size (fewer than 350) restricted the district's ability to use state funds to renovate the building as needed. It is likely that parents and others in the community will continue to protest this decision.

The table on the following page summarizes the school's characteristics that are most closely associated with the “Five Lessons Learned” identified in the initial *Schools of Promise* case studies. Essex Elementary has successfully put into place many practices that have proven advantageous to children, especially with respect to reading achievement. The school especially has done a good job of monitoring and identifying performance declines with African-American males and is making efforts to address those gaps. It is likely that the school will be able to recover its *Schools of Promise* status in reading in the upcoming year, but it still needs to do much work to improve student learning in math.

Essex Elementary: Summary of School Characteristics by Five Lessons Learned

Five Lessons Learned					School Characteristics
Providing leadership that results in continuous improvement	Creating a culture where each individual feels valued	Designing instruction to ensure every student's success	Providing rigorous instruction aligned to standards	Engaging parents and community to support student success	
					Staff Characteristics
X					Strong and collaborative principal
X					Strong previous principal
X					Senior/experienced staff
X					High staff commitment
X	X				Caring teachers and staff
X	X	X			High expectations
					Practices Impacting Students
	X	X	X		Tutoring at-risk students, in-school or after-school
X		X	X		Analysis of test data to inform intervention
		X	X		Frequent testing
	X	X	X		Small reading groups
	X	X	X		Extensive use of small groups
	X	X	X		Collaboration of intervention, special, and regular
	X				Incentives
					Instructional Characteristics
X		X	X		Strong Reading Program
X	X	X	X		Leveled reading program (<i>100 Book Challenge</i>)
	X	X	X		Wide variety of instructional strategies by teachers
					Use of centers
	X	X	X		Summer school intervention program
X					Schoolwide behavior management program
					Staff Development Characteristics
		X	X		Attention to state standards
X		X	X		Extensive professional development
X		X	X		Grants (Ohio Reads)
X		X	X		Opportunities for teachers to observe each other
					Parent and Community Characteristics
				X	Extensive communication with parents
				X	High level of parent involvement
				X	Staff who are graduates or part of community
		X	X	X	Alliance with area colleges
					Institutional Characteristics
				X	Open Enrollment