

# Withrow University High School

Cincinnati Public (Hamilton)



School Profile 2004-2005	
<i>2004-2005 School of Promise in Reading</i>	
School Rating	Effective
Enrollment	571
Grade Levels	9-11
Percent Economically Disadvantaged	49.0%
Percent Racial/Ethnic Minority	93.9%

District Profile 2004-2005	
District Rating	Continuous Improvement
District Enrollment	35,839

## Lesson 1: Providing Rigorous Instruction Aligned to Standards

**Alignment to Standards:** Withrow has aligned its curriculum to the standards set by the state of Ohio. Teachers set objectives each day and focus on the content standards in their lessons. If a topic or activity does not relate to the standards, teachers eliminate it or allocate it as a lower priority.

**Collaboration:** Withrow's teachers frequently collaborate with each other to ensure they are focusing on the same standards in the same time frame. Teachers collaborate vertically across grade levels, horizontally within grade levels, and within teams comprised of interdisciplinary groups of teachers. Collaboration occurs formally during planning periods built into the school day, and informally after school and on weekends.

**College Focus:** Withrow wants students to achieve beyond graduation. School leaders and teachers focus on college in several ways: college banners hang throughout the hallways; the school newspaper gives advice and presents facts to students about college; the school's two college counselors assist with applications and financial aid; and the school's partnership with nearby Xavier University helps incoming high school freshman acclimate themselves to a college-bound culture. Teachers encourage good grades and emphasize developing the skills needed for college and workplace.

**Bridge Summer Program:** Withrow collaborates with Xavier University to assist students with the transition between middle and high school. Incoming freshman participate in mathematics, science, and English, become acclimated to Withrow's college-bound culture, and learn about school policies and expectations for students. While students visit the Xavier campus and get a taste of the college experience, the teachers take the opportunity to assess students' academic skills and group them according to their performance level for their first year at Withrow.

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

**Open Communication:** Administrators strive to keep open communication among the staff and students. Administrators often have spontaneous class visits where they observe teachers and ask the students about the day's lesson. At faculty meetings, administrators discuss student performance data at the teacher level in an effort to hold everyone accountable for improvement.

**Innovative Use of Funds:** A significant factor in the transformation at Withrow has been additional funding over three years from the Gates foundation. These dollars allowed the entire staff to visit other high-performing schools across the country, adopt strategies used in other successful urban schools, and develop a teacher interview process that involves role playing and gauging a candidate's fit for the culture and climate at Withrow.

**Professional Development:** Professional development emphasizes collaboration, classroom management and discipline, content area knowledge, and use of student data to drive decisions.

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

**Collaboration to Ensure Every Student's Success:** Teachers and administrators work together to develop instructional strategies and intervene with students who are having difficulties. For students who have missed a class or need extra support in a subject, teachers may collaborate and request that a student be "pulled out" of another subject for one "bell" or class period to work with the teacher or an intervention specialist. Teachers also regularly stay after school to provide tutoring. Students know they can ask for help whenever they need it.

**Instructional Strategies Support Student Success:** Teachers use a variety of instructional techniques to ensure that all students master a concept before moving onto the next. Teachers build personal relationships and cultivate an atmosphere of trust among students and teachers. For example, teachers may talk one-on-one with students to determine if the student is experiencing any outside problems that may affect his or her schoolwork or may consult with other teaching staff to provide the student with the necessary supports to ensure success.

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

**Parent Communication:** Withrow teachers contact parents early to engage their help when a student experiences difficulty or falls behind. They contact parents when any student misbehavior occurs, even a student's violation of the school uniform policy. The teachers communicate with parents through phone calls, e-mail, or correspondence sent home with students.

**Parent Connect:** Parents can access their children's performance data at any time through a program called "Parent Connect." Once parents have a password, they can easily and frequently monitor students' daily routines and progress. The school sends e-mails to parents when new grades are entered, and they can keep track of all current student performance data including grades, homework, discipline and attendance.

**Community Partnerships:** Withrow partners with several community organizations and businesses including: United Way, Xavier University, Luxottica, Convergys and the University of Cincinnati. These partnerships give assistance to parents, students and teachers in the form of counseling services, supplies, classes, tutoring and mentoring.

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

**Setting High Expectations:** While staff and administrators are sensitive to students' home situations and cognizant of the difficulties of working in an urban environment, they are adamant in their refusal to accept excuses for poor work and lower standards. The principal maintains open lines of communication with teachers and students by developing and cultivating personal relationships. She holds regular staff meetings, frequently visits classrooms and talks with students about that day's lesson.

**Family Atmosphere:** Parents believe the small class sizes, gender-based classes, and caring and concerned teachers contribute to this sense of family at the school. Teachers and administrators consider providing emotional support and developing personal relationships as critical factors in ensuring their students' academic success. Teachers are aware that some students may lack a sufficient support system at home or live with parents or guardians who did not finish high school or college. They impress upon the children that with support and determination, they can succeed despite difficult circumstances.

**Discipline and Structure:** The school's discipline and structure are perceived as crucial to support students whose home lives may be, at times, chaotic. The school has a clear discipline policy that is published in the student handbook. A grid identifies misbehaviors, examples of corresponding initial consequences, and consequences for repeated offensive and chronic offenses. The structure also includes a uniform policy and gender-based classes. These policies are consistently implemented in the hope of reducing discipline problems and helping students focus in the classroom.