

Roosevelt Elementary School

Steubenville City School District

Steubenville, OH

Superintendent: Richard Ranallo

Principal: Joseph Nocera

<http://www.steubenville.k12.oh.us/schools/res/>

Roosevelt Elementary School has enjoyed the honor of being recognized as a School of Promise not only for 2003-04, but also for 2001-02. Three other schools in the Steubenville City School District--Garfield Elementary, Wells Elementary and Harding Middle School--were also Schools of Promise in 2003-2004.

in past years, Garfield, McKinley, and Lincoln elementary schools were also recognized. These designations of academic achievement are remarkable, since Steubenville has been in a steep economic decline with the loss of its once-thriving steel industry, and the number of economically disadvantaged students has

increased dramatically. For example, of the 218 students at Roosevelt, 81.5% qualify for free and reduced-cost lunch. Despite these demographics, Roosevelt provides evidence that all students, including those with disabilities, can succeed. During the 2003 –2004 school year, 95.7% of the third graders passed the reading achievement test and 83.9% of the fourth graders passed the reading section of the proficiency test. (See bar graphs at the end of this report for trend data.)

SCHOOL PROFILE	
2003-2004 Building Rating	Effective
Grade Levels	K-6
Enrollment	201
Economically Disadvantaged Students	81.5%
Students with Disabilities	20.9%
Multi-racial Students	19.9%
Black Students	45.1%
White Students	35.0%

The Success for All (SFA) comprehensive school reform model serves as the foundation for continuous school improvement at all of the elementary school.

STEBENVILLE CITY DISTRICT PROFILE	
2003-2004 District Rating	Excellent
District Enrollment	2,236

Schools in the Steubenville City School District. The Steubenville elementary schools, including Roosevelt, adopted the SFA model five years ago, first with the reading program, and then one year later with the math program. An intensive research-based professional development component is central to the approach, as well as frequent site visits by SFA staff and teacher attendance at national meetings.

“It was a major financial commitment,” shares assistant superintendent Peter Basil, “but well worth it.” The district has offset some of the cost by volunteering to pilot new SFA products. For example, Alphie’s Alley, a computer-based program targeting lowest-performing first graders, was piloted at Roosevelt. “The investment has resulted in remarkable results for all of our students, including those with disabilities,” shares Basil.

The SFA model is aimed at preventing and remedying reading problems in the early grades through a school-wide improvement approach. Developed in 1987 under the direction of Robert E. Slavin at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Success for All has an extensive research base, with more than 50 experimental control studies. While the model is used in more than 1,100 schools in 46 states, Steubenville is one of only a few school districts adopting the model across all of its elementary schools (six neighborhood schools housing preschool through grade five). SFA was selected from three programs that had been researched by the Administrative Team of the Steubenville City School District and presented to teachers for their consideration. Adoption of SFA required 85% approval by the teachers.

“The investment in Success for All has resulted in remarkable results for all of our students, including those with disabilities.”

Peter Basil, Assistant

PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL CHILDREN TO ACHIEVE

“We attribute our School of Promise designation to our incorporation of Success for All,” shares Joseph Nocera, principal, who has just completed his third year at Roosevelt. “Our special education teachers use the SFA approach with some modifications, mainly additional time.” Roosevelt received special recognition as a 2003-2004 School of Promise for improving the performance of their students with disabilities, 77.8% who scored proficient or above on the fourth grade reading section of the Ohio Proficiency Test.

For reading instruction, students in the school are homogeneously grouped according to their reading performance level. This results in students moving from one classroom to another depending on their reading level; for example, a third-grade student may join a fourth-grade class for the reading block. Student progress is continuously monitored, and students are regrouped for reading instruction throughout the year to insure that they are advancing according to the pace expected for each student.

Every elementary student has an individual intervention plan that tracks the student’s progress based on data. When the data shows that a student is struggling in one or more areas, teachers must use a variety of interventions prior to referring a student for possible identification as a student in need of special services. The interventions used can include concentrated individual tutoring, a big part of the SFA program.

The library schedule was revised to permit each class to spend three periods per week participating in computer-assisted instruction, both to remediate and accelerate. Students spend one period a week working with each of the following programs: Larson Math, Accelerated Reader and Math Facts in a Flash. Students also take advantage of these programs before and after school. Also, tutoring using the SFA reading and math-tutoring programs are provided for children most at risk in reading and math, and parents and university students provide tutoring under the Ohio Reads Program.

In addition, each of the schools has a Solutions Team that offers family support. This team meets monthly to discuss concerns such as attendance and discipline that could be interfering with student performance. A school social worker, funded through a grant awarded to Jefferson County Education Service Center (ESC), serves as a

standing member of the Solutions Team. Parents are involved in the team meetings, and according to Mr. Nocera, “It is a good way to get parents involved in a constructive way.” One of the things the Solutions Team might do is invite parents to a training in how to help their children with their homework.

“The Solutions Team is a good way to get parents involved in a constructive way.”

Joseph Nocera, principal

Students with IEPs are included in regular classes at least 60% of the school day. The four intervention specialists at Roosevelt collaborate with the regular education teachers when they include students with disabilities and continue to provide the students access to the general education curriculum when they work with them outside of the regular classes.

Mr. Basil’s background in special education enables him to provide situational leadership supporting what is best for the students with disabilities. He is responsible for researching and purchasing Kurzweil assistive technology for reading for each of the elementary schools.

Steubenville’s belief in the importance of students entering school ready to learn is demonstrated by a commitment to all-day, every-day kindergarten since 1998-99, and to early childhood education programs, including Even Start and all-day preschool and special needs programs, for 15 years. Comprehensive family literacy services are provided for families with children from infancy through age eight. Year-round school age childcare is also offered from early morning until 5:30 P.M. The childcare program offers enrichment activities as well as time spent on reading and math, reinforcing what students are learning during the school day or have learned during the past school year.

A Touch of Class Academies, a summer program, has been offered by the school district for 25 years and is open to students from Brooke and Hancock counties in West Virginia, and Belmont, Harrison, and Jefferson counties in Ohio. The Academy presents a variety of classes, including numerous virtual learning classes that may be taken for credit, a musical production, sports camps and basic skills in reading and math. The basic skills is the Title 1 summer program, offered for four weeks free of charge to all Steubenville residents entering grades one through eight.

A summer program for elementary students with disabilities is provided to serve children with moderate to more severe disabilities from Steubenville and other neighboring districts. Full-time teachers and aides are onsite for the intensive supports needed to ensure that intended added benefits are realized—that children maintain skill levels over the summer months.

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Under the SFA approach, a full-time building facilitator, in a key non-teaching role, is a leader in the school, coaching teachers as they prepare and implement new lessons. Together they tackle the tough problems with students who are struggling, team teaching as needed and celebrating their successes! “This is a small building with only 13 homeroom teachers,” explains Mr. Nocera. “Leadership is shared and we operate as a team, with the facilitator being the key ingredient.”

Teachers use data to make instructional decisions and to provide appropriate interventions. The Success for All reading program requires the monitoring of student progress. Students are assessed every eight weeks and regrouped based on their

performance. Additionally, teachers administer short-cycle assessments and, with assistance from Muskingum Valley Educational Service Center (ESC), have reviewed trend data for the achievement and proficiency tests.

Teams at each building/grade level have aligned curriculum and instruction with state content standards and have worked with the Success for All facilitator to map their curriculum. Every day includes an uninterrupted 90-minute reading block in every class and an uninterrupted 75-minute mathematics block in grades three to five. Repetition, review and reinforcement are ongoing. A typical Fast Track Phonics lesson, for example, begins with a teacher and small group of students practicing sound/symbol picture cards and sounds-*Theo has a thimble on his thumb*--followed by a feature video with Theo. Teachers are animated; children are engaged. Learning is fun!

A Quality Improvement Initiative, piloted two years ago, has provided Roosevelt with a discipline strategy that has proven effective. Data collected over three years at Roosevelt shows a reduction from 209 to 23 disruptions (defined as classroom behavior requiring principal intervention) per year. The strategy, which uses a color card system for students to track and chart their own behavior, provides a data-driven and goal-orientated approach that is a perfect match for the SFA reading and math tracking methods. Students begin charting their own progress in preschool.

Roosevelt encourages students to work hard and behave appropriately through a reward system that revolves around getting their pictures and names up on a Wall of Fame in the front hallway of the school. Students who maintain a green card (no behavior incidents) every day for a month are considered to be members of the Green Team; their names are added to the Wall of Fame. There is also a monthly building goal that includes goals for each classroom. Classes that meet the goal get their class picture posted. Class goals include the percentage of students completing their reading and math homework as well as the class with the highest percentage of reading responses in the Accelerated Reading program. There is great excitement during the monthly drawings when prizes such as computers, bikes, TVs and VCRs, donated by area businesses, are awarded to Wall of Fame students whose names are drawn. Classroom prizes include pizza parties.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As noted earlier, Success for All incorporates an intensive professional development component. The SFA building facilitator organizes and designs the professional development for the teachers. An SFA team provides onsite quality reviews and shares new developments based on research as available. Teachers are required to attend related national meetings.

While the SFA onsite teams are in the schools working with teachers, principals participate in a two-day training on Quality Schools and bring back ideas to the building staff members. Principals also are involved in intensive technology training over a three-day period.

Mr. Nocera states that participating in the sessions offered through the Quality Improvement Initiative has been extremely helpful to his staff and himself. He reports that the networking and sharing of best practices among educators is especially beneficial.

New full-time teachers are selected from a pool who have worked half time for a year and from substitute teachers who work on 100-day contracts. These part-time jobs are very attractive to teachers since it is only through this experience that they can be considered for full-time positions. The hiring system not only provides potential full-time employees the opportunity to learn about SFA, but also gives principals the chance to see how these teachers perform on the job before making a decision to hire them full time. Each year all principals meet with the pool of eligible applicants and rank the top choices for hire. Steubenville is one of the highest-paying school districts in the area, so their teaching positions are highly prized.

CULTURE

The spirit of this learning-centered culture can be seen and heard throughout the building.

“Why are you here today?” “To Learn!”

“Who is responsible for your learning and behavior?” “I Am!”

These words are posted on walls and spoken between teachers and students throughout the day.

Roosevelt Elementary is committed to continuous quality improvement. The school's mission statement reads: *We will all work together to be Responsible, Respectful and to Learn*, and each class also has its own mission statement. Four basic building level goals are clear and simple:

Increase Positive Behavior

Increase Reading Scores

Increase Math Scores

Increase Writing Skills

Mr. Nocera describes the school's environment as “healthy.” He credits the Quality Initiative Program and the implementation of several Quality Tools for making a major difference in the school.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH PARENTS/FAMILIES/COMMUNITY

Using data to report on their own progress, students take the lead in parent-teacher conferences at Roosevelt. Parents and students also share responsibility for learning through the 20-minute-a-night reading-together time required by Success for All, for which books are provided in take-home packs. Parents know that if this requirement isn't met, the consequence is that their child won't be eligible for special activities at school. A Breakfast Reading Club, staffed by teachers who volunteer their time, will be initiated in the 2005-2006 school year to provide a reading/response activity for students whose parents are not able to meet the 20-minute requirement at home. Before that, Mr. Nocera had been making time available for students who had not completed the assignment to read to him.

Parents are also encouraged to volunteer in the school and to attend special events such as the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) Open House, the school district Family Expo and the Raising Reading Stars workshop.

Despite the decline of industry in Steubenville, Roosevelt continues to thrive in the context of a multi-generational community that has high expectations for all of its children. There is reciprocity between the school district and its community. On the high school campus a wellness, fitness and sports facility is provided not only for students but for the community as well. Although fees are charged (except for senior citizens and the district staff) for facility use, including the Olympic-size swimming pool, no one is turned away because of inability to pay. Local businesses provide support and in return are able to display advertising signage.

Interest in the District

The progress experienced by students in the schools in the Steubenville City School District has not gone unnoticed. Richard Ranallo, the superintendent, and Mr. Basil have been contacted by many educators and people from various organizations who want to visit to see for themselves what is working so successfully. In April and May of 2005, Roosevelt and the other schools in the district were a part of a study of four districts in three states to determine how those districts are managing to implement district-wide systemic change leading to high and equitable outcomes for all students. Funded by the Hewlett Packard Foundation, the Study of Instructionally Effective Schools was conducted by Michigan State University. After their team of five people spent seven days studying all aspects of the Steubenville City School District, the study's impressed principal investigator said, "Steubenville is quite a remarkable district."

What does the data say?

