Port Washington Elementary School

Indian Valley Local School District

Port Washington, OH
Superintendent: Randall Cadle
Principal: Roger Bond

http://www.ivtv.k12.oh.us/pw_home/pw_home.htm

A strong sense of community is fundamental to the success of Port Washington Elementary. Students, teachers, administrators, support staff, parents and community members share student success as common ground for a partnership that produces results! Visitors are greeted by a warm and friendly staff and are accepted as

contributing members of this focused and intentional partnership for the duration of their stay. For the purpose of learning more about this School of Promise, the visitation team was extended full access to the building with an open invitation to visit classrooms and talk with staff and students throughout the day. Clearly, learning

SCHOOL PROFILE	
2003-2004 Building Rating	Excellent
Enrollment	416
Grade Levels	K-5
Economically Disadvantaged Students	42.3%
Students with Disabilities	12.0%
White Students	99.0%

more about what works is a high priority for this school community.

Port Washington Elementary is housed in an immaculately-maintained building built in 1926 located within the heart of this small town. Upon entering the town of Port Washington, visitors note the beautiful tree-lined Main Street with large front porches proudly displaying American flags. At the time of this visit the windows of the elementary school were filled with large signs urging residents to "Vote Yes for Issue 8" to support three new buildings and add to the current high school—badly needed improvements as emergency measures are under way to temporarily relocate students

from another elementary school determined unsafe due to decaying structural conditions. There is enthusiasm in the air as children arrive to begin their school day. Teachers are

INDIAN VALLEY LOCAL DISTRICT PROFILE	
2003-2004 District Rating	Effective
District Enrollment	1,868

outside to welcome students as well as many parents and family members who are bringing children to school. It is common for informal parent/teacher conferences to occur during this time and also at the end of the school day.

"We're all family. We all look out for each other. When one student fails, we all fail" is a central theme of Port Washington expressed repeatedly by teachers and administrators. At the core of this "family" is a collaborative culture of purposeful assessment, instruction, intensive intervention and overall student support that results in an environment in which all children, 42.3% of whom are economically disadvantaged, have an equal opportunity to learn and succeed.

This overall student support is making a difference. Not only was Port Washington named a 2003-2004 School of Promise with special recognition being given

for improving the performance of students with disabilities, but the school was also designated a Blue Ribbon School.

Port Washington's fourth grade students demonstrated high levels of achievement in both the reading and mathematics sections of the proficiency test during the 2003-2004 school year with 90.1% passing reading and 84.5% passing mathematics. Additionally, 90.6% of the third graders scored proficient or above on the reading achievement test. As a subgroup, 76.9% of the fourth grade students passed mathematics, representing an increase over the previous two years. (See bar graphs at the end of this report for trend data.)

PROVIDING OPPORTUNIES FOR ALL CHILDREN TO ACHIEVE

A recent iteration of the continuous school improvement process is the design and planned implementation of Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs). The goal of the ILP is to guide individualized instruction for each child in the Indian Valley Local School District. Teachers will make frequent use of the ILPs throughout the school year to quickly access pertinent information about children and their needs and to determine how to differentiate instruction for all learners. Teachers will update these plans periodically and pass them along to each successive grade's teachers. The completion of the ILP is designed to be a collaborative and ongoing process.

"The key to our success with special education students," according to Randall Cadle, superintendent, "is that we have high expectations for ALL kids, and we spend

an extraordinary amount of time with intervention. It's not acceptable not to do well. No excuses. We use data to identify the bubble kids (those kids teetering between passing and failing)

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Fourth Grade Teaching Team

and we really work hard with them. Expectations and our intervention process are the key ingredients."

A variety of special programs, services, and targeted activities are implemented within this educational safe haven where everyone is committed to the vision that every child can and will learn:

- Full day kindergarten;
- School breakfast program;
- Full-time computer instructor with
- 30 computers in dedicated computer room;
- Full-time media specialist/librarian and largest elementary library within the A-site region with more than 11,000 books;
- Accelerated Reading Program with books coded by reading level and paired to individual student goals; computerized tests for all books;
- Ohio Reads HOST program;
- Books On Wheels program providing books in book bags for individual and paired-peer reading while on school busses (grant program;

- Foster Grandparent Program (COAD) with six foster grandparents reading with children four hours each day (grant program to pay grandparents);
- Challenge Academic Braves (CAB) program for advanced students;
- Character Counts program promoting six core values and six pillars of character;
- Four Title teachers working in the classrooms;
- Three special education teachers working in classrooms;
- Speech therapist (two days per week);
- Social worker (full time)

In terms of behavioral issues, teachers believe that it is most important for students to understand what they did and why that is a problem, as opposed to the students not really understanding the problem. The goal at Port Washington is to be tough but fair. The philosophy of Roger Bond, principal, is that the first intervention should come from the grade level teams—in terms of talking to the student about what occurred, collecting all the facts and suggesting an appropriate disciplinary action. If a reoccurring situation deserves the principal's attention, he assumes responsibility for talking with the student and the parents. Discipline is not a big problem at Port Washington. As stated by Mr. Bond, "A strong emphasis on student engagement in the classroom is the primary reason why we have very few problems with discipline."

Mr. Cadle discussed the overall effects the use of data has had in the district. He said, "We're big on data. We started out charting minutes of teaching. Now we use data to make decisions about everything. For example, we use data to make decisions about cafeteria meals. We look at the cost of menu selections and we spread out the higher cost items. We also discontinue serving items that kids don't eat, like mixed vegetables, most of which were ending up in the garbage." Information about all improvements is shared throughout the district after an administrative retreat is held at the end of each year to plan for the next. Administrators look at district goals, building goals, classroom goals and student goals to make their plans.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCESS

Several years ago Mr. Cadle traveled to a school in Brazosport, Texas, because it was reported that students there were achieving at exceptionally high levels. (It's not unusual for this school district to learn from the successes of other districts.) Since that time several visitations were made by Port Washington teaching and administrative staff. As a result, the PLAN-DO-CHECK-ACT process so successful in Brazosport now pervades the culture of the Port Washington instructional process, with Eight Steps to Success:

Disaggregate Test Scores!

Develop a Timeline!

Develop an Instructional Focus!

Administer an Assessment!

Provide Tutorials to Re-teach!

Provide Enrichment for Mastery Students!

Maintain and Re-teach!
Monitor Continually!

AND, don't forget to...
Celebrate Successes!

Mr. Bond reveals that before visiting Brazosport, he and others did not know what to do with the data they had about the students. That has now changed dramatically. Now they look at their testing data for each year to give them direction for their ongoing plan. Mr. Bond reports, "When I get my data each year, first I get it to the teams. Teams discuss the tests, question by question, indicator by indicator, to determine the strengths and weaknesses. An item analysis is done. We tear the tests

apart to see how we did on each of the indicators. We organize the results on the indicators from weakest to strongest to determine instructional focus time. Then we build a calendar and map in our weakest areas to plan

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Randall Cadle, superintendent

special instruction on those indicators. Teachers then conduct ten-minute instructional sessions focused on the weakest areas each week and then test the students on the material. If students get three out of four answers correct, they go to enrichment the next week. If they fail, they go to intervention the next week where the lesson is presented in a different way. A lot of our students with IEPs pass and go to enrichment, and students in regular education often go to intervention. So there's a plan for each week." (Data notebooks on the bookshelf in the principal's office show heavy usage.)

Next year each student will maintain a DATA NOTEBOOK where they will track their own progress on the indicators. Based on local assessments, teachers and students will be able to chart attainment of the grade-level indicators in each content area.

Mr. Bond emphasizes that an ongoing focus on the identification and review of research-based instructional practices is maintained in large part due to the influence of the curriculum coordinator. Under contract by the school district and employed by the Warren County Educational Service Center (ESC), Janis Hunter, the curriculum coordinator, works very closely with the teaching staff at Port Washington. The teachers and principal report that Mrs. Hunter's expertise and the role that she plays at Port Washington are invaluable.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A strong sense of professionalism and teamwork is imbedded into the everyday work of the teaching staff. The school day was extended by contractual agreement to provide a block of collaboration time each morning from 7:35 A.M. until students arrive at 8:00 A.M., to allow for teamwork between and across grade levels. Three grade level meetings are scheduled each week; for example, the fourth grade teaching team reports a three-prong focus for team meetings: curriculum, student concerns, and

scheduling. "The big goal is always centered on the percentage of kids passing the proficiency or achievement tests," the team members report.

"We're big on professional development," states Mr. Cadle. Teachers are required to fill out a form that indicates how proposed professional development will

help with building goals, and they must present the new information they learn to the staff when they return from a meeting or conference. "We try to watch our money so we can support critical professional development activities."

"Our success is not about me. I have an outstanding staff and they're the key to the success of the school!"

Roger Bond, principal

Teachers report that they can't remember a request being turned down as long as the connection to building capacity for improving student performance was documented. A formal Title I School-Wide Program Staff Needs Assessment Survey is used each year to inform professional development priorities at Port Washington.

The superintendent and curriculum coordinator meet with every teacher for half a day twice each year. This time is for talking through the hard questions about teaching and learning, such as "What are you doing that works?" and "How are you aligning to the standards?" Mr. Bond spends a considerable amount of time in the classrooms and maintains a close collegial relationship with the teaching staff. "Our success is not about me," he brags. "I have an outstanding staff, and they're the key to the success of the school!"

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS/FAMILIES/COMMUNITIES

"The school is the busiest center of the community," according to Mr. Bond. The school hosts a variety of widely attended community events that many times serve as a source of entertainment for families outside as well as inside the Port Washington

immediate area. Compliments of the Center for Science and Industry (COSI), a very popular Science Night featured a Star Watch activity. When the COSI telescopes were delivered in trucks, much anticipation and excitement were

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generated throughout the community. Other academic theme nights include Math Night, Reading Night, and Social Studies Night. The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is very active and sponsors a number of activities including a Winter Carnival that is very popular. The community Halloween Parade begins at the school and includes fire trucks and the high school band leading the parade through town. During Right to Read Week, a community event is typically sponsored. An annual Back to School Fair for kindergarten through second grade is held each August. This well-attended event provides a prime opportunity for parents to obtain needed information, and students to receive free school supplies to get the new school year off to a successful start.

Strong and consistent communication is maintained with parents. As stated consistently by staff and parents, "Communication is the key!" A daily student agenda is maintained between home and school, each teacher prepares weekly newsletters, and phone calls and visitations are frequent.

SCHOOL CULTURE

Port Washington enjoys a school culture that is rooted in tradition and a deep sense of community pride. It is common for those growing up in this community to want to remain here as adults. A significant percentage of graduating seniors earn college scholarships, and most opt to attend college close to home. The district hires as many teachers as possible that grew up in the community. Mr. Cadle noted, "It is getting harder for our kids to continue to live in our community following college graduation due to the economy and lack of jobs."

One of the halls in the Port Washington building displays graduating class photographs and trophy cases from years gone by. In the same spirit of tradition, individual ceiling tiles display the artwork of fifth graders who move on to the middle school. The creative and colorful ceiling tile designs have one thing in common - each must incorporate the initials of every member of the fifth grade class.

The principal himself attended this school and worked alongside his father after school. His father was the head custodian of the school at that time. The same sense of pride in the impeccably kept building is apparent today. Although now nearly 80 years old, the building remains a shining example of the pride and respect that this community has for its schools and the education of its youth.

WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?







