

# Struthers High School

Struthers City School District (Mahoning)



School Profile 2004-2005	
<i>2004-2005 School of Promise in Reading</i>	
School Rating	Excellent
Enrollment	614
Grade Levels	9-12
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	64.0%
Percent Racial/Ethnic Minority	6%

District Profile 2004-2005	
District Rating	Effective
District Enrollment	1,979

## Lesson 1: Providing Rigorous Instruction Aligned to Standards

**Aligning Curriculum to the Standards:** To achieve success, the district consulted with a curriculum director<sup>1</sup> to work with teachers on curriculum alignment and provided them with release time for professional development. An educator from the local Educational Service Center also assisted with curriculum alignment of English, mathematics, science, and social studies content standards.

**Seamless Instruction:** The superintendent believes strongly in a “seamless” delivery of instruction. The district created a study skills class in middle school to better prepare students entering high school and developed a technical program that spans multiple grades. For example, the district offers a technology program that starts in grade five called “career exploration” that extends into high school.

**Using Data to Improve Instruction:** Teachers emphasize learning over studying exclusively for the Ohio Graduation Test. The staff views the test as a measurement tool on what students are supposed to be learning in each subject. Teachers analyze assessment data to determine weak areas and improve instruction.. Professional development efforts focus on data and assessments.

## Lesson 2: Providing Leadership That Results in Continuous Improvement

**Setting Goals:** Goal setting at Struthers serves as a basis for consistency, communication and informal conversations between administrators and staff. Struthers’ two principals use goal setting to establish common objectives for the entire staff so they can coordinate and focus activity on the areas of greatest concern. Before school begins, teachers complete three in-service days where co-principals work with each department and each teacher to identify goals and priorities for the coming year. They review student test results, identify priorities, and discuss plans for the year ahead. Additionally, each year the district administrators also set a broad goal for the entire district.

**Professional Development:** Struthers High School teachers have monthly in-services, as well as internal professional development on topics like in-depth content mastery, instructional strategies and assessments. The school also provides two full waiver days throughout the year. In 2005-2006, the waiver days focused on sensitivity training on cultural and learning differences to support the switch to open enrollment. The staff also participated in Baldrige training for continuous improvement.<sup>2</sup>

## Lesson 3: Designing Instruction to Ensure Every Student’s Success

**Student-Centered Instruction:** The teachers do not just want students to master the content standards, they want them to learn to problem solve. They help them do this by identifying how each child learns

<sup>1</sup> The district formerly had a full-time director of curriculum, but due to the district’s financial problems the position was recently cut.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on the Baldrige criteria, see [www.baldrigeineducation.org](http://www.baldrigeineducation.org).

best. The majority of the observed classes had a strong emphasis on concept development and higher order thinking. The teachers often integrated real-world problems into the class to make the content more interesting and practical for the students. Teachers often encouraged the students to explain the reasons for their decisions or their solutions.

**Tutoring:** Teachers often stay after hours to make sure struggling students have the opportunity to catch up. Students also tutor each other. One teacher estimates that half the students receive this service. In focus groups, students said peer tutoring eases the pressure on teachers. Tutoring takes place whenever and wherever possible. Students and teachers work before school, after school, during planning periods, over lunch—whenever there is an opportunity and extra help is needed.

**Building Assistance Team:** Intervention also occurs through the Building Assistance Team (BAT) program, led by Principal Meadows, which brings together a struggling student with teachers, guidance counselors and parents. The BAT program is customized to the needs of the individual students, and provides them with personalized attention and a plan tailored to meet their specific needs. It also provides mechanisms to make students accountable for completing their assignments—often failing to do homework is a primary reason for students to enter BAT.

**Inclusive Environment:** Students with disabilities are fully integrated into the school's general population, with the exception of one developmentally handicapped unit. Principal Meadows reviews student rosters and clusters student into classes so that there are multiple inclusion students in a classroom (four or five instead of one or two) with an inclusion teacher providing assistance. The regular and inclusion teachers participate in common planning time to collaborate. The school's three inclusion teachers specialize in language arts, mathematics, or social science.

#### **Lesson 4: Engaging Parents and Community to Support Student Success**

**Involving Parents in Decision Making:** Struthers' staff and administrators rely heavily on parents to support their classroom decisions and to provide a consistent message to students. Most teachers view parents as an important part of student success and have no hesitation about contacting them to discuss behavior and classroom performance. Teachers say the parents' participation is a natural extension of the community's values and work ethic.

**School Reflects the Community:** Since many of the teachers grew up in the community, the staff and administration have strong social connections and a clear understanding of the history of their neighbors. They provide a learning environment that reflects community values. The school can quickly garner community support and students also support community efforts. The superintendent says she has tried to adopt standards that best reflect her understanding of what the community, where she lives, would find acceptable. A clear example of the respect that Struthers has for the community and its values is seen in the way the dress code was created and maintained.

#### **Lesson 5: Creating a Culture Where Each Individual Feels Valued**

**Positive Reinforcement:** The principals have worked to develop reinforcement to encourage students to exhibit positive behavior. The school gives year-end awards to recognize and celebrate student achievement, which also serves as peer modeling. At a year-end awards ceremony, students with the highest GPA in each class and subject receive an award. Students also are rewarded for perfect attendance. Seniors receive special honors, among them scholarship awards, recognition for having the highest GPA in each subject, perfect attendance, and Army and Marine recognition awards. In addition, one male and one female senior are recognized as "most improved over four years."

**Supportive Environment:** Administrators, teachers and students enjoy a personal, nurturing school culture where mutual respect is maintained through clear, strong discipline policies and high expectations for all. Teachers do not need to reprimand students. They use effective, interactive strategies to prevent discipline problems. Teachers feel responsible for making sure all students succeed, spending extra time with them after school and during lunch periods. At Struthers, teachers encourage students to perform at high levels and praise their efforts to improve.