

Harding Middle School

Steubenville City School District

Steubenville, Ohio

Superintendent: Richard Ranallo

Principal: Rob Rembold

Vice Principal: Joe Yonok

www.steubenville.k12.oh.us/schools/harding

Harding Middle School, named a School of Promise for the 2003-2004 school year with special recognition being given for improving the performance of students with disabilities, serves students from the Steubenville City School District's six neighborhood elementary schools, four of which have also been recognized as Schools of Promise. Serving grades 6 to 8, the district's only middle school is housed in a newly built modern facility that expects to serve a record high enrollment of 540 students in the 2005-2006 school year. This new building is quite a change for students who come from smaller and older neighborhood school buildings that are in the process of being replaced under the district's school facilities plan.

SCHOOL PROFILE	
2003-2004 Building Rating	Excellent
Grade Levels	6-8
Enrollment	499
Economically Disadvantaged Students	53.0%
Students with Disabilities	12.9%
Multi-racial Students	8.0%
Black Students	32.7%
White Students	57.9%

The Steubenville City School District has made a strong commitment to ensuring high levels of academic achievement during the early years. Early childhood and all-day, every-day kindergarten programs are in place. The Success for All (SFA) comprehensive school model has been implemented district-wide through grade five and has been quite successful, yet it is not uncommon for achievement scores to drop when students make the transition to middle school. This challenging change faced by students is one that the Harding staff members take seriously. "We all put on our counseling hats," shares Rob Rembold, principal. "This is a developmental age when students need a lot of special attention." When asked why the school is successful, he responds, "Our staff is second to none!"

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

"Our staff is second to none!"
Rob Rembold, principal

Harding Middle School shows that students with disabilities, as well as students from each racial, ethnic and income group (over 50% of the students come from low-income families) can succeed not only at the elementary level but also into the middle school years. As depicted in the bar graphs that appear at the end of this report, 96.2% of the sixth graders scored proficient or above on the mathematics section of the proficiency test during the 2003-2004 school year, and increase of 46.8% over a three year period. Students with disabilities scores

in mathematics have progressively increased since 2001-2002 from 61.1% scoring proficient or above to 81% in 2003-2004.

Curriculum and Instruction

The teaching staff at Harding has worked hard to align the curriculum with Ohio's content standards. They also had a mission to help all students, including students with disabilities, become familiar with the type of questions that were on the proficiency tests. The teachers became familiar with the tests and for the last five years have conducted a one-hour proficiency class each day to acclimate students to the questions on the tests. They then used data from the students' work on the proficiency tests to determine areas that needed to be reinforced. Now, with the shift to achievement tests, Mr. Rembold shares, "We are going to have a growing period now. This is a new ball game."

Tutoring, including peer tutoring, is available for all students. After-school tutoring is limited to 30 to 40 minutes as transportation is a concern. The only transportation home after regular hours is the detention bus. A remedial school that focuses on reading and math is also provided in the summer.

Harding Middle School houses six special education classes, one self-contained for students who function at a low academic level, and the other five grouped by the achievement levels of the students. In each of the classes, extra time is spent on reading, the weakest subject for many of the students. The school will change to a more departmentalized approach in the 2005-2006 school year. Under the new structure, students with IEPs will return to their home class for one period of achievement test preparation. Students with disabilities will continue to participate in music and sports as they always have.

Also, in the 2005-2006 school year, every student will have two periods of math each day under a new program called Math in the Middle. Teachers will use the two periods to make sure a math concept can be covered in one day instead of teaching a concept over two days or will teach one period and then have students work on computer-assisted programs such as Star Math.

Retention

Whether or not to retain is determined on an individual basis, based on all the efforts made by and for each student during the year. After the first report card, the teachers and the guidance counselor meet with students who are experiencing problems to determine appropriate interventions and tutoring. If problems persist after the second report card, the principal and parents meet with the teachers and students to explore other alternatives and to inform the student and the parents that retention could be a possibility if there is not sufficient improvement. Students not meeting expectations are also referred to the summer program for reading and math.

Discipline

Misbehavior issues are viewed as disruptions to valuable learning time for all the students. "Our philosophy is that if kids are disrupting learning time, they must be removed from the classroom," explains Mr. Rembold. "But we don't

want them to miss out, so they are required to make up what they missed.” During the time out, the student must complete the work that is provided by the teacher whose class is missed in order to return to class. Misbehavior incidences are tracked, and a data-driven approach is used to design strategies to reduce problems that lead to disciplinary action.

For students whose behavior problems persist, an alternative court program is available at the Jefferson County Courthouse. While the curriculum at the alternative program is aligned with that of the schools, and students are held to the same standards of performance as they are in their home school, the philosophy at Harding is do everything possible not to exercise this option.

Professional Development

Mr. Rembold and Joe Yanok, vice principal, actively participate in and support the district’s professional development plans and services. This is accomplished through after-school and summer in-service meetings and sitting in on staff professional development meetings. They also participated in the training on the Ohio Academic Content Standards provided by the school district.

Staff professional development is provided during one full-day in-service meeting, five half-day in-service meetings when students are dismissed at 11:30 A.M., and at after-school meetings. During the 2004-2005 school year training covered highly qualified teachers, data training for proficiency (DTI), strategies for taking achievement and proficiency tests, and providing intervention in the classroom. Updates on the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) and on special education were included in each meeting. Harding staff collaborated with high school teachers to discuss curriculum alignment so students would be better prepared for the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). Training on Automated External Defibrillators (AED) and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) was also provided.

Technology

Harding, like all schools in the Steubenville City School District, is fiber optic connected. There is such high interest in the use of the school’s computers that the librarian must assign time in computer-assisted labs. For instance, there are 60 students who arrive at school at 7 AM to use the computers.

21st Century Grant

Four years ago, the Steubenville City School District was awarded a federal 21st Century Community Center Learning Grant that was used to offer after-school programs for students and parents in three elementary schools and Harding Middle School. Students at Harding were offered after-school tutoring and computer-assisted learning programs, and parents were offered classes in computer technology. Not only did these programs provide an alternative to keep students occupied productively after school, but they also provided parents the option to go to the school to have access to computers while learning how to use them. A wellness program was also offered to provide students and their

parents the opportunity to learn about good health habits, to develop good exercise habits for wellness and to learn how to swim.

Parent Involvement

Parents continue to hold high expectations for their children's achievements in middle school, although parent involvement typically declines somewhat during the middle school years. Harding staff members put forth many efforts to encourage parent engagement such as sending home a monthly newsletter that includes information on the students recognized at the quarterly awards ceremonies, hosting a web site that is maintained by the math teacher, and having an online progress book that is available for parents to see grades, attendance records, homework assignments and comments from the teachers. Teachers also use the phones in their classrooms to communicate with parents. Attendance is usually good at the beginning-of-the-year Open House. Parents are always invited to the quarterly award ceremonies. Grandparents are also recognized with an annual day in their honor; the theme for spring 2005 was A Tribute to the 60s. An active Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) also exists.

Student Recognition

Harding encourages positive achievement by the students by recognizing them at an awards assembly every nine weeks. During one 2005 assembly, for example, 187 students were recognized for making the Honor Roll or the Principal's List, or for having 4.0 averages. Nine students improved their grade point average (GPA) by at least 1.0. Perfect attendance certificates were awarded to 105 students. Citizenship awards were given to 46 students who served as peer tutors, found and returned lost items, assisted teachers, videotaped sporting events or worked in the bookstore. Individual awards were presented for achievement in art, home economics, band, choir, orchestra and physical education. Basketball players, cheerleaders and wrestlers were awarded letters for their first year of participation and pins for their second year. Special recognition awards were passed out to students who participated in the Spelling Bee, National Geography Bee and Power of the Pen.

Harding staff members are proud of the great extra-curricular activities they offer. In addition to a wide variety of sport activities, students can participate in activities related to music by participating in the choir, band or orchestra. Also, two teachers volunteer to direct plays that are very popular with the students.

A Community Service Program, the Harding Enriches Lives of Pupils Through Services (HELPS) Club supports the opportunity for students to volunteer their services in the community. This not only fosters a sense of civic responsibility and a commitment to service, but also provides enrichment to academic learning by seeing real life situations first hand. Local Steubenville charities benefit from the proceeds that are donated from a Christmas dance for seventh and eighth graders.

What does the data say?

