

Jackson Elementary School

Superintendent Stephen P. Anderson

Principal Nanetta Fults

Case Study Report Highlights: Jackson Elementary School

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- **Strong and Experienced Leadership** - The principal was previously a second-grade teacher at the school. She is also continuing as district curriculum director, a position she has held for the past 12 years while serving as principal at another building. She is experienced and adding to the foundation established by her predecessor.
- **Superintendent Supportive of Reading and Math** - The superintendent has introduced numerous changes intended to promote reading and math districtwide, including requiring elementary schools to spend more time on these subjects by eliminating PE and art, reducing music to an hour per week and covering science in nonfiction reading. The district also has invested substantially in reading resources and professional development.
- **Experienced and Collaborative Teachers** - Several teachers have long-term teaching experience and a few have been at the school for many years. The teachers work well together with each other and the principal. All elementary teachers in the district have Common Planning Time every morning prior to the arrival of students.

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

- **Caring Teachers** - Teachers demonstrate that they care about students in numerous ways, ranging from working with them outside of regular class time to ensuring they have proper clothing for cold weather.
- **High Expectations** - Teachers consistently emphasize they expect all children to achieve at a high level. All teachers assign homework Monday through Thursday and test often. Staff also places a high value on field trips and other activities that give the children a larger world view.
- **Strong Discipline** - Teachers generally deal with misbehaving students immediately and they appreciate the principal's support of discipline. The school also uses a character program to help students' learn self-control.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS

- **Reading Program** - The basal text at the school is the McGraw-Hill series. However, intervention teachers' use of McGraw-Hill varies. They have found the Benchmark tutoring program to be especially effective.
- **Accelerated Reading Program (ARP)** - Students enjoy reading the leveled ARP books. They are color-coded so students can select their own books. Students take computerized tests upon completion of each book. When they score a 4/5, they get credit for the book and receive prizes based on the number of books read.
- **Small Reading Groups, Intervention and Inclusion** - Struggling kindergarten students go to an intervention teacher for 30 minutes daily. Students reading at the lowest levels in grades 1-5 are either assigned to the Title I teacher or the special education teacher for reading. The Title I teachers have these students for their entire two-and-one-half-hour reading period. The special education teacher has students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for an hour and then they return to their regular classrooms. Use of group activities enables regular teachers to give IEP students one-on-one attention. Assignment to intervention teachers reduces each instructional group to 6-10 students. Students in grades 3, 4 and 5 can be sent to another grade-level room if their reading ability is high.
- **Writing Program** - Each Jackson class composes a book each year that is professionally published free for the school. These books are in the classrooms for students to read and each student can purchase a copy.
- **Assessment** - The school has added systematic pre- and post-testing. The *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) test is used with first-graders and a *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) with second- through fifth-graders. Testing associated with the McGraw-Hill series and ARP books also is utilized.
- **Use of Tutors** - A retired teacher tutored struggling third-graders prior to the state's third-grade reading test.
- **Incentives** - Children, particularly in grades K-2, are given small awards such as candy and toys to encourage completion of academic tasks, reward them for reading leveled books and to discourage misbehavior.

PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

- **Attention to Standards** - Teachers have a good working knowledge of the benchmarks and standards.
- **Professional Development and Grants** - Receipt of an OhioReads grant brought an infusion of reading resources and professional development to the school which staff views as having had a major impact on students' reading performance. Students had a 32 percent increase in reading performance in the first year of OhioReads.

ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

- **Parent Involvement** - Jackson is a close-knit community and many parents attended the school. Parents like the friendliness and "family" atmosphere of the school.

INTRODUCTION

The town of Jackson, located in southern Ohio between Chillicothe and Athens, is in Jackson County. The population is slightly more than 6,000. The 1999 median family income was \$38,345, which is 23 percent below the state median of \$50,037. Jackson Elementary is located in the countryside, about 10 miles outside of town, and serves one of the poorer areas of town. More than one-half (54 percent) of Jackson Elementary students are low-income.

Jackson City School District Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
District Rating	Continuous Improvement (10 out of 18 indicators met)	Continuous Improvement (9 out of 23 indicators met)
District Enrollment	2,638	2,724
Schools	Elementary Schools: 7 Middle Schools: 1 High Schools: 1	Elementary Schools: 4 Middle Schools: 1 High Schools: 1

Jackson Elementary School Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
School Rating	Effective (5 out of 7 indicators met)	Continuous Improvement (3 out of 9 indicators met)
Enrollment	129	127
Grade Levels	K-5	K-5
Average Expenditure per Pupil	\$3,093	NA
Low-Income percentage	55.6%	54.1%
Percent racial/ethnic minority	5.2%	5.4%
Students with Disabilities	20.2%	24.8%
Student Attendance Rate	95.4%	95.4%

The school is very small, with only 129 students. It is in an older building and, even with such a limited student body, is bursting at the seams. It does not have an auditorium, gym or a separate teacher restroom. Hallways are filled with bookshelves that contain labeled reading books that can be accessed by children from various classrooms. The district closed Jackson Elementary at the end of the 2004-2005 school year and is building a new school that will combine the enrollments of Jackson Elementary and another district elementary school.



Jackson Elementary School Teacher Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
Teachers	9	8
Average Teacher Salary	\$42,451	\$46,768
Percent of Courses Taught by Certified Licensed Teachers	100%	100%
Teacher Attendance Rate	96.3%	91.0%
Average Years of Experience	14	18

SCHOOLS OF PROMISE AND THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROCESS

Jackson Elementary was recognized as a *School of Promise* as a result of students' reading performance in 2003-2004. Students demonstrated a huge gain on their reading achievement between 2001-2002 and 2002-2003. They moved from a 57 percent pass rate to 89 percent, an increase of nearly 32 percentage points on the fourth-grade proficiency test. The students showed continuing improvement in 2003-2004, as 100 percent passed the reading test. Children who took the third- grade achievement test in 2003-2004 also did well with 89 percent passing. Jackson Elementary met the *Schools of Promise* criteria in reading for two years, 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. Staff views the OhioReads grant program as a major factor in students' improved reading performance. The school's fourth-graders also progressed in math during these years. Students went from 48 percent proficiency in 2001-2002 to 65 percent passing the test in 2002-2003, a 17 percent improvement, but there was little progress in the following year, as 65 percent passed the math section in 2003-2004. The school did not satisfy the state minimum requirements of at least a 75 percent passage rate on the fourth-grade proficiency test in math for any of the years studied.

Unfortunately, the school's state test scores in reading and math declined in 2004-2005. Only 68 percent of Jackson's fourth-graders were successful on the 2004-2005 reading test and only 52 percent passed the math test. Third-graders' scores also declined in reading, from 89 percent in 2003-2004 to 71 percent in 2004-2005. Seventy-six percent of third-graders, however, passed the math test, but this was not true of all subgroups. For instance, only 72.7 percent of those who are not economically disadvantaged passed the test. Fifth-grade students met the state requirement with a 77 percent pass rate on the new reading achievement test; however, the economically disadvantaged subgroup (72.7 percent) failed to meet the state's minimum criteria.

Jackson Elementary is one of four elementary schools randomly selected by Institutional Research Consultants (IRC) from the 68 elementary schools identified among the 2003-2004 *Schools of Promise*. The focus in this case study is the school's reading program, but the research team also observed math classes and asked teachers about their math instruction. As part of the two-day case study visit, the researchers observed five of the six K-5 teachers and interviewed all of them. Interviews were also done with the principal, a special education teacher and two Title I teachers. In addition, the team conducted two single-sex focus groups with students, three males and three females.¹ Finally, the researchers completed telephone interviews with six parents. A total of 22 people participated in interviews. The table on the following page outlines all research activities.

Jackson Elementary was selected as a case study based on its designation as a *School of Promise* in 2003-2004, but the site visit took place in 2004-2005. This report describes the specific strategies that teachers and the principals attribute for the students' high level of achievement. Jackson Elementary also provides an example of a school that had multi-year success followed by dramatic declines in test performance. Furthermore, this was a school that was scheduled for closing. This report describes the school's efforts to maintain students' strong performance in reading and to further improve math achievement; however, several changes that occurred in 2004-2005 may have negatively impacted student learning. Since Jackson's

¹ For all elementary student focus group sessions, the research team asked that the included students be at least age 9. Unfortunately, the principal missed this specification in the directions and sent grade K-2 students to the groups. As a result of excluding the younger children, the student focus groups at this school were smaller than the six per group intended.

situation is not that uncommon, this report may provide useful advice to other administrators dealing with school consolidations.

Jackson Elementary School: Case Study Research Coverage

	TOTAL	Interviewed		Observed		Returned Survey	
	N	N	N	N	%	N	%
Teachers							
Pre-K – Grade 5	6	6	100.0	5	83.3	6	100.0
Other Interviews and Surveys							
Principal						1	
Parents						6	
Students (Two Focus Groups)						6	
Other Interviews/Observations							
Special Education						1	
Title I Teachers						2	
TOTAL INTERVIEWS						22	
TOTAL TEACHERS OBSERVED						8	
TOTAL TEACHER SURVEYS						7	

This report is organized using the “Five Lessons Learned” identified in earlier *Schools of Promise* case study research.² 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. Jackson Elementary has evidence of these components, and this report is an effort to highlight some of the ways that it is applying the lessons in its day-to-day operations.

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Even though this is Dr. Nanetta Fults’ first year as principal at Jackson Elementary, she has worked in the district for more than 30 years. Earlier in her career, she was a second-grade teacher at the school, so she knows many of the families and teachers. Moreover, as district curriculum director, she had ongoing contact with the school. Interestingly, since the district and school are so small, she has been both a principal (in another building) and the curriculum director for the past 12 years. She also has been a Title I Reading Coordinator. Thus, Dr. Fults is highly experienced and especially knowledgeable with the issues involved in teaching young economically disadvantaged children how to read.

The previous principal, Mrs. Deborah Biggs, set the tone for the school’s current progress towards achievement. Staff described her as an effective organizer and grant writer. Teachers also attributed gains in student learning to the way that the former principal effectively handled discipline problems. Dr. Fults has been able to build on this foundation. Mrs. Biggs became the principal at one of the new district schools and two teachers (one in special education and a

²The *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).

Title I teacher) followed her to the new location. Consequently, beginning with the 2004-2005 year, Jackson has a new principal and three new teachers (two of whom teach at critical testing grade levels) on board, which is quite a substantial transition for such a small school (in effect a third of the staff has changed within a single year).

The district superintendent, Stephen Anderson, has also done a lot to provide all elementary schools in the district with the resources needed to improve students' reading abilities. In the past two years, the district has committed \$250,000 to the purchase of reading materials. In her role as curriculum director, the principal had a Reading Fair and many vendors came to display their wares. In addition to McGraw-Hill books and supplements, the school purchased the following additional resources: Scholastic Guided Reading (fiction), Learner and National Geographic (nonfiction) and the Benchmark tutoring program. Although Jackson Elementary has a very limited budget, it is well equipped with reading resources, and the principal felt if they requested something beneficial for instruction the superintendent would likely honor the request as long as it was appropriate for the entire district.

The district's goal is for every child to be reading at grade level. The superintendent has implemented a number of changes that make reading and math a clear priority. He has expanded the number of class sections in kindergarten and first-grade in order to reduce class size and enhance reading instruction. He has also eliminated or reduced time for all other subject areas at elementary schools districtwide. Physical education (PE) and art are no longer offered; a music teacher comes to each school for 30 minutes once a week; and science is to be covered in the elementary grades through reading only. Teachers that taught these subjects were reassigned to other positions. Classroom teachers are now expected to cover these content areas through reading and math instruction. For example, students drew pictures as part of writing a story and teachers played music while students completed worksheets. In an effort to direct more time and focus on test scores, the superintendent has also reduced the number of field trips and is requiring all grade levels across the district to have the same field trip experiences. Teachers and parents appreciate the district's intensive emphasis on reading and math, but both groups expressed concerns about the reduction in PE, science, art, and restrictions on field trips. The main reason staff gave for the changes was the district's goal to improve students' reading and math scores on state tests.

The district also introduced Common Planning Time in the 2004-2005 academic year. All teachers have the first 45 minutes of the day for planning. They used to have planning time when their children went to art and PE. Since the superintendent eliminated those classes, he gave teachers a Common Planning Time at the beginning of the day. Even though there is only one teacher per grade level, there is the need for them to communicate with each other, the special education teacher and the Title I reading/intervention teachers. Dr. Fults discussed her leadership approach and how teachers were using their planning time:

Since this was my first year, I wanted to come into the building and see how things were running. I'm not one to make a lot of changes immediately. I like to see how things are going. Staff has time in the morning to meet with each other, and I know that they do meet frequently and talk, especially the Title teachers who work with particular teachers. They meet practically daily to talk with each other. They [all teachers] are required to meet at least three days. In the other buildings, where there are multiple grade levels, they are required to meet as a grade level team three days a week. The other days they can work on their own.

The school day also has been shortened by an hour. Teachers normally arrive at 7:45 a.m., have 45 minutes for planning, and then students are at school from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. In addition, this schedule facilitates monthly districtwide professional development meetings.

The principal's major goals for the school include maintaining the school's achievement level in reading, getting new staff including herself acclimated to Jackson and its processes, and determining aspects that could be further improved. The school benefits from the fact that most of the teachers have been at the school for at least 10 years and are highly skilled. Furthermore, Jackson qualifies for two Title I teachers which helps to keep the student-to-teacher ratio lower than average. The principal explained that the ratio at Jackson Elementary is 1:11 compared to 1:25 at her former school in the district.

The small size of the school and community result in a "family" atmosphere in which most of the staff regularly demonstrates a high level of compassion for their students and maintains a close relationship with parents. Further adding to parents' good feelings about Jackson is that many of them are former students of the school and some even had the current principal as their second-grade teacher.

Highly Experienced Staff Committed to School

Several of the teachers in the building (grades K, 1, 3, and 5) have taught for many years. The average years of experience were 18 years. Three had been at Jackson for more than 15 years. A few of the teachers noted that their parents had been teachers or administrators and emphasized that education has always been an important part of their lives. The principal effused, "They are all just strong teachers. They're just excellent teachers." Teachers consistently described the school as a friendly place to work in which they felt supported by the principal and parents. They enjoyed working at Jackson and wanted to do all they could to help the children.

Collaborative Working Relationships

The teachers work well together. They feel supported by the principal and each other. Their comments included:

The freedom the administrator gives us to use whatever materials are available and to make our own plans. You just feel trusted that you know what you're doing, and that's very rewarding.

We've had some changes over the years, but it's always been a very cohesive staff: People who care about each other and who care about kids. ... I hope that it can continue. People work together. It takes a lot of cooperation. For example, with my third-grade math, this was the first year that we did the third-grade achievement test in math and I realized that I used the wrong rulers when we did math. Anytime something like that comes up, I can go to the second-grade teacher and ask, "What do you use to measure? Can you try to use this, because this is how it was tested on the third-grade test?" And she does it. It's that spirit of cooperation in this building that has a great deal to do with our success. It's not the money or what the kids have at home, that's obvious.

The staff here is wonderful, everyone here is really friendly. If I need anything I can ask them for advice or help. I was coming in as a substitute teacher, and they didn't know how long I'd be here. I'd write my lessons. I was pretty much on my own, but if I had questions I could ask. I knew everybody here--I used to go to

this school. Three of them were actually my former teachers, so I have known them for a long time.

Teachers were concerned that their closeness might be somewhat lost when they moved to the larger school, and they mentioned this fear in their interviews. For example, one explained:

I have heard you lose your small school awareness. That's from friends that have gone to some of the new schools. There's not the closeness and camaraderie you have with your peers in the small setting. But I'm looking forward to having a new environment. [This teacher's class is along the cafeteria, with no walls. It is not a real classroom.]

Jackson is a school in transition. It is in the process of preparing for the move to a much larger setting. The district also is implementing numerous changes to increase standardization across schools, partly in an effort to duplicate the success of Jackson's reading performance at elementary schools districtwide.

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

The small size of the school and community contributes to teachers' ability to make individual students feel valued. There is only one teacher for each grade level. Grades K-2 were self-contained classrooms in which most students have the same teacher for the full-day. In grades 1 and 2, the lowest readers had their reading class (2.5 hours) with the Title I teacher and special education students spent an hour with the special education teacher. The Title I teacher also worked 30 minutes daily with the lowest performing kindergarten students. In grades K-2, mornings are devoted to reading and at least an hour is focused on math in the afternoon.

Students in grades 3-5 have departmentalized classes in the mornings. They rotate through a separate language arts class with the third-grade teacher, math with the fifth-grade teacher, and social studies with the fourth-grade teacher. All three teachers in the higher grades have all students in grades 3-5, so the teachers throughout the school get to know all the students. In the afternoon, third- through fifth-graders have their grade level teacher for reading and spelling. Comparable to grades 1-2, the lowest-performing readers go to the Title I teacher for two and a half hours and special education students work with the special education teacher for an hour.

Hiring and Nurturing Staff Committed to Students

Staff members are willing to do what they can to help students progress. One teacher emphasized, "Teachers are very work-oriented here. They go above and beyond what I've seen. They give up their lunch and recess to continually work with children. That's the biggest difference." Their concern for the children also went outside education, including making sure students had shoes or mittens if needed. As one teacher pointed out, "If kids don't have those things, they can't learn." It was clear from teachers' descriptions of the students, particularly ones that have experienced hardship such as living in foster care or dealing with various learning disabilities, that they cared deeply about the students. There were many examples of how teachers helped make the children feel valued and important. For example, in the second-grade classroom, student photos hung on one wall. During observations, teachers called on students by name and encouraged everyone to participate in the class. Teachers also wanted to instill in students the joy of learning and reading. One elaborated on this:

You have to show enthusiasm for learning and I'm very dramatic. I think when you can meet each child's needs and you can get them to learn to love to read,

that is just a lifelong skill they're constantly going to have. Even my poorest-reading student loves to hear stories, loves to read on his level. I think as long as you can instill love for learning and reading, that's the key.

Teachers repeatedly emphasized the importance of showing students they cared about them.

Specific Efforts to Address Needs of All Students

For all grades, students who had been identified as needing extra assistance were either assigned to a smaller reading group with the Title I teacher or to the special education teacher. Observations revealed that nearly all of the teachers had exceptionally high rapport with the children and were good at providing one-on-one encouragement within the small group setting. The teachers seemed much attuned to which students were having difficulties. The district also had a Talented and Gifted program (TAG) teacher who came to Jackson Elementary one day a week; she provides resources for K-2, and students in grades 3-5 are pulled out to work on special projects.

High Expectations

Teachers communicated high expectations to students by consistently encouraging them to achieve and by exposing them to experiences beyond their own small community. Elements of holding students to a high standard included nightly homework (Monday-Thursday) by all teachers and frequent testing.

Field trips were an important way of showing the students there was more in the world. As one teacher noted, "I think a lot of times the kids just don't have very high expectations because we live in an area where kids don't always have much. I put things around the room to excite them."

The principal described some of the outside presentations and field visits:

We'll have COSI in September. Again, those are now all district-planned. If we have COSI, everybody will have it. We're trying to bring in more programs from outside. We've already got a field trip planned for this spring. We're bringing in a theater production for K-2. We've always traveled, but they're coming here. We'll go to town. They have the space where we can bring in 200 children. We've gone to Shawnee or Columbus Children's Theater but we're bringing them here so all children get the same opportunity.

Additional activities include writing pen pals in town. The second-grade teacher underscored how isolated some of the children can be and how writing to people locally can be a learning experience, "You would be surprised at the children [living] in the country. We had career day last week, and I had only two children who had been to our YMCA in town." The fifth-grade teacher stressed her goal to prepare students for life beyond elementary school and encourage college attendance, especially as many of the parents had not finished high school.

Strong Discipline

Teachers feel discipline is essential in ensuring that students learn and succeed. All emphasized they try to deal with any discipline problems before sending a student to the office. They appreciate the way the principal provides needed disciplinary support. However, several mentioned the need for additional emphasis on teaching self-discipline to students. The school has used a character program, the Virtues Program, to help children feel good about themselves as well as be more respectful and compassionate. Some teachers noted that this program, unfortunately, has not been consistently utilized. In addition, with the loss of PE,

children are not learning about rules and sportsmanship, and teachers have begun to see more problems at recess.

Teachers were caring and nurturing. They recognize their main responsibility is to educate. Their focus is on preparing children to read at grade level and helping them progress as far as possible.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS

Jackson Elementary has clearly made reading a priority and has scheduled two and one-half hours of reading daily for grades K-5. McGraw-Hill www.mhschool.com/reading/2005/student/index.html is the primary reading program for all grades. Textbook selection is a board decision with input from a teacher committee that studies the materials and makes recommendations to the board. The district adopts new reading materials about every five or six years.³ Monthly meetings are held with all teachers, and if there are any concerns, they can initiate a review of new materials. All teachers are using the McGraw-Hill series, although there is some variation in use – especially by the intervention teachers (Title I and special education). All teachers were supplementing this basal text with a number of additional resources that gave students more options to work at their individual levels. Strategic use of small reading groups, the Accelerated Reading Program (ARP) <http://www.renlearn.com/ar/default.htm>, ample supplemental resources and intervention are key elements of the school's instructional approach.

Small Reading Groups

The school has reorganized classes in an effort to reduce the reading groups to small groups of 10 or fewer students. In grades 1 and 2, the most challenged students in the reading class are sent to the Title I reading teacher all morning or to the special education teacher for an hour. This leaves the classroom teacher with a small group to instruct in reading. In the afternoon, teachers in grades 3 through 5 similarly send their lowest-performing students to the Title I reading teacher or special education teacher. Students in grades 3, 4 and 5 can be sent to another room if their reading ability is at that reading level. A Title I teacher discussed the benefits of the small group setting, "When you're in a small group setting – I have five children around the table, and I'm sitting over here – I can touch each one of them and keep them on task. Nobody is walking around; I know exactly what they need." In kindergarten, all 22 students are in the same room but two parent volunteers, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, assist the teacher. During the case study observation, the teacher and volunteer were constantly circulating through the room, providing individual attention and keeping all children on task.

Accelerated Reading Program

The other major reading program that the school uses is ARP, which it put into place at least five years ago. Books in this program are leveled and labeled. Students read them on their own and then answer questions using a computer. When students achieve a score of 4/5, they are listed on a chart. The ARP books are color coded so students know which ones are appropriate for their reading level. The second-grade teacher explained how this worked, "I have a few students who are reading yellow (fourth- and fifth-grade level). The red dots are the end of first- and second-grade level. The blue dots are first. I have two children that are in the blue dot

³ Most textbook adoption states have a 6-year selection cycle (see *The Mad, Mad World of Textbook Adoption* by Chester E. Finn, Jr. and Diane Ravitch www.edexcellence.net/institute/publication/publication.cfm?id=335, The Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 09/29/2004). In Ohio, the board of education of each city, exempted village or local school district is responsible for the selection and purchase of textbooks (OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 3329.07), so the annual cycle may vary www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/57/75/5775.htm.

books. The rest of them use the red or the yellow. Children are allowed to go to the library to get books as well.” Students can earn a reward if they read certain ARP books (different ones for each grade level) or complete a specified number of books. Teachers post graphs on their walls that list the number of books read by each student.

Teachers for the most part let students choose their own books. The second-grade teacher, for example, requires students to read two books every day and then take the corresponding short test on the computer for each ARP book the student reads. They can share the book with other children or with the teacher. She explained that since she started this practice their ARP points have soared. All teachers were pleased with the ARP and thought it helped make reading more enjoyable for the children. One highlighted its appeal:

The Accelerated Reader Program has certainly been an added plus. The students are using every extra minute they have for reading and doing this accelerated computer test. I've been here for five years and ARP was here before I got here. The thing about Accelerated Reader is that everyone can be reading at his or her own level. That's the neat thing about it. So no matter what grade level you're reading at, you can find your own level. It's a program that's reading for fun, for enjoyment.

According to the teachers, the ARP continues to be of interest for students and there are no signs they are bored with it.

Additional Reading Resources

Teachers, especially the more experienced ones, have a great deal of resource material they draw upon to help struggling students. The principal explained how this came about:

That money came from the general fund. When our new superintendent came in, his goal was to increase the amount of instructional materials so that teachers could instruct on the child's instructional level. We had one basal series and most of the teachers were using that basal series whether the child was reading on grade level or not. We just never had funds in the past to buy a lot of extra materials, and he [superintendent] committed several thousand dollars. We purchased four additional materials: Scholastic Guided Reading (fiction), Learner (nonfiction), National Geographic (nonfiction), and the Benchmark tutoring program.⁴

Six of us went to the Title I conference a year ago – two principals and four teachers. We went to all the vendors' displays, looking at some of the materials. Then we invited 20 of those vendors to come here and we had a vendor's display in May. All the elementary teachers [in the district] were invited to visit that and we had them fill out a questionnaire about each of the companies. They were to indicate the materials they liked and didn't like. When we invited the vendors, we asked them to come with materials for regular instruction, for remedial programs, for tutoring programs, for summer school programs and for working with students who were off grade-level. Actually, the teachers were a little overwhelmed with the first one. So in June, we narrowed the field down to 10 and we brought those 10 back and again offered people the chance to come in. That's how we

⁴ The Benchmark Education Tutoring Program www.benchmarkeducation.com/03_rex/03_rex.html is recommended as a supplement for intervention needs. Its research base is consistent with national standards in reading and the No Child Left Behind legislation www.benchmarkeducation.com/03_rex/03_rex_federal.html.

narrowed it down to the four. And we're going to do another one this spring. We're doing it K-12 this time because we're implementing reading programs in both the middle and high school this year.

Additional supplemental resources Jackson teachers mentioned using included: Scott Foresman for phonics, Parrot books and corresponding tapes, Geo-safari stations and games.

One of the Title I teachers highlighted the value of the supplementary materials, especially for struggling readers:

I modified, with my first-graders, the McGraw-Hill curriculum up until a few months ago. We have gotten a lot of new materials, and I'm working with Benchmarks right now. My five first-graders were really kindergarten level, so I started them with the Scott Foresman phonics program and I've even used the Harcourt materials. I use anything that I can find on their level. The Benchmark seems to be really good. I've enjoyed that because it seems to me it's meeting their needs. That's what the special education teacher uses also [Benchmark program]. We just got that this year.

Teachers said they try a lot of different things and continue ones they find successful with their students. Since there is variation in every class, they are constantly experimenting and learning the new materials. Although the district superintendent was adamant about every school having the same instructional materials available to every building and every child (so that all children are experiencing the same activities and educational opportunities), there is a lot of teacher variation in how the materials are used. This is so even with the basal text and especially in the intervention and special education classrooms. Consequently, children's experiences and access to materials can be very different depending on teachers' choices.

Writing Program

Another supplementary practice Jackson students experience is that each class composes and publishes a book. The principal explained that each class writes its own book in the fall and a publisher prints them at no cost to the school. Each student can then buy the class book. These books also are available in the classroom for students to read. The observer who reviewed the books was impressed by the quality of the writing.

Assessment

The school has begun pre- and post-testing of every first-grade child using the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills* (DIBELS) test once a year. They are now using a pre/post *Developmental Reading Assessment* (DRA) with the second- through fifth-graders. If teachers see students are performing well, they are retested and possibly moved to another group. Teachers also use the *STAR* assessment which is part of the APR, in grades 2-5. Those using McGraw-Hill also use its year-end test. In addition, the kindergarten teacher has a check-off list she uses twice every grading period to monitor students' progress. The list includes letters, sounds, numbers, shapes and colors. Next year, the superintendent will have a committee update the checklist for use by the entire district.

Special Education Inclusion

Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) participate in the regular classes. Some of them spend an hour a day with special education teachers for reading. The special education teacher explained there are students whose IEPs specify full inclusion. Teachers are receptive to having these IEP students in their classroom. If needed, the special education teacher will help the regular teacher work with them by modifying the curriculum for struggling students. Students

assigned to the special education teacher are about two years behind. However, these students also participate in a portion of their reading session with their regular grade level class and ones that show substantial progress can be reevaluated. For example, the fourth-grade teacher explained, "There are several students in the class that have IEPs and there is one little girl for whom we just had an IEP meeting last week. They're taking her out of the special ed program, as she's doing really well."

The school normally does not like to label students as special education before second grade. The first-grade teacher clarified the reason behind this, "You have to be really, really low-performing in first grade to be two standard deviations below [grade level]. Usually they want us to wait until second grade to put them in special education. It's a very hard decision for first grade. It's one of the things I don't like doing." Teachers also emphasized how much young children can grow and mature in a short period of time, so their preference is to not classify children until it becomes absolutely necessary. Teachers mentioned that many struggling students often have families that move frequently. For example, of the nine extremely low-performing students in second grade in the prior year, seven of them moved to other districts.

Part of the reason that the special education students spend so much time with the regular classroom is that the school only has one special education teacher. The school could use an additional special education teacher to share the load, and when the move is made to the new school, this problem may be resolved. Meanwhile, regular teachers have devised various ways of providing special education students with the one-on-one attention needed in the regular classrooms. The second-grade teacher described how she works to give the special education students needed one-on-one assistance:

Two of the 12 that I have are special ed. I have them because the special education teacher is overloaded. They are getting only 50 minutes of reading a day. That's falling through the cracks. I give them anything I can. If we're doing round-robin reading, I will put one of them with my strongest reader and one with me. Then I will give them a paragraph to read that I think they can read. They are so pleased because they can read that portion.

Within the regular classrooms, in addition to the special education students, children are at a range of levels, including those in Talented and Gifted, right at grade level, and slightly below grade level. The better readers often help teachers work with the special education students. During observations, students not assigned to either intervention or special education were engaged and appeared successful. Teachers often organize their activities so that students progress from one to another, freeing the teacher to work with individuals who need help.

The special education teacher emphasized that her use of the Benchmark curriculum this year has made a huge difference. She revealed, "This has helped my students a lot. I was really surprised. A lot of parents have said they like what I'm doing this year." She also noted they had already begun to see improvements with the increased focus on reading and use of flexible grouping. One special education student passed all five parts of the proficiency last year and another passed the third-grade reading test. The principal would like to introduce cross-grade grouping in the upcoming year. This would mean the special education teacher would not have all the special education students. Instead they would be distributed among the Title I teachers and classroom teachers, with the children's placements being based more on ability than grade.

Intervention

The lowest performing students not classified as special education are assigned to one of two Title I reading teachers. These teachers work with small groups of five to six students.

Struggling kindergarten students go to an intervention teacher for 30 minutes. Students in grades 1-5 spend their entire reading/language arts time with one of the two intervention teachers. Students who leave the classroom to work with the intervention teacher are at a lower reading level and need more one-on-one attention made possible by the small group setting. The intervention teacher often uses the same textbooks and practice books, and the regular teacher will often provide corresponding additional worksheets for vocabulary and comprehension. Nonetheless, teachers were free to supplement with different books and resources, so the regular classroom and intervention students did not always have exactly the same experiences.

The kindergarten teacher explained she began using the Scott Foresman early intervention program and a reading test developed by the state to group her students in the following ways:

- Bottom five receive 30 minutes of instruction daily from the itinerant teacher.
- Middle 15 or so receive instruction from the volunteer (usually hands-on activities).
- The top five receive 30 minutes of instruction, two to three times per week, from the kindergarten teacher.

Itinerant teachers are preschool teachers who work with children who are identified with an IEP or special needs. This year, these teachers have also been helping out with the early reading intervention program. The principal indicated, "We've really been impressed with that [Scott Foresman early intervention program www.scottforesmancatalog.com]."

The third-grade teacher referred to the school's approach as "divide and conquer" in that they would separate the weakest students into small groups and give them individual attention. She said, "I found it amazing when I came from a middle-school level to a situation where you work with a handful of students at a time. It's really a blessing in preparation for the test we took [third-grade reading test]." Teachers found the intervention program helped their weakest students, but it also positively impacted the stronger students remaining in the classroom, as they benefited from having a smaller class size and progressed at a more rapid pace.

The school's approach to intervention began with its efforts to prepare fourth-graders for the proficiency test. The fifth-grade teacher explained, "Our Title I person pulled out what we called our bubble group. We'd take test results from the previous year, and say, 'This kid passed but just barely' or 'This kid was close to passing.'" Jackson has now expanded this to earlier grades in an effort to bring students up to grade level in reading as soon as possible.

Teachers also stressed their flexibility. For example, a few of the special education students went to the intervention teacher. Placements were made on a student-by-student basis with their abilities taken into consideration, in an effort to place students with a group that would result in the most progress.

Tutoring

In addition to the regular intervention program, beginning two months prior to students taking the proficiency test, the school hired a retired teacher to come in and work with small groups of students. She helped children that were performing at the lower and middle levels. The third-grade teacher described the impact on students preparing for the third-grade reading test:

I could see such improvement in that middle group – those kids that were borderline. We had a wonderful retired teacher who taught third grade for 30 years. She came in and spent about two months of really, intensive focused time.

That made such a difference with those kids. She's no longer here. After the testing was finished that was the end of her time. The kids have stayed in touch with her. They're doing better and I'm just delighted. That's one of the strengths of this school. To those kids that were close to passing, she really did help them.

This left the regular classroom teacher working with eight students in the classroom, all of whom were top students, including five in the TAG class. She was able to do accelerated activities and a lot more writing with this group, which the children as well as the teacher enjoyed. The students normally assigned to intervention also spent extra time with the Title I teachers during this two-month period.

Incentives

Children, especially those in kindergarten through grade 2, are given many incentives to complete their work, including candy, play tattoos, pencils and various rewards. Teachers often use their own money to buy many of these incentives. In the kindergarten class, each student began the day with three new coins (play money). The coins can be used for purchasing prizes. They also can be lost for infractions of the rules. For every three or four books read (and a score of four of five correct answers), students got a prize.

The first-grade teacher explained how her opinion about the use of incentives had changed over the years:

One of the things people told me is that you should never reward kids for doing well. You're giving the wrong impression. But if you didn't pay me to come to work, I wouldn't come every day. I think kids deserve a positive pay-off. My kids get stickers. They get treats for doing well on tests. Sometimes it's for getting 100 percent, and sometimes it's for doing better than you did last week. Sometimes it's just for really working hard. We do word searches on Thursday, and if you have not lost any recesses that week for misbehavior, you may have a partner. I always try to look at it from the positive – you're going to get something if you do well. I know how easy it is to fall into, "If you don't do this!" I don't like to be negative.

What influenced me the most is my daughter. She came home from school once and said, "Mom, I don't understand this. If you work really hard and do all your work, what you get is more work." I said, "You're right." So now I say when you do all that work, and you do it well, you need a pay off. And the pay-off has to be something fun. 'You can do a math safari, you can do a geo safari, you can do a leap pad, you can do another ARP book.' Although they have to be educational choices, they are still fun choices. I think that's important.

Teachers rewarded students for exhibiting good behavior as well as academic performance. Several did things to encourage children to behave during recess. Observations revealed that the use of incentives helped keep the students on task. They were reading and seemed to enjoy their reading, which are school goals. The ARP includes prizes for number of books read (different quantity at each grade level.) During the site visit, students who had read 60 books were having pizza with the principal – a tradition begun by the previous principal and continued by Dr. Fults.

Retention

Teachers explained that the decision to retain students is very difficult for them. The school has implemented a modified curriculum, meaning that children generally are passed to the next

grade level but are provided with additional small group and one-on-one instruction in an effort to help them realize grade-level achievement. The superintendent also is very concerned about the subsequent implications of failing students in the elementary grades. Specifically, students who turn 18 and have not graduated are likely to dropout. He was scheduled to meet with teachers building-by-building before the end of the school year to review the retention of individual students. Many of the changes he has implemented in the elementary grades are designed to provide students with sufficient skills so fewer children need to be held back each year. At the end of the school year, Jackson had only half a dozen students failing and all were in grades K-2. The district has a two-week summer school in August for children who fail reading, but the principal added that it does not have good attendance.

Those in higher grades who have ongoing difficulties are typically classified as having learning disabilities and the school does not fail special education students. The school referred three students to special education this year. Either the parent or the teacher suggests or recommends it. The principal asks the parent to come in to discuss it. It is a 30-day process and at the end, the principal calls the parent back to determine if the school should proceed with the special education testing. The school has an Intervention Assistance Team (IAT).

Math

Students have math for an hour daily. Teachers feel the students are making progress. The second-grade teacher shared that the third-grade teacher commented on the improvement in this year's class:

Last year the third-grade teacher came to me and said, 'Thank you.' I said, 'For what?' She said 'The kids are doing a great job. They are doing well in math this year and you just did a great job in teaching them.' I said, 'Well, thank you for saying that but is there anything you think I should work harder on?' She said they struggled in one area. But that she felt that was because they didn't review before they took the test. I told her I would just double the work I did on measurement this year. Maybe it was my fault. That's how we work together.

The school's focus is clearly on reading, but they are planning to begin applying strategies they have used in reading to math instruction. Next fall, they are hoping to begin placing the five or six students having the most difficulty with math in a small group. Staff is also in the process of reviewing the math curriculum and specifying the pacing for each grade. Since they could not find a diagnostic math test that met their needs, they have begun development of their own. The principal also pointed out that the math textbooks are old; the district will soon begin purchasing new math resources.

PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

Teachers are knowledgeable about the state standards. They use the benchmarks and state standards as a guide in determining what they should be teaching and the expected level of student performance. They have made some changes in what they are teaching as a result of increased attention to the standards. For example, the kindergarten teacher is doing more with phonics and the fifth-grade teacher has added greater coverage of figurative language. All the teachers are working to help students develop comprehension and understanding. The fourth-grade teacher described the process:

We test them beforehand to see what level they're on and then teach them from there. I do a lot of reading aloud, that's the best way to teach students how to read. They model themselves after your reading. They can see what it sounds

like to be fluent. I know we do a lot with comprehension, making sure they comprehend the story. I ask different types of comprehension questions. Every time I read a story, we discuss the story and what they thought about it.

There was ample evidence the teachers were covering the state standards appropriately in reading. Observations further revealed that students in the regular classrooms were reading at grade level and enjoying the activities. Teachers were creative and incorporated activities such as a spelling bee for the older students and a “Clifford the Big Red Dog Week” for younger children. They were covering the standards and also making reading fun.

Nonetheless, given the reductions in the attention to all other subjects except for math, the district may want to verify that the standards in other areas are being addressed adequately. Teachers were especially concerned about students being sufficiently prepared for the fourth-grade science proficiency test. Given that 46 percent fewer fourth-graders passed the science test in 2004-2005 than the year before, it would seem that they had valid concerns.

Professional Development and Grants

Staff feels that professional development has substantially helped them improve their instruction and ability to identify students that need further assistance. Teachers emphasized their openness to trying new things. According to one, “We’re always looking for new ways to do things, are never satisfied with what we’ve got, and realize what worked with one class won’t necessarily work with another.”

Teachers’ opportunities to participate in high quality professional development increased dramatically with the district’s receipt of an OhioReads Grant for four of the six elementary buildings in 2001-2002.⁵ Teachers and principals participated in 12 weeks of Rigby training www.rigbysteck-pd.com, which is a balanced literacy program. A consultant came in for 12 weeks and also was available one night after school each week. She met with K-2 staff and did presentations in the classes. The following fall, the consultant worked for another 12 weeks with grades 3-5. This professional development helped staff members to see what they needed to be doing in the classrooms, what to watch for and how to be more effective with guided reading. The OhioReads funding ended at the conclusion of the 2004-2005 school year.

For the past two years, teachers have had early release days once a month and the district has brought in various speakers for two-hour professional development meetings. These sessions have focused on curriculum development, teachers’ needs and review of materials. The most recent ones have focused on establishing pacing charts by grade level for math. The teachers are working on those in grade-level groups and a committee will complete the process. Some teachers have found these sessions highly useful, whereas others expressed the desire for more targeted sessions applicable to their grade level or discipline area. One teacher stressed what she has learned from these sessions:

I think one of the best things they do is when they bring a motivational speaker in, especially in the beginning of the year. It just gets everybody started off on a good foot. I know that when we chose a new math series, we had training on that. That was worthwhile, they actually teach you how to use the teacher’s manual – you learned how everything fits together, that was really good.

⁵ The Jackson School District had six elementary schools in 2001-2002, seven in 2003-2004, and four in 2004-2005.

At the end of the school year, instead of having a professional development meeting, the principal indicated that the teachers would spend the release time in their building going through the new material more thoroughly and matching it up to their lessons.

Teachers also have participated in various professional development activities during their Common Planning Time in the morning. This past fall, they had a presenter on Four-Blocks www.four-blocks.com, a multilevel, balanced literacy framework that incorporates four different approaches (guided reading, self-selected reading, writing and working with words) each day. The presenter had a session at a different building for four consecutive weeks and introduced teachers to a different segment of the program each week. She also was available in the afternoon for teachers who wanted a classroom demonstration. The principal noted that the district increasingly has brought in consultants that included classroom demonstrations in addition to presentations.

Other professional development activities that teachers mentioned as being particularly beneficial:

- Accelerated Reading Program training
- National First-grade Teacher's Conference in Columbus. The presentation highlighted how all children do not have the same opportunities and emphasized the importance of teacher dedication.
- State Institute for Reading Instruction (SIRI) workshops www.ohiorc.org/features/oh_reading/professional_development.aspx. SIRI workshops are designed to support one or more of the five essential components of reading – phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. The district had SIRI training for kindergarten and adolescents and is planning to bring it in for middle and high school teachers.

The principal mentioned the district has a two-week Four-Blocks training scheduled for June for teachers through grade six. The district has another consultant to help with language arts. Staff will spend time working on pacing charts and short-term assessments. The district appears highly supportive of professional development, offering it on a regular basis and providing at least partial funding for teachers to participate in relevant statewide workshops. Dr. Fults is in charge of the district's summer professional development program. This program has been in place for several years and offers a week of classes for which staff can get credit.

Student Performance

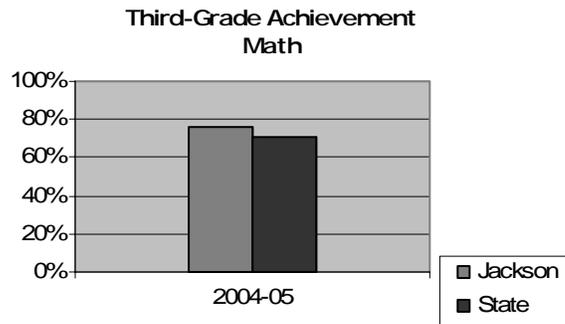
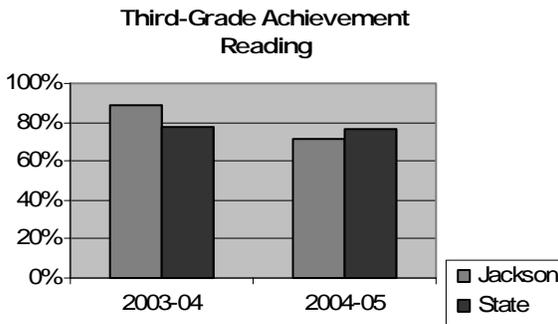
All the attention on reading appeared to be positively impacting student performance, but the school's 2004-2005 test results raise questions about the aspects that are essential to maintaining high levels of student achievement. Jackson students experienced dramatic improvement in reading in 2002-2003 and 2003-2004. The school met the criteria for *Schools of Promise* in reading for the fourth grade for both years and on the new third-grade achievement test in 2003-2004. In 2004-2005, however, only 68 percent passed the fourth-grade reading test and 71 percent of third-graders passed the state test. Although the fourth-graders did better than in 2001-2002, they did not meet the state's minimum requirement of 75 percent passing in reading. On a positive note, 77 percent passed the new fifth-grade achievement test, but only 73 percent of economically disadvantaged students passed this test.

Students also made some progress in math in 2002-2003 and 2003-2004, but scores on the fourth-grade proficiency plummeted in 2004-2005, with only 52 percent passing. Jackson did not meet the state's minimum requirement for math on the fourth-grade proficiency for any year. Students, however, succeeded in meeting the state's requirement on the new third-grade

achievement test in math with a 76 percent pass rate. Nonetheless, only 73 percent of non-disadvantaged students passed.

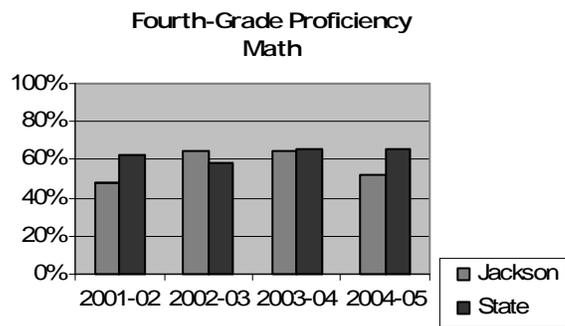
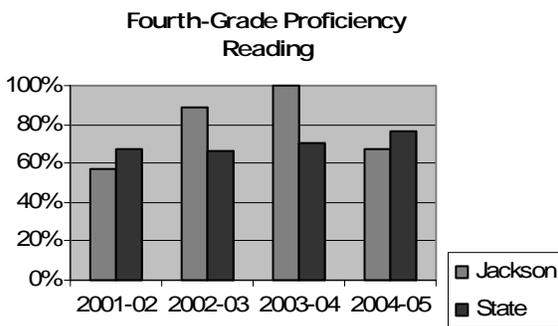
Jackson Elementary School vs. Ohio⁶ Third-Grade Achievement Test Results

	Reading		Math	
	Jackson	State	Jackson	State
2003-2004	88.9%	78.2%	NA	NA
2004-2005	71.4%	77.3%	76.2%	70.4%



Jackson Elementary School vs. Ohio⁶ Fourth-Grade Proficiency/Achievement Test Results

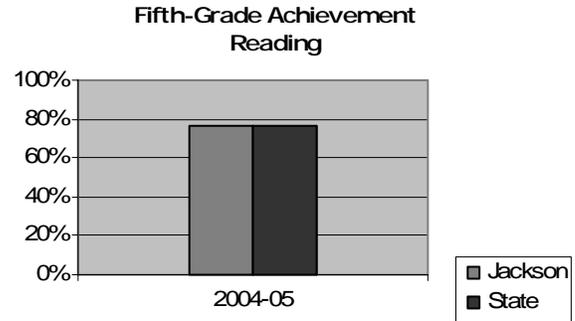
	Reading		Math	
	Jackson	State	Jackson	State
2001-2002	57.1%	67.7%	47.6%	62.9%
2002-2003	88.9%	66.3%	64.7%	58.6%
2003-2004	100.0%	70.8%	65.0%	65.8%
2004-2005	68.0%	76.6%	52.0%	65.5%



⁶ Data Source: School and State Report Cards

Jackson Elementary School vs. Ohio⁷ Fifth-Grade Achievement Test Results**

	Reading	
	Jackson	State
2004-2005	77.3%	76.9%



ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Jackson is a close-knit community where everyone seems to know everyone else. Teachers talked to parents regularly and sent out newsletters. Teachers described parents as supportive. Involvement is largely through the PTO which has a newsletter. The school has two huge yard sales and a fall festival. Both events bring in a lot of parents, although neither has anything to do with academics. The school has volunteers in the kindergarten; all volunteers must go through a background check and fingerprinting. The principal indicated that there are five to 10 parents she can call on at any time.

Interviewed parents described the school as friendly and “like family.” Parents were very pleased with the instruction and the contact with staff. Comments included:

I think they really have the kids at heart. They really think a lot of them. I don't know where Jackson gets the teachers that are here because I never had any like them. I'm glad this is where she [daughter] ended up... It's not much like a school setting. I hated to go to school. I cried. The first day my daughter went to school, she loved it. It's like a family setting. Everyone cares about everyone else. (Parent of a fifth-grader)

My son [who now attends the middle school] misses it. He likes the teachers he's got now. He misses the one-on-one. He talks about that all the time. My girl loves it. I think it's one of the best schools. (Parent of kindergarten student)

She has attended since kindergarten. She loves it. I love it because it is small. It's more one-on-one. It's more personal. (Parent of a third-grader)

They want them to be well-educated, but if there's someone who's having difficulties, I've seen the teachers really try hard [with] somebody who's just not getting something; they'll work with them. They'll ask parent volunteers to sit down with a child and help them. There's always someone there to help. And they try to do that as much as possible. (Parent of a fifth-grader)

I really believe that they love the students. They're there to help them learn... She's in first grade and she can read. I couldn't read in first grade. ... They're learning about money, and we've noticed that she can actually count out money to you. Last night she dropped a lot of change in the car, she'd lost one of the

⁷ Data Source: School and State Report Cards

coins and she knew what it was – ‘The nickel is gone.’ Before she didn’t know what each coin was. (Parent of a first-grader)

One parent also recalled that when she telephoned to report that her child was sick the secretary knew immediately who her child was. Parents feel very comfortable with the teachers and principal. They indicated the school has regular contact, usually through notes to the parents. Parents’ only complaint was the district’s new restrictions on field trips and the elimination of PE and art.

The school also has a partnership with several businesses. The local Burger King provides food for field trip day and keeps a jar for change on the counter that they donate to the school. A printing company binds the students’ class books for free.

SUMMARY OF “LESSONS LEARNED” SPECIFIC TO JACKSON ELEMENTARY

Jackson Elementary has put a tremendous emphasis on reading in the past few years. Part of the impetus for the school’s shift in focus was receipt of an OhioReads grant that provided an infusion of additional professional development and reading resources. The Accelerated Reading Program and use of incentives have helped make reading fun for the children. Students spend two and a half hours daily involved in reading activities. The school also has expanded its use of the Title I and special education teachers so that students having the greatest difficulties are in small groups for all or part of their reading instruction. Removing these students has also enabled the classroom teachers to introduce accelerated materials and make greater progress with their stronger readers. The table on the last page of this report summarizes the school’s characteristics that seem most closely associated with the “Five Lessons Learned” identified in the initial *Schools of Promise* case studies. Jackson has many of the aspects and practices that do make a difference for student achievement. Unfortunately, its progress is complicated by the performance declines in 2004-2005 on the third- and fourth-grade reading tests.

Jackson closed at the end of the 2004-2005 school year and its student body was reassigned to other district schools. The district had already begun adopting many of the school’s practices districtwide. Although it is likely that the increased reading resources and professional development have been helpful, other changes that happened during the year may have negatively impacted student performance. These include:

- There was substantial staff turnover in 2004-2005 (three new teachers and a new principal). The new teachers overall were less experienced than the ones that they replaced. Furthermore, given that this is a rural setting in which the children are not accustomed to a changing environment, it is possible that such staff turnover had a substantial impact on student learning.
- The districtwide elimination of PE and provision of science only through reading are disconcerting. Teachers and parents expressed concerns about this change. Fourth-graders’ performance on the science proficiency dropped from 70 percent passing in 2003-2004 to 24 percent passing in 2004-2005. In addition, it is possible that the loss of active engagement in scientific activities negatively impacted the morale of teachers and students.
- Moreover, for many children, some kind of physical activity and periodic break from academic pursuits is absolutely essential to their well-being. Of notice and possibly related to the elimination of PE is the growth in the percentage of students with disabilities. It went from 20.2 percent to 24.8 percent at Jackson and increased at every elementary school in the district. There is a well

documented relationship between exercise and behavioral problems such as Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Learning Disabled (LD).⁸

- The district has been in the process of building new larger elementary schools and closing smaller schools such as Jackson. During the interviews, it was clear that the teachers had a great deal of anxiety about the upcoming move. It is likely that the students picked up on their stress as well as had their own fears about the upcoming transition, and this may have interfered with their education.
- Finally, children were in school an hour less each day. With the introduction of the 45-minute Common Planning Time for teachers, the school instructional day was adjusted downward by an hour. Although PE and Art were the subjects eliminated as a result of the schedule change, the loss of these classes as well as overall time in school may have reduced student learning to a greater extent than anticipated.

Jackson Elementary is an example of a small rural school that had two years of success with its reading program but had a poor showing in the current year (2004-2005). The results make one wonder to what extent the additional reading resources and professional development have truly had an impact. Furthermore, students' inconsistent performance raises questions about what additional actions are needed. Jackson's experience highlights the importance of constant monitoring to ensure that students are progressing as desired. Such ongoing assessment may have pointed to things that the teachers could have done prior to the state tests that might have made a difference for students. If nothing else, such research may have provided further insight about why the children had difficulties on the 2004-2005 state tests. The district will need to continue to closely review the progress of the former Jackson students and provide them with the support needed to improve their learning and performance. The district is committed to strengthening its reading program and plans to implement comparable improvements in math. It may want to reevaluate its focus on these two subjects, however, at the possible sacrifice of areas that, on the surface, may appear to be less essential but may contribute significantly to children's overall learning and well-being as well as teacher morale.

⁸ Frances E. Kuo and Andrea Faber Taylor, "Children With ADHD Benefit From Time Outdoors Enjoying Nature" www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2004/08/040830082535.htm American Journal of Public Health, September 2004. Rubenzer, Ronald L., "Stress Management for the Learning Disabled." ERIC Digest #452. ERIC Identifier: ED295396 (1988). Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children Reston VA. www.ericdigests.org/pre-928/stress.htm. Hinkle, J. Scott, "School Children and Fitness: Aerobics for Life." ERIC Identifier: ED347484 (1992). Source: ERIC Clearinghouse on Counseling and Personnel Services Ann Arbor MI. www.ericdigests.org/1992-3/fitness.htm. "Can Exercise Replace Ritalin as a Treatment for ADHD?" www.acalogic.com/ritalin.htm.

**Jackson 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
X					High superintendent involvement
Practices Impacting Staff					
X					Common Planning Time
X					Creative use of staff
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 teachers
	X				Incentives
Instructional Characteristics					
X		X	X		Strong Reading Program
X	X	X	X		Leveled reading program (Accelerated Reader Program)
	X	X	X		Teachers' use of variety of instructional strategies
	X	X	X		Summer school intervention program
	X	X	X		Gifted and talented program
Staff Development Characteristics					
		X	X		Attention to state standards
X		X	X		Extensive professional development
X		X	X		Grants (Ohio Reads)
Parent and Community Characteristics					
				X	Extensive communication with parents
				X	High level of parent involvement
				X	High percentage of parents attended the school
				X	Staff are graduates or part of community