

Genoa Elementary School

Perry Local School District

Massillon, Ohio

Superintendent: Paul Carver

Principal: Diane L. Kittelberger

<http://perry.net.sparcc.org/genoa/pages/welcome.htm>

Genoa Elementary, housed in a building that is over one hundred years old, is a suburban school in northeast Ohio that serves a diverse population of approximately 400 students, 50.1% of whom are economically disadvantaged, in kindergarten through fifth grade. Genoa demonstrates that the climate of a school and the performance of students are not necessarily hampered by the age of the edifice. Genoa is a safe, caring, student-centered place. The school's motto, **Believe-Achieve-Succeed**, and the staff members' belief that their students, regardless of their background, can achieve at high levels are evident throughout the building.

SCHOOL PROFILE	
2003-2004 Building Rating	Effective
Enrollment	396
Grade Levels	K-5
Economically Disadvantaged Students	50.1%
Students with Disabilities	13.5%
Black Students	3.7%
Hispanic Students	2.7%
Multi-racial Students	3.8%
White Students	89.1%

With strong district support, the staff at Genoa work collaboratively in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to analyze student performance, assess individual student needs, plan for instruction, establish grade level goals for the building's Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP), and determine professional development needs. This extensive study of student data combined with teachers who set and monitor achievement goals, creates a powerful learning structure for all students. Another important factor in Genoa's success is the belief that a strong partnership with the community and parents is a key component in the success of its students.

Genoa Elementary School's achievement and proficiency test scores provide evidence that all students can succeed. During the 2003-2004 school year 88.7 % of all fourth graders scored proficient or above on the mathematics section of the Ohio Proficiency Test (OPT). Contributing to these passage rates were the scores of fourth grade students with disabilities, 77.8% scored proficient or above. Additionally, students demonstrated high levels of performance in reading with 95% of third graders passing the reading achievement test and 88.9% of the fourth graders passing the reading section of the OPT. Students scores have progressively increased in both mathematics and reading during the last three years as depicted in the bar graphs included at the end of this report.

PERRY LOCAL DISTRICT PROFILE	
2001-2002 District Rating	Excellent
District Enrollment	4,791

Designing Instruction to Ensure every Student's Success

Genoa's success in designing instruction to ensure every student's success is due, in large part, to

- o assessment data analysis at the district, building and classroom level;

- timely and effective intervention;
- implementation of a variety of teaching methodologies and strategies;
- integration of technology into the classroom; and
- after-school tutoring.

At Genoa, **assessment data** drives instruction and intervention. At the district level, the administration is committed to the use of data and provides strong leadership in this area. For example, central office hires people to analyze test items and prepare information for individual schools. The district also uses information acquired from assessment data analyses to plan professional development activities and to provide a two-week intervention program.

At the building level, each school, including Genoa, establishes a Building Continuous Improvement Plan (BCIP) that sets instructional goals based on analysis and discussion of student achievement trend data. This plan is created within the structure of **Professional Learning Communities**, which are grade-level teams of teachers. Most PLCs include an intervention specialist or Title I specialist. Before the PLCs meet at the beginning of the year, Continuous Improvement teacher leaders meet during the summer to do an initial analysis of student data and assemble data folders with pertinent student achievement data for each teacher. At the beginning of the school year, one full staff meeting and one late-start day are provided for teachers to work together in their PLCs to review the data, identify strengths and weaknesses, and develop the BCIP. The plan identifies the vision for the school and includes strengths and weaknesses and goals for each grade level, how the goals will be measured, the action steps each PLC team will implement, and the products (i.e., common assessment, intervention lessons) that will be created as a result of implementation.

The process is not over with the creation of the plan, which is reviewed and revised throughout the year as new data becomes available. Furthermore, each PLC also reviews proficiency test results and conducts an item analysis to identify not only content errors but also the kinds of questions that are troublesome for students. The teams meet one hour a month to talk about instruction, assessment, and intervention. Each team develops their own agenda based on their needs. Teachers rotate as facilitators, and the principal attends various monthly meetings to hear the issues. Minutes of each team's meetings are posted so everyone can see what the others are working on. Recently, the second grade team reviewed an assessment they had given students to see how students performed on particular questions. The team then analyzed how different teachers taught the corresponding information to determine whether different types of instruction had an impact on performance. Another team worked on the development of a rubric for writing. Other teams prepared common materials to use in the classroom, such as a summary sheet for a non-fiction book.

At the classroom level, individual student data is continuously reviewed. All schools in the district use the Dominic Reading and Writing Assessment as a tool to identify needs and design instruction for use in kindergarten through second grade. At Genoa, the special education intervention specialist and kindergarten through fifth grade teachers also use this assessment with students who need intervention. At the beginning of the year, during intervention, and at the end of the year, teachers test the reading fluency and comprehension of each child.

In addition to data analysis, the staff considers **timely and effective intervention** to be a critical component of achievement. At this school-wide Title I school, the Title I staff members provide math and reading intervention at every level. A daily, focused intervention time is built into each grade level. The students are divided into groups based on assessment data and are instructed at their own levels. The instruction, focused on the grade level indicators, prepares the students for achieving on various assessments. Classroom teachers, intervention specialists and Title I personnel all work together to provide instruction to students in these flexible groups based on need. Each classroom teacher also provides immediate intervention if an individual student or small group is not understanding a lesson. Extended-day kindergarten is provided for twelve students based on their individual needs.

Because Genoa Elementary is an Ohio Reads building, a structured program with volunteers working with at-risk students in the area of reading is provided. Program participation is determined by assessment data.

Students receiving special education services generally go to the resource room for reading, math and spelling. The materials used follow the general education curriculum, are aligned to standards, and are at a high interest and lower reading level. During writing intervention, the special education intervention specialist may come into the classroom to provide support. In the area of spelling, emphasis is on high frequency and everyday words which can be used throughout a student's life.

“If I could do anything, I’d hire more intervention teachers to co-teach and provide more individual assistance and intervention.”

Diane L. Kittelberger, principal

A tour of the classrooms shows a **variety of teaching methodologies and strategies** being used to engage students. A single lesson may involve visuals, discussion, purposeful student movement, and group involvement. Changes in instruction techniques are frequent to keep all students involved. In one particular lesson, the teacher holds up sentence strips that small groups had written the previous day. A student reads the sentence strip and identifies which of two stories (or both) the sentence described. The student, after placing the sentence strip onto a Venn diagram on the board, is asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with other students' answers using a thumbs-up or thumbs-down motion. This is a simple and effective strategy the teacher uses for group involvement. Once the strips are all in place, the teacher sets up the writing exercise on comparing and contrasting.

In another class, students are reviewing long division. First, the teacher has a problem already solved on the board and asks the students if they agree with the problem solution and to explain why or why not. The multiplication process for checking the answer is reviewed. Then, the students count off to make teams of two; each team is given a small chalkboard. One student of each pair is given a problem they must solve and talk through with their partner. The partner then must determine the accuracy of the solution and check the work through multiplication. The teacher moves around the classroom assisting any team or individual having difficulty. Frequent positive and encouraging comments are heard in each of the classrooms. Desks are often rearranged. Groups are assigned by skill level and also by random selection.

Genoa has also successfully **integrated technology into its classrooms** to better ensure every student's success. For example, the staff uses an FM system when

teaching. The teachers have found that they can use a quiet voice because of the FM amplification. This quieter atmosphere increases the attention of students and encourages the students to use quiet voices in the classroom. Also, each classroom has computers that are used at the primary level in activity work centers and for research in the upper grade classes. Students have computer lab every week with a hired staff member who works cooperatively with teachers, providing them with student achievement benchmarks for computer skills. Currently, the third graders are learning how to send an email message.

After-school tutoring is provided two nights a week, from January to March. The teachers eagerly sign up to participate. The staff works very hard to get the students to attend. The principal sets up carpooling. Teachers drive students home after tutoring. Their efforts were rewarded; this past year over 100 children participated in the program.

Teachers at Genoa, dedicated to helping all students succeed, are willing to put in the time needed to provide instruction to ensure every student's success. In addition to common planning time one to two times a week, teachers at all grade levels have one-half hour before school one day a week set aside for grade-level planning. Planning over lunch and using e-mail to communicate ideas are common occurrences.

Providing Rigorous Instruction Aligned to Standards

The district has an adopted course of study for each subject area at each grade level. The core components of the course of study reflect the grade level indicators in the Ohio Academic Content Standards. Textbooks and supplemental materials are carefully selected by district study groups to reflect grade-level indicators. Before the district purchases new textbooks, teachers review them closely to determine if the lessons and materials are aligned with the standards. Each indicator is reviewed to determine if the materials meet the standards. Once textbooks are selected, the content of the texts are mapped out and paced over the course of the year. For example, the district science department has committed to buying new materials and has asked all third grade teachers in the district to review them. For this review, the district pasted Ohio's grade level indicators onto the textbook course of study and added a column for teacher assessment. The Saxon Math Series was selected for special education students because it closely aligns to the curriculum, meets the indicators and provides for repetition of skills.

Genoa provides language arts instruction with a balanced literacy system including read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading with shared writing, guided writing, and independent writing. Teachers work with students in flexible groups and provide differentiated instruction based on student needs. With a goal of developing independent learners, students are helped to progress from direct instruction to guided practice to independent work at individual levels.

Genoa participated in Project SEEDS: Science Education Enhancing the Development of Skills, a hands-on, minds-on elementary science curriculum that is integrated with language arts and math. The science instruction focuses on concept development through the use of inquiry, reflective thinking and hands-on lab experiments. The teachers have linked all science lessons to the state indicators, and materials were selected based on the best methods for teaching the indicators. These strategic lessons utilize kits, literature and hands-on materials. Conceptual

development is also key to Genoa’s math curriculum. A system of modeling, guided practice and independent work is used for instruction. Assessments that are administered frequently are used to identify students in need of intervention.

All classroom lesson plans are designed to address benchmarks and standards. Most staff members use a standard computerized lesson plan form. The form requires the identification of the standards for each subject or instructional area, the instructional performance, and the evaluation component of each lesson. All lessons in every curriculum area are structured around a model that includes introduction, modeling, guided practice, assessment and intervention. Assessments are done at the end of units of study, and results are compared across the district.

“Teachers have a passion, commitment and knowledge of instruction. There is not a lot of fluff. Kids have fun, but we also have high expectations for them.” Diane L. Kittelberger, principal

Students are made aware of the benchmarks for their performances through “I can” posters displayed in each classroom. These posters help students understand the targets for learning that are based on state standards.

Providing Leadership that Results in Continuous Improvement

Based on the administrative evaluation instrument, the main goals of Diane L. Kittelberger, Genoa’s principal, are to continue to support, monitor and evaluate the school’s intervention model and to emphasize the importance of on-going intervention throughout the day. She wants to show student growth but reduce the pressure the teachers place on themselves by empowering them and by celebrating their successes.

The mission statement of the district is posted throughout the building, as are academic standards.

Professional Development

The staff members at Genoa have participated in a variety of professional development opportunities to study balanced literacy, assessment for learning, differentiated instruction, inquiry models, and data study and analysis to inform instruction. They have participated in study groups and action research projects. Time spent aligning instruction and assessment in all curricular areas has provided teachers with the skills to engage in purposeful lesson planning and to create meaningful assessment experiences for students.

“I’m just one part of a learning team. I don’t know everything, but I can find answers or staff development to help get us there.”

Diane L. Kittelberger, principal

The principal at Genoa also continues to develop her own skills. She attends a monthly principal study group with peers from her own as well as neighboring districts. During these meetings, principals identify issues, questions, or best practices they would like to address. The meeting agenda is set, and the meeting is facilitated by one of the principals. She also attends workshops/in-services with teachers.

Discipline

Each classroom develops a list of expected behaviors and a system for identifying consequences. Students begin the day with a good citizen card placed by their name. Each of five other-colored cards represents a consequence: warning, five minutes taken from recess, 10 minutes from recess and a note home, morning detention, and being sent to the principal. The students change their card if directed by the teacher. Prior to any student being sent to the office, forms are completed for detention. If a child is sent to the office, further consequences depend on the infraction and how often it has occurred. The students know that the best thing they can do is tell the truth so they can walk out of the office with respect. Parents are frequently called so school and home can work together.

Engaging Parents and Community to Support Student Success

Parents and Genoa Educators (P.A.G.E.) meetings are held the first Monday of the month. Mrs. Kittleberger provides a monthly report regarding P.A.G.E. activities, goals and accomplishments. Parent volunteers from this group support various projects throughout the school year, such as putting stickers on student papers and working with students on basic math facts. This year the focus of P.A.G.E. is to acquire DVD players for each classroom.

When Genoa's school playground was set afire, members of the school community worked together to raise the money to rebuild it. With the help and determination of the staff, students and P.A.G.E., along with money from five community businesses and donated labor, new playground equipment was purchased and installed. The class that helped raise the most money won the privilege of being the first on the slide during a special recess time.

Genoa also regularly communicates with parents and the community regarding what is happening at the school. A monthly newsletter is disseminated to parents and stakeholders, and the school Web site is updated to inform parents and the community of the school expectations, school and student successes, and upcoming events. Genoa's Continuous Improvement Plan and the school's strategies and successes are presented at Board of Education meetings each year.

At the classroom level, communication with parents is an ongoing process. Teachers inform parents and students of student expectations and progress through newsletters, parent handbooks and numerous face-to-face and telephone conferences throughout the year. Weekly work packets are also sent home, signed, and returned. Students at the intermediate levels are provided with assignment notebooks that communicate daily student work expectations to parents.

A variety of activities are scheduled to reach out to parents and encourage them to visit and become involved in the school. Prior to the start of the school year, a Back To School Night is held to meet students and parents. During the school year, a number of evening activities are held, such as the Fall Fun Fest, Family Fun Night in the spring, and the holiday program. When parents arrive at the school, the staff tries to make them feel comfortable so they will return. All parents are scheduled for conferences, and nearly all of them attend. On occasion, teachers and the principal conduct home visits for a variety of reasons, including to check on the home, to provide condolences, or to intervene because a child needs a bath.

Parents report that they believe their children are in a caring, safe environment.. They are very positive about the fact that all elementary schools in the district have a buzzer on the door for security.

The school needs to make referrals to Children’s Services for various reasons, often once a week. Again, communication with the parents is key. Generally, the parents are not angry. The staff members make it clear that they care about the parents as individuals, but that the children come first. The parents are told that the school is an advocate for their child.

“Obviously walls don’t make the climate. Our building has a family-feel. You see the kids interacting, the teachers and students interacting, staff collegiality, laughing. It’s a comfortable, kid-friendly, kid-centered place.”
Diane L. Kittelberger, principal

Creating a Culture Where Each Individual Feels Valued

At Genoa, every person is expected to respect and value other members of the school community. The school fosters good citizenship through the People Respecting Others (PRO) awards program and Kindness Tip of the Week. As part of the PRO program, the names of students who are identified for recognition by staff are put into a box. Twenty names are drawn, and these students attend a PRO party in their honor. The names of the winners are put into a newsletter and on the school’s Web site.

The knowledge and opinions of teachers are valued at Genoa. Teachers are surveyed concerning the school culture. They also work in Professional Learning Communities to identify and suggest strategies and interventions to improve student performance and ensure that students do not fall through the cracks. Staff members are encouraged to connect with each other at meetings and during overlapping lunch hours.

Parents of children with disabilities report that the teachers go out of their way to look for students’ strengths to enable them to develop confidence, work to their

“The best thing about Genoa is the caring and the competence of the teachers. They helped my daughter learn to love stories and literature and to work to her potential.” A parent of a student with disabilities

potential, and increase social skills. According to the parent of a daughter with disabilities, “The best thing about Genoa is the caring and the competence of the teachers. They helped my daughter learn to love stories and literature and to work to her potential.”

What does the data say?

