

New Lexington High School

Superintendent Larry A. Rentschler

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Case Study Report Highlights: New Lexington High School

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

- **Leadership Emphasis on Academics** - The new principal has helped to increase teachers' use of data to inform instruction, increase alignment with the state standards and prepare students for the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT).
- **Experienced Teachers** - Many of the teachers have been at the school for a long time. Several of the newer ones graduated from the school and were taught by veteran teachers still on staff.
- **Collaborative Working Relationships** - Teachers enjoyed working together. The math and special education teachers especially had a highly collaborative relationship.
- **Common Planning Time** - The district introduced common planning time to enable teachers to work together on infusing standards into lessons and applying lessons learned from expanded assessment processes.

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

- **Caring Teachers** - Teachers enjoyed working with students. A few were observed as particularly effective at addressing different learning styles within a single classroom.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS

- **Emphasis on Reading** - The school has implemented two major reading activities that involve the entire school. The Schoolwide Reading Program has everyone in the school silently reading 30 minutes of the same book daily (school goal is to read three books per year). The Word-of-the-Day program expands students' vocabulary.
- **Use of Data to Target Instruction** - Teachers learned about using data analysis to inform instructional changes at Project SOAR (Battelle for Kids) workshops. The school is participating in the Literacy Curriculum Alignment Project (LCAP) and teachers are using short-cycle assessment to identify needed modifications in their lessons. They also are using the Riverside Test with freshmen and OGT results to guide alignment with the state standards.
- **Math Changes** - The math department has been working on standards and updating its curriculum for at least six years. The school has introduced what teachers call "applied" algebra and geometry courses as part of its efforts to better prepare all students for the OGT. It has plans to offer "Applied" Algebra II next year.
- **Special Education** - The special education teachers work very closely with the regular teachers. The school places students with Individual Education Plans (IEP) in regular classes if at all possible. The special education students participate in the schoolwide reading activities, use many of the same textbooks and take similar tests.
- **Intervention** - Students who need intervention have four options: work with a teacher during their study hall, attend a week-long summer program, use a computer tutoring program, or be assigned to Education Services Center (ESC) activities. The school is planning to target intervention to students not passing the OGT.
- **Incentives** - Students are given various incentives to reward their progress. Classes that show the most progress get pizza parties. Failing students are not allowed to go on field trips.
- **Use of Technology** - A \$20,000 technology grant covered costs of new equipment and training (teachers and students). The library has two well-equipped computer labs which are used frequently by classes. Each classroom also has at least four computers. Students regularly do PowerPoint presentations.
- **Opportunities for College-bound Students** - Through the district's Realizing Our Academic Dreams Model Access Program (Road Map), federally funded through Gear Up, the current seniors have been in a college preparation program since they were in seventh grade. At year end, 120 seniors remained and 85 percent had submitted at least one college application. College Prep students include a mock college scholarship interview and vocational students complete a job shadowing experience as part of their Career Passports.

PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

- **Attention to Standards** - Extensive professional development over the past 5-6 years has helped staff understand the standards and modify their curriculum. LCAP short cycle assessment and OGT training was notably useful.
- **Grants** - The school has benefited from a number of grants that have paid for in-service training and expanded technological resources. The Martha Holden Jennings Initiative funded staff development activities that changed the conversation in the building, resulting in the introduction of monthly Common Planning Time in 2004-2005.

ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

- **Parent Involvement** - Parent involvement is the school's weakest area. The school is planning to do more outreach to parents, including surveying them about their needs and willingness to participate.

INTRODUCTION

New Lexington is the county seat of Perry County. Located about 22 miles southeast of Zanesville, the small rural town has a population of nearly 5,000. About one-third of its residents are employed in manufacturing and about one-fifth has jobs in education, health and social services. Hocking College (Perry Branch) is located here. The 1999 median family income was \$33,514, which was 33 percent below the state median of \$50,037 that year. The poverty rate was 24 percent for families with children under 18. Forty percent of the high school's student body is economically disadvantaged.

New Lexington City District Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
District Rating	Continuous Improvement (5 out of 18 indicators met)	Continuous Improvement (6 out of 23 indicators met)
District Enrollment	1,932	1,904
Schools	Elementary Schools: 2 Middle Schools: 1 High Schools: 1	

New Lexington High School Profile		
	2003-2004	2004-2005
School Rating	Continuous Improvement (3 out of 7 indicators met)	Effective (2 out of 7 indicators met)
Enrollment	582	556
Grade Levels	9-12	9-12
Average Expenditure per Pupil	\$7,064	NA
Low-Income percentage	45.0%*	40.3%
Percent racial/ethnic minority	Less than 1%	Less than 1%
Students with Disabilities	15.6%	14.7%
Student Attendance Rate	91.4%	90.9%

*The percentage as reported in the CCIP system.

New Lexington High School (NLHS) moved into a new building four years ago. The building is large and spacious. Classrooms are arranged by department so that, for example, all math teachers have classrooms close to each other. The school has several computer labs, giving students access to current technology. The high school is located on the same campus as the middle school and one of the district's elementary schools.



New Lexington High School Teacher Profile		
	2003-04	2004-05
Teachers	35	36
Average Teacher Salary	\$47,026	\$49,954
Percent of Courses Taught by Certified Licensed Teachers	92.7%	93.3%
Teacher Attendance Rate	94.7%	94.7%
Average Years of Experience	19	20

The superintendent attributes the district's success to the strategic planning process begun a few years ago. The planning group is comprised of school administrators, teachers, other school staff, board members and parents; it meets twice a year, in addition to one full day in December, to strategize about the future of the district. The four components of the Strategic Plan are: Teaching and Learning, Academics, Technology, and Parents/Community. Funds from a Martha Holden Jennings Initiative Grant are helping to support development of the community involvement component.

The school has introduced a number of innovations to its reading program in recent years. Staff emphasized several activities as key to the school's success. These were:

- Martha Holden Jennings Initiative that paid for numerous staff development activities for the past three years, and, according to staff members, "changed the conversation in the building." The principal and teachers said they found the *Classroom Instruction that Works* program a particularly helpful resource.¹ This grant has now ended, but the school's introduction of a system of Common Planning Time largely stems from work with this grant.
- Literacy Curriculum Alignment Project (LCAP) in which staff members have learned to use short-cycle assessment to inform changes in their curriculum. LCAP is aligned with the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT). NLHS is participating in this project with two other schools in the county. All three schools give the same test during the same time period, enter data online and then review and compare the results. It guides teachers in the development of higher level questions that appear on the OGT and provides opportunities for students to practice answering those types of questions.
- A strong Reading Committee that initiated schoolwide reading and a Word-a-Day Program that exposes students to new vocabulary.

Grant funding has resulted in staff putting much greater focus on using data to inform instruction. Moreover, the school has done a lot of work to strengthen the connection between its curriculum and state standards. Students also have benefited from a grant designed to encourage college attendance.

SCHOOLS OF PROMISE AND THE CASE STUDY RESEARCH PROCESS

NLHS was selected for recognition by *Schools of Promise* based on students' high academic achievement in reading in 2003-2004. A high 95 percent of NLHS tenth-graders passed the state's ninth-grade proficiency reading test. Nearly 10 percent more students did well on the reading test in 2003-2004 compared to the prior year. Students' math performance, however, did not satisfy the *Schools of Promise* criteria. Although 79 percent of students passed the math test, only 65 percent of economically disadvantaged students succeeded on the math proficiency test. NLHS was the only school in Perry County to be recognized as a *School of Promise* in 2003-2004. In the 2004-2005 academic year, the school maintained its *Schools of Promise* status in reading and two additional high schools in Perry County were recognized. Since several of NLHS grant activities are either countywide or regional, this development

¹ *Integrating Technology into the Classroom using Classroom Instruction that Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* by Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering, Jane E. Pollock http://t4.jordan.k12.ut.us/professional_development/strategies/.

suggests that strategies the school has introduced are broadly applicable and are resulting in positive impacts at more than one school.

NLHS is one of four high schools randomly selected by Institutional Research Consultants (IRC) from the 34 high schools identified among the 2003-2004 *Schools of Promise*. The focus in this case study is the school's Reading/Language Arts program, but the research team also observed math classes and interviewed math teachers. As part of the two-day case study visit, the researchers observed four Language Arts teachers, four math faculty, two Special Education teachers, and one Intervention Specialist. Interviews were also done with these people as well as the principal, the district superintendent, the reading committee chairperson and a grant coordinator. In addition, the team conducted two single-sex focus groups with students, five males and eight females. One researcher completed telephone interviews with two parents. A total of 31 people participated in interviews, 11 teachers were observed and interviewed, and nine teachers returned surveys. The following table outlines all research activities.

New Lexington High School: Case Study Research Coverage*

	TOTAL	Interviewed		Observed		Returned Survey	
	N	N	N	N	%	N	%
Teachers							
Language Arts Teachers	4	4	100.0	4	100.0	3	75.0
Math Teachers	4	4	100.0	4	100.0	4	100.0
Other Interviews and Surveys							
Principal		1					
Special Ed Teachers		3					
Intervention Specialists		1					
Parents		2					
Students (Two Focus Groups)		13					
Other Interviews							
Superintendent		1					
Reading Committee Chair		1					
Grant Coordinator		1					
TOTAL INTERVIEWS		31					
TOTAL TEACHERS OBSERVED		11					
TOTAL TEACHER SURVEYS		9					

*The Reading Committee chair who teaches Spanish was not observed.

This report is organized using the “Five Lessons Learned” identified in earlier *Schools of Promise* case study research.² These lessons emphasize the importance of instituting strong leadership, establishing a school culture that values individual students, designing instruction to ensure student success, providing rigorous instruction aligned with the standards, and engaging parents and the community to support student success. NLHS staff members’ activities and overall approach included elements identified by earlier research efforts. This report describes the school’s efforts in greater detail and hopefully will be useful to others who would like to introduce comparable improvements.

PROVIDING LEADERSHIP THAT RESULTS IN CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Dennis Love is in his first year as the principal of NLHS. He was previously an assistant principal at the school for three years. Teachers said that Love has made a difference by pushing them to look at data and changing the way they think about what they teach. They said that he is adamant about the importance of academics, and one noted that he also constantly reminds them, “We’re here for the kids.”

Staff stressed that extensive professional development activities have given them a much greater understanding of the state academic standards and their connection to student learning. In the past year, teachers have focused on preparing students for the OGT. The teachers’ significant levels of experience and ability to work well together across departmental lines further contributed to the school’s leadership.

Highly Experienced Staff Committed to School

Many teachers have taught at the school for a long time. Several who were hired recently graduated from the school and had been taught by the veteran teachers. Two-thirds of the nine teachers responding to the case study survey had more than 20 years of teaching experience and half of the respondents had taught at NLHS for at least 11 years. The average amount of teaching experience at the school is 20 years.

Collaborative Working Relationships

The teachers reported that they work well together, and as is common in a small community, they also see each other frequently outside of the school day. They regularly interact with each other and feel comfortable asking each other questions. Teachers said that their work on the standards and professional development activities had resulted in greater collaboration. Teachers repeatedly noted they have learned a great deal from each other. The special education teachers especially seemed to have a close relationship with the math department.

Common Planning Time

The district introduced common planning time in 2003-2004 and it is facilitating NLHS teachers’ efforts to collaborate and work together. In addition, the time enables them to attend districtwide professional development sessions.

²The *Five Lessons Learned* emerged from the case study research conducted by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) in 2001-2002 (see http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement_gaps/Schools_of_Promise/5lessons.asp) There is also evidence of the use of practices that corresponds to the Framework of Practice that ties the *Five Lessons* to research on effective schools (see http://www.ode.state.oh.us/achievement_gaps/schools_of_promise/FOP.asp).

CREATING A CULTURE WHERE EACH INDIVIDUAL FEELS VALUED

Teachers repeatedly talked about how they enjoy working with students, and although they are often frustrated with them, they believed in their potential and made efforts to encourage them. Teachers had the following to say:

I've taught here for 25 years. I like the kids. I like their humor, their desire to want to become better.

I enjoy working with the kids. They get frustrating sometimes, but I like just being around them all the time and everything and seeing the changes they make. Although there are some that seem to go the other way and you get frustrated with them, you usually have more successes than failures.

The research team observed positive interactions between teachers and students. Teachers seemed to know the students well. Some of the teachers were especially good at encouraging the students and praising them as they worked through class activities. The special education teachers were particularly "hands-on" in their approach with students, demonstrating a high level of empathy and compassion for their students. In addition, even though students were not always organized in groups or explicitly doing group work, teachers encouraged students to help one another in many of the observed classes. Some of teachers effectively used instructional strategies designed to meet the needs of students with a wide variety of individual learning styles. For example, within one class, a few students worked alone, there were some in small groups, some worked on the computer and others worked with paper and pencil. Many students seemed to be active learners; teachers appeared to expect this behavior and were not upset by it.

Students at NLHS emphasized the people at the school as the best thing about NHLS and what makes the school special. Participants in the student focus group said that "everybody is close to everybody...and everybody gets along." One of the girls in the interview session explained:

It makes it easier to learn because we all get along. There are not many people who are mean or stuck up. People are pretty relaxed. If you answer a question in class and it's wrong, it's okay. We don't feel bad in front of each other. We just have fun with it. If you have a problem, you can just talk to your teachers about it. They will talk to you individually, and they'll even do it in front of the class. If you don't understand it, chances are that other kids don't either. If they call on you and you're not sure how to do it, they'll call you to the board and help you do it.

Students indicated that they felt respected and encouraged by the teachers.

DESIGNING INSTRUCTION TO ENSURE EVERY STUDENT'S SUCCESS

NLHS is in the process of implementing schoolwide projects intended to improve student performance across the board. Staff members are targeting reading as an area in which they would like to have a major impact on students. They also are doing extensive testing and analysis of data to inform their instruction.

Major Program Areas

The two major program areas are College Prep and Vocational. The principal explained that it was largely up to students and parents with guidance counselor advisement to make the

decision about student placement. Although students change their minds, Mr. Love said that only a handful of students switch programs each year. The Vocation Program includes Agriscience, Family and Consumer Science and several school-to-work options.

Emphasis on Reading

NLHS has formed a reading committee (composed of language arts, special education, foreign language, math, and social studies teachers and an assistant principal) in response to research that shows that good readers are active readers and that the ability to read is crucial to well-educated students. The goals of the committee are to assist the teaching staff to better:

- set standards in terms of meaningful reading criteria;
- measure students' progress toward standards;
- adjust instruction to accommodate the ability of all students; and,
- select materials appropriate to each student's ability.

NLHS wanted to make students better readers and to help students comprehend what they read and be able to apply the information. At various professional development sessions, staff members had heard about other schools successfully implementing schoolwide reading programs, so they developed their own program.

In the third quarter of the 2003-2004 school year, the school began implementation of a project that provides a period of daily independent reading time for every student. The committee selects a book, allowing approximately three weeks for each book. The students read two books as part of the schoolwide reading project this past year. The school's goal is to have students read a book every quarter beginning in the fall of 2006.

The school cut about five minutes from each class to allow for a reading period. Since the reading and accompanying exercises include all aspects of the curriculum, students are not losing educational time in any subjects. All students (except for students identified as Mentally Disabled, who remain self-contained during this period) are divided alphabetically and placed in groups of about 15 students. Every staff member in the building, including the principal, assistant principal and counselors, lead a reading group during the schoolwide reading time. The daily reading time includes a 3-4 minute warm-up session, a 30-minute silent reading session, and 5-10 minutes of follow-up activities. All special education students also participate in the activities but are placed in groups with a smaller number of students. They read the same book, though their teacher may read to them. The reading program includes projects for everyone, from the students who have difficulties to the most advanced readers. The objective is to help every student become a better reader. According to staff, parents have responded positively to the program and from surveys administered by the school, students are saying that they are doing more reading for pleasure.

A committee of eight teachers plans the program. The process takes a lot of preparation, as the committee compiles activity packets that students work on each day the reading groups meet. Students often work in smaller groups to complete the activities and engage in discussions about the book. Students who have already read the book are allowed to read another book, but they are expected to do the associated activities for the assigned book.

The school purchases the books for all students and plans to reuse them on a 5-year cycle. This will allow them to keep the costs of the program reasonable, without students having to read the same book twice. The school purchased the first two sets of books and the third set was donated from the Central Office through Title I (OhioReads) funding. The school is doing various

fund raisers and has implemented activities such as charging \$2 for all staff who wear jeans on Fridays to raise money for the book fund.

The committee is selecting books that are consistent with the state reading and social science standards with respect to knowledge and skills expected for high school students. Teachers also have additional opportunities for input into the book selections. The Reading Committee chair described their experience to date:

Data show the best way for students to improve reading skills is to actually read. Reading is an active process in which students must use higher level thinking skills. By providing time for students to read, they improve their reasoning skills as well. Since NLHS has adopted the schoolwide reading program, not only have students in grades 9 and 10 surpassed other schools on the LCAP test, but our students have also produced higher practice OGT scores.

We try to get books that we think will hold the student's interest, that will either improve their lives or make them interested in a variety of things. We've done *Night* which was based on the Holocaust. We had a guest speaker come in whose father was a survivor of the Holocaust. The kids were very, very taken back because they really haven't been exposed. We also watched *Schindler's List* with that one.

Teachers have been generally supportive, recognizing that the school's student body, which is largely from Appalachia, does not have a great deal of exposure to culture or literature. They also noted that the principal has urged them to tie the reading activities into their other lessons to the extent possible so the concepts are reinforced and students can further see the value of reading.

The reading committee is now working on tightening the logistics. The initial school reading activity did not operate as smoothly as staff members would have liked, as it was competing for time with other events such as in-service activities and proficiency testing. In addition, since some students read faster, they are planning to have those students read the book out loud into a tape recorder and then share the tapes with lower level students, giving them an opportunity to hear students reading. Given that books with social science themes have been well received, the school is planning to pilot adding government classes into the program next year. The Reading Committee chair pointed out they are continually learning and improving the program.

Another major activity the school has implemented is called Word-of-the-Day. This activity is takes place in the weeks between the schoolwide reading programs. All teachers contribute to the Word-of-the-Day list. Each day, one word is presented on classroom televisions during announcements. Teachers then write the word on a dry erase board and talk about its definition. Before each Word-of-the-Day program, students take a pre-quiz; then they are tested every Friday on the words presented that week. The objective is to expand students' vocabulary and improve their ability to use a wide variety of words appropriately. Many staff members feel this program has been responsible for student improvement on standardized tests.

Use of Data to Target Instruction

Teachers have participated in data analysis workshops conducted by Project SOAR, a Battelle for Kids project. Teachers also are using LCAP, Riverside testing for freshmen, and OGT results to help guide instruction. Their own classroom assessments help them determine how well

students are achieving, but the standardized testing programs provide detailed information on each student's understanding of every state standard.

All freshmen and sophomores take the LCAP short-cycle assessment quarterly. Teachers receive item analyses of the scores, including a list of individual students who have weaknesses, so they can plan their instruction to address students' needs. LCAP has provided the school with a system in which teachers can enter test results into a computer program to determine which standards have not been learned. Staff believes that LCAP has made a huge difference for the sophomore class, making it more comfortable with testing and also providing teachers with specific information on each student's strengths and weaknesses. The school compares their results to two other high schools in the county.

Another source of data used by teachers is provided by the Riverside Test that students take in both the eighth and ninth grades. This is part of the district's "Plan Study Do Act" Action Plan (PSDA) in which three out of the four buildings are participating. Only ninth-grade teachers are involved at the high school.

Teachers look at the OGT practice test questions and see where instruction needs to be modified. During the Common Planning Time, teachers have been working on individual grade analyses and are in the process of setting up a plan to address student needs in each area.

Math Department Efforts to Address Students' Needs

The math department has been working on standards and curriculum for about six years. The county has taken an active leadership role in promoting math improvement and the high school is benefiting from many of those activities. Changes that the school has made include the introduction of an "Applied" Algebra course a few years ago. A math teacher explained that this section of Algebra I is designed specifically to prepare sophomores for success on the OGT. The school continues to add new classes as teachers realize a need. This year, it added Applied Geometry and plans to initiate Applied Algebra II next year. Teachers indicated these courses are explicitly aligned with the state standards and help prepare Integrated Math students for the OGT. Teachers want students to improve their math understanding, to be able to communicate and write mathematically and to master as many of the indicators as possible. One teacher explained this process:

We had taken last year's OGT data, and then this fall we gave the OGT practice test. We're starting to correlate all that to see if we had any changes. Of course, we're only talking about a short length of time. Our goal in our mathematics department is to see where we have improved and what changes need to be made for next year or where we need to concentrate more effort.

In addition, this is the first year that the middle school has offered Algebra I in grade 8 and Pre-Algebra in grade 7. The school system previously did not have a teacher with proper certification to teach these courses in seventh or eighth grades.

NLHS students have to complete three math credits in order to graduate. The school currently offers a total of 5.5 math classes. About 10 percent of students take more than the required three math classes. A four-year curriculum for College Prep students would be: Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Advanced Math. In the Advanced Math class they work on a variety of projects including conducting a survey and then analyzing their data. Most of the College Prep juniors take Calculus their senior year. About nine NLHS students took the AP test in math

in 2004-2005, and staff expects three or four to pass. The school will pay the fees for low-income students to take the AP test.

Teachers have participated in math-related professional development activities such as Ohio Mathematics Academy Program (OMAP), which is a state-funded teacher-training program on the use of standards-based modules in algebra, geometry and data analysis. One special education teacher emphasized the benefits of professional development in math and how she also learns through teacher collegiality:

The OMAP was great. But I would say the best is working with the other math teachers, going to them and saying, "This lesson just bombed today. How can I teach it differently?" I go after school... I've done a lot of inclusion throughout the years. We'll make it so I can do some team teaching. They [special education students] work really well with modifications in their classrooms."

OMAP gave preference to participation by school teams and explicitly recommended that special education teachers be included. NLHS already had good communication between math and special education, so this opportunity was an especially good fit.

Special Education

Special Education is more fully integrated into the regular education program at NLHS than is often the case. When students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) come into the school, they are often placed in regular classes. One teacher described this process:

We usually start off the year by putting them in the mainstream class to see how they handle it for the first few weeks. If they can't handle it, we pull them out and bring them into a self-contained class. We test the kids. We know where they are in eighth grade before they come up here. There are quite a few out in the regular education classes who get inclusion support.

To the extent possible, special education students are doing the same types of things as the regular students. Instruction includes modifications such as teachers reading more difficult materials to the students, allowing them more time for tests and providing them with more supplemental materials that are at a lower level.

Special education teachers also use some of the same textbooks and give the same type of format on tests as do regular teachers. The special education teachers expressed that they truly feel part of the school and the curriculum. They do Word-of-the-Day and look at their students' LCAP results, which allow them to compare students' performance to other districts. These teachers also have the standards posted in their room and are systematically checking them off as students demonstrate their understanding.

Special education teachers explained:

We push our kids... Part of it is how the staff here presents things. Every one of my kids is important. Those tests are just as important in my eyes as they are to the future leaders of the world.

I work with a lot of kids. I guess a big goal for them is to be productive citizens. I teach job skills class and a lot of that deals with what kind of employees they will be.

Like the regular education teachers, much of their focus is on preparing students to be successful on the OGT. Special education students are expected to pass, but it is not a graduation requirement for them. Teachers also compare their students' test performance to regular students and find that some in special education do better. Since math is often an area in which students have weaknesses, the special education teachers have come to rely on the math department to help them develop content-appropriate materials. Two special education teachers are regularly included in the math department meetings.

Intervention

The school's intervention program is four-fold and includes the following options:

- Students can be assigned to a teacher during their study hall.
- Students can attend a weeklong summer program.
- Students can have computer practice.
- Students can be assigned to the county Education Service Center (ESC) for additional services.

One teacher noted that the school is in the process of developing a more effective intervention program. He suggested that it was too easy for students to not take the existing options seriously. Within the next two years, the school will likely set up an OGT class primarily for seniors who have not passed the test.

When students fail a course, they can repeat the class or take a comparable class online. Sometimes to fulfill requirements, students take several English classes at a time, which is not ideal, but it is preferable to them having to repeat a year or dropping out. Staff agreed that failure was primarily due to high absenteeism and lack of motivation. Students who miss too many days of school (12 days for a semester course and 24 days for a year long course) are not permitted to pass a class, even if they have high grades. Since the NLHS attendance rate at 91 percent did not meet the state requirement of 93 percent, this is an area on which the school may want to give additional attention.

Incentives

The school frequently uses incentives to encourage student achievement. Pizza parties are given to classes that make the most progress. Students, including special education students, are not permitted to go on field trips when they have failing grades. There were also incentives for students who completed school reading activities. Their names were entered in drawings. Incentives included gift certificates to McDonalds and the Movie Gallery. The school offered prizes that they thought would encourage students to read and to finish their activity packets.

Use of Technology

A technology grant provided the school with \$20,000 for equipment and training for students and teachers. The school has about 160-175 computers or about one computer per three students – nearly twice the average for Ohio public schools.³ The library has two labs which are used nearly all of the time. A computer aide manages each lab. All the computers are networked, enabling the technology director to do things such as download a video for viewing in a particular classroom. Eighty percent of teachers have earned a Novice Certification, meaning they been trained to do basic things on the computer such as word processing, spreadsheets, internet searching and e-mail.

³ On average, there is one classroom computer available for every 5.8 public school students in Ohio, making Ohio one of the top 6 states in classroom computer availability for students. Good News about Public Schools in Ohio <http://www.nea.org/goodnews/oh01.html>

The English teachers use the computer labs frequently. For example, they use the lab for career exploration and college preparation activities. Science teachers use them because their textbooks are outdated, insufficient in number and not correlated to the standards. The social studies teachers use the labs for research and for students to prepare PowerPoint presentations. Given the heavy demand for computer labs, math teachers spend less time in the labs than other discipline areas, but they like to use the *Geometer's Sketchpad* when they can schedule time. Each classroom also has approximately four computers. Additionally, teachers have overhead projectors, video cameras and televisions that can upload videos from a central site. One teacher discussed how access to technology has impacted instruction:

The English Department has this new lab at our disposal. We had to upgrade our lesson plans to incorporate use of the equipment. As far as our teaching, we're still doing what we'd normally do to meet the standards. It's incorporating all the new technology – the overhead projectors, the VCRs and TVs. There are a lot of new things we can incorporate. We have *Chalkwaves*, for example, on our TV now. We can pull a video up on our TV and show it to students. Or, I can do a lesson on the computer and they can see it up there on the TV I'm trying to get them acclimated to college life. For example, when I taught at Ohio University at Athens, my class was in a computer lab. We would compose a piece of writing, log in, and then submit the work.

Students are already using computers in this way, as some are taking a distance learning marketing class through Hocking College.

All the teachers also have their own Web sites. The technology director is planning a class after school to show them how to use it. Staff recently took part in a professional development workshop that introduced them to *Chalkwaves*, an extensive suite of technology-based educational tools (see <http://www.wsiu.org/learning/chalkwaves/index.shtml>). Several expressed excitement about the potential of this resource. In addition to teachers wanting to expand their skills, another major incentive for them to participate in technology classes is that it helps the district continue to qualify for SchoolNet monies. SchoolNet and grant funds have facilitated the school's efforts to expand its technology program. In 2005-2006, NLHS plans to further expand online communications with parents and students at home.

Technology is also being used by teachers to "spice up" their instruction. Teachers gave several examples of how they are incorporating use of the Internet and PowerPoint presentations into teaching traditionally mundane but essential tasks such as research and report writing. A few examples are provided below:

At the beginning of each unit I make up a Web search about the kinds of things they are going to be reading so they are familiar beforehand – more about the author, the themes and the characters. *To Kill a Mockingbird* is set in Alabama during the great depression. I have a group researching the depression. I have a group that is researching Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. I have a group researching the civil rights movement. So we are not just looking at the common themes in the book, but what's going on in our world at that time. In this particular project, my students have their choice of how they will present it. I have several groups that are doing PowerPoint presentations. We've done them at several points during the year. They get really into that. If I said write a 5-page report and turn it in, I might not get 50 percent back. But on a PowerPoint, even the reluctant students tend to do really well. I have one group who is making a

video. They are setting up a newscast and reporting on different aspects of their project.

My senior College Prep kids read *Fallen Angels* and they do a whole WebQuest that is computer-oriented. We're now studying British authors, and they're making a Web page for each author.

The technology training for teachers has increased their comfort level and ability to incorporate more versatility in students' projects. These types of activities will also help to prepare students for college and the work world.

Opportunities for College-bound Students

The district began participation in the Realizing Our Academic Dreams Model Access Program (Road Map), which is federally funded through the Gear Up program, when the current seniors were in seventh grade. The purpose was to follow a class through until graduation and encourage them to go to college. The grant also pays for some of the reading books. Shawnee State is the fiscal agent for this grant, which is in its last year of funding. All of the senior class was invited to participate in Road Map. There were 135 students at the beginning of the junior year, and at the end of the current school year, 120 seniors were still involved.

The program coordinator sent newsletters to parents explaining things that students needed to do while in high school to improve their chances for getting accepted to college. To help students stay organized, they were given an electronic calendar and a notebook with the requirements for their Career Passport, an obligation for all Ohio seniors. The senior English teacher also has them do a college portfolio. Some of them were having trouble with college essays, so the school offered a writing session after school. In addition, teachers incorporated ACT Prep activities into their instruction and the coordinator worked one-on-one with students who had not passed the proficiency test. Eight of 10 passed the test. The school had an orientation at the beginning of the senior year to facilitate communication among the parents, teachers and students.

While in the lower grades, students had the opportunity to visit several colleges and go on field trips. Over the past two years, students were taken on tours to Ohio University-Athens, Hocking College, Ohio State University-Newark, Central Ohio Technical College, Shawnee State and Zanesville State. The coordinator described a particularly fulfilling development following their visit to Hocking State last year:

A student requested that he be put on the early consideration list for Hocking College's Nursing Program. He came in, went through all that testing and did all the paper work. This is somebody that had not been motivated before. I was shocked. I was excited. He's very intelligent. He's just never taken advantage of his intelligence.

The program also sent four students to a journalism camp and two to a creative writing camp. The two girls who went to the creative writing camp have now started a school newspaper that is published every two weeks.

The coordinator met with students to make sure they have applied to at least one college. About 85 percent had submitted at least one college application by the end of the school year. Some students have jobs lined up and others cannot pursue college at this time due to other reasons.

The program succeeded in pushing students to look more closely at what they intended to do following graduation. Preparation of Career Passports specifically requires students to complete a career-related assignment for each year of high school. The major tasks for each grade level are:

- Grade 9 - Prepare a Career Narrative.
- Grade 10 - Develop materials as part of meeting The Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills' (SCANS) recommendations. (<http://wdr.doleta.gov/SCANS>). These are based on a report from a national commission appointed in 1990 to encourage a high-performance economy characterized by high-skill, high-wage employment.
- Grade 11 - Prepare a resume.
- Grade 12 - Use the Ohio Career Information System (OCIS) to submit final graphs.

Students must complete a Career Passport to graduate. The process involves work across several different discipline areas. Vocational students do a job shadowing experience and then videotape their speech. College Prep students do a college scholarship interview and include some of the things learned from the process. All students place their work and presentations on a CD-ROM that they submit to fulfill Career Passport requirements. Students include coverage of the academic standards they have learned in their Career Passports.

Separate from Road Map, Ohio University offered seniors who are in the top 15 percent of their class the opportunity to take a class for free. Two students took advantage of the offer.

PROVIDING RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION ALIGNED TO STANDARDS

Teachers explained that they started aligning their lessons with state standards using curriculum mapping about five to six years ago. They took the standards books and examined each of their classes to check on the match between the two. They found they were not covering the standards as needed in the lower-level classes, so they began making changes. Several noted that the state standards have been especially helpful in spelling out exactly what students should know. Professional development and additional grant funding have been critical components in helping teachers expand their understanding and application of the standards. One teacher gave an overview of their activities and stressed their hard work over the past few years:

We're doing a lot of different things. We're doing Common Planning Time. We're going to lots of different workshops on data analysis. We're taking a closer look at the OGT. About three or four summers ago, we went to OMAP. We drove to Rio Grande every single day for a week or two. When we got there, there were schools that didn't even know what the standards were. I couldn't believe that because we'd had ours in our hands for at least two or three years. And they'd never even seen them. Our curriculum director at the time gave them to us. That's when we started taking a look at our classes and our curriculum and said what we are teaching and where. We've been doing mapping for about six years. It's taken us time. It's taken a long time to get to where we are now. Teachers also described how LCAP has helped them determine needed adjustments in their instruction.

We work on analyzing test grades, and identifying where there is the biggest need. We analyze a lot of data. With the LCAP we can enter the standards they have not learned into a computer program In our Common Planning Time, we look at the OGT questions and see where we need to increase instruction. We're still in the process of setting up a plan to address student needs in each area. We're really in the beginning stages of that.

I can see a big difference in the kids coming up. Like my sophomores last year, my freshmen this year are much more adept at writing answers and being able to explain compared to my juniors and seniors. Our LCAPs, at least for the first nine weeks, said to me they've learned something.

We meet with two other schools in the county to write test questions using the OGT. We did a pacing chart and put them in different nine weeks and wrote tests to cover those. Every nine weeks we're giving a mini-OGT to see where the kids are. This is in the core subjects. We should have it in all subjects, but part of our downfall, I think, is that when the standards came out, they were in English and math and that's where we focused. Everyone has them now, but the other subjects at first were kind of "out of the loop." People felt like it was a waste of time because their subjects weren't being tested The LCAP is helping because not only are we hitting the standards, but we've also learned what the questions were like on the OGT by writing them ourselves, so we know what they're facing and what style of question we need to get them used to. We're also doing all of our tests in that or a similar format. I think that helps a lot.

Teachers acknowledged that this is something they are continuing to work on. They also noted that students express many concerns about passing the OGT. In addition to providing reassurance, they have taken numerous steps to better prepare the students. The school now requires that all tests be configured in the OGT format. Teachers ask three types of questions: multiple choice, short-answer and extended-response. One teacher uses the following mnemonic device which she gives to students to help them respond more quickly in an organized fashion to extended-response questions:

URTOPSRR

u –underline important words
r– read
t– topic sentence
o–organize
p–paragraph
s–summarize
r r–reread

She has shared this tool with other teachers in an effort to provide students with consistent reinforcement. Teachers verified that the OGT and the standards have raised their expectations for students:

I believe that we expect a lot out of kids. I expected a lot and now I expect even more. I want them to learn more, comprehend more and remember more. We also do the question of the day – the entire school, whatever subject you're teaching. The office gives you a binder with overheads of OGT questions. Every class has to start with an OGT question of the day. It doesn't matter if the student

hasn't had that [topic] yet; they've seen it, and they'll make a connection later on if you briefly explain it.

In the past year, staff members have been shifting their lesson plans so that instead of having lots of separate lessons, they bring what they are doing into a single unit.

Professional Development

Professional development activities have focused on the standards and staff has participated in numerous in-service events. The principal emphasized, "For the past two or three years our professional development has been around standards – how to teach them and how to test for them in OGT format." Teachers underscored the value of various in-services such as additional training in LCAP short-cycle assessment, use of technology and OMAP.

A portion of each monthly staff meeting is devoted to teacher learning. At the end of the school year, the principal and two teachers were leading the staff through a series of PowerPoint presentations on the art and science of teaching and learning from the *Classroom Instruction that Works* materials. This includes a list of classroom practices that have already been rated so that teachers can see how much improvement will likely result from various approaches.

Early dismissals are held once a month for professional development and the current focus is the districtwide Common Planning Time project which is intended to encourage teacher communication. One teacher described activities that have occurred as part of this process:

We meet once or twice a grade period. When we first started meeting, we met during the school day. Sometimes we would get time out of school to meet. Sometimes they would get us subs. We have teachers from other school districts as well. Someone from the county met with us and said, 'Here's how you structure your tests.' They try to help us meet the indicators. We compare our test scores with other county high schools.

During their meetings at the end of the school year, teachers were reviewing the results of the practice OGT and trying to make sense of students' results. For example, they were analyzing whether students' errors were related to the method of instruction or to a lack of coverage of specific content. They are reviewing trends to see whether they can identify changes in responses across different test years. For example, one teacher expressed that the math program that worked well with students in the 2003-2004 school year did not seem to be as good of a fit with their current students, as this group's performance was not as strong.

Grants

External grant funding has enabled the school to do extensive professional development and has enhanced materials, especially in the area of technology. To summarize, the major grants that have impacted the school's progress substantially are:

- The Martha Holden Jennings Initiative paid for staff development activities related to incorporating the standards in instruction for the past three years.
- The Road Map grant (part of federal Gear Up program) paid for services associated with encouraging college attendance.
- A \$20,000 technology grant has provided for equipment and training of students and teachers.

One teacher emphasized the impact that the Martha Holden Jennings Initiative has had on how the school developed standards-based instruction:

In this Jennings initiative, we had a district work team that planned it and we had teacher leaders. They started Project SOAR. We had action teams from each [pilot] school that got trained on “Plan-Do-Study-Act,” which we’ve pulled into the whole district. The last year they taught us about Marzano’s “What Works in Schools.” We’ve just gotten so much information, it was almost too much in such a short time, but I think that this year it’s coming together and starting to make sense In some of our buildings last year and all [buildings] this year, we have them using unit plans and not lesson plans, and that’s [because of] Jennings. You’re supposed to start with standards, plan your assessment, plan your unit, and then do your instruction instead of the other way around.

Of concern is that the Martha Holden Jennings Initiative and Road Map grants are ending this year. Like many rural schools, NLHS recognizes that supplementary funding through grants helps provide the tools to offer students opportunities comparable to wealthier districts. The school recently applied for three ECONOLAB grants (environmental grants of up to \$3,000 each awarded to schools south of I-70 near Buckeye Lake), respectively in reading, Latin and English. The school also benefits from countywide or regional initiatives designed to address the needs of students in rural, impoverished areas. It was not clear if there were any major new grants in progress that have the potential of replacing at least some of the lost funding.

Student Performance

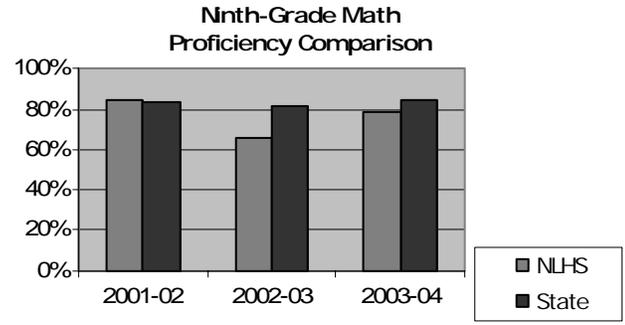
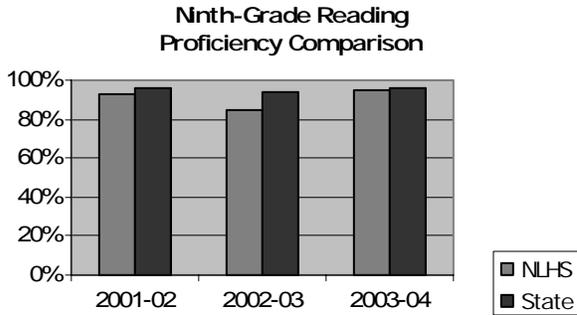
The school’s increased focus on standards and use of data have most likely been important factors in students’ higher achievement levels in reading. Reading performance has been reasonably high for the past three years with 10th-grade students surging to a nearly 95 percent pass rate on the ninth-grade proficiency test in 2003-2004. NLHS also succeeded in maintaining its *Schools of Promise* status in reading in 2004-2005. The results, however, highlight the school’s ongoing need to address student achievement in math.

New Lexington High School vs. Ohio⁴ Ninth-Grade Proficiency – Tenth Grade Results⁵

	Reading		Math	
	New Lexington HS	State	New Lexington HS	State
2001-2002	92.4%	95.9%	84.7%	83.4%
2002-2003	85.0%	93.8%	66.0%	82.0%
2003-2004	94.8%	95.7%	79.1%	84.5%

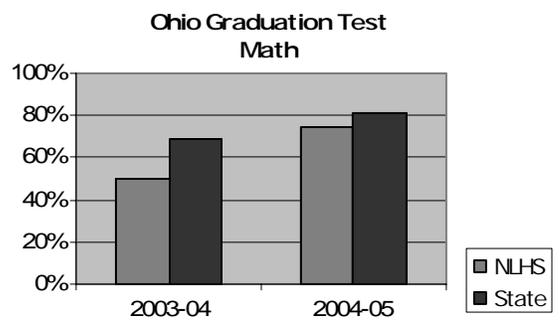
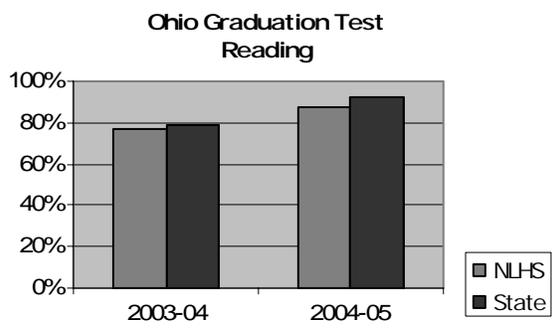
⁴ Data Source: School and State Report Cards

⁵ Tenth grade results reflect performance of ninth- and 10th-graders on the Ninth-Grade Proficiency Tests.



**New Lexington High School vs. Ohio⁶
Ohio Graduation Test - 10th Grade Results⁷**

	Reading		Math	
	New Lexington HS	State	New Lexington HS	State
2003-2004	76.7%	78.5%	49.6%	68.4%
2004-2005	87.8%	92.0%	74.4%	81.6%



ENGAGING PARENTS AND COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Staff agreed that parents are not as involved in the school as they would like them to be. This is one area that staff plans to focus on in the coming year. The principal described parent involvement as follows:

We have parent conferences, open houses, and different activities for the seniors, college night, financial night, senior orientation night, information meetings. Everybody does Freshman Orientation but we do Senior Orientation. It helps parents with the senior year.

Teachers said they write notes and send things home. They often ask parents to call them and leave voice mail messages, but parents do not always comply. One teacher pointed out that the school offers a parent/teacher conference in the fall for a day and a half in an effort to

⁶ Data Source: School and State Report Cards.

⁷ Tenth grade results reflect performance on the new Ohio Graduation Test. The state administered pre-tests in reading and math in 2003-2004. Thus, one year of trend data are available for this test.

accommodate parents, but they could probably eliminate the half day given the lack of response. The school also schedules special education IEP meetings in the fall for two days until 6 p.m. in the effort to make the sessions as convenient as possible for parents. Interviews with parents revealed a mixed opinion about the school. One was very pleased and said, "We have an excellent staff and an excellent office staff" (Parent of a freshman and junior). Another parent, however, expressed reservations about the school's emphasis on the OGT. She felt the school was not sufficiently challenging students, especially in English; she would like to see them doing more reading, term papers and preparation for college during their senior year.

The school is in the process of developing ways to further bring parents into the school. A special education teacher on this committee highlighted some of the issues:

In our CIP (Continuous Improvement Plan), we try to find out ways to reach out more This may be the first generation to actually graduate. So we're trying to find out how to reach out, to make the partnership, and to do it in a variety of ways. One thing we are doing is trying to involve parents in our reading program by having a display. I tell my kids this is a contest. Everybody is going to see it. Your name is on it. I'd like to see your parents. My class is doing the front page.

Next year the school is planning to install a homework hot line. It also hopes to start an academic boosters club and is discussing setting up an advisory council. The principal, however, pointed out that his predecessor also attempted these types of activities; it was difficult to get additional parent involvement, as the ones who are interested already seem to be participating in existing activities. The advisory council would include parents, teachers, administrators, students, business people and others. Some schools that have used this approach have involved grandparents and learned they were key in bringing in greater parent involvement. Staff is considering doing this as well as administering surveys to find out parents' needs and willingness to be involved in various activities.

SUMMARY OF "LESSONS LEARNED" SPECIFIC TO NLHS

Grant funding has been a major factor in the school's efforts to implement the standards and improve student learning. NLHS is fortunate to have a highly experienced and committed staff that is willing to participate in extensive professional development and learn to use data, technology and other tools to enhance student performance and planning for their future. Staff acknowledged that they are continuing to learn and are willing to try new things such as the Schoolwide Reading Program and Word-of-the-Day. They are making ongoing revisions in their lessons and planning processes to target students' weaknesses and strengths. Staff acknowledges that they need to do more to involve parents and plan to focus on this in the coming year.

The school's efforts to improve student performance have focused on building staff capacity and understanding. As the result of grants and professional development, this school has implemented schoolwide activities with the goal of impacting overall student achievement.

The table on the following page summarizes the school's characteristics that seem most closely associated with the "Five Lessons Learned" identified in the initial *Schools of Promise* case studies. Although there are common elements across all *Schools of Promise*, compared to the other featured high schools, NLHS appears to be spending less energy on targeting individual students for intervention and more on making overall programmatic changes that have the potential of positively impacting the entire student body. Consistent with this approach, the

school has put into place a greater number of achievement-related instructional characteristics and staff development than the other high schools studied.

New Lexington HS: Summary of School Characteristics by Five Lessons Learned

Five Lessons Learned					School Characteristics
Providing leadership that results in continuous improvement	Creating a culture where each individual feels valued	Designing instruction to ensure every student's success	Providing rigorous instruction aligned to standards	Engaging parents and community to support student success	
					Staff Characteristics
X					Strong and collaborative principal
X					Senior/experienced staff
X					High staff commitment
X	X				Caring teachers and staff
X	X	X			High expectations
					Practices Impacting Staff
X					Common planning time
					Practices Impacting Students
	X	X			Two major program areas (College Prep and Vocational)
	X	X	X		Tutoring at-risk students, in-school or after-school
	X	X	X		Increasingly effective at working with lower students
	X	X	X		Increasingly effective at working with top students
X		X	X		Analysis of test data to inform intervention
		X	X		Frequent testing
	X	X	X		Small class size
	X	X	X		Collaboration of intervention, special and regular
	X				Incentives
					Instructional Characteristics
X		X	X		Strong English Department
X		X	X		Strong Technology Department
			X		Change in math classes
X					New/different use of technology
		X			Emphasis on Career Passports
		X	X		Schoolwide Reading Program
		X	X		Word-of-the-Day Program
					Staff Development Characteristics
		X	X		Attention to state standards
X		X	X		Extensive professional development
X	X	X			Research-based professional development program
X		X	X		Grants
		X	X		Support from ESC
					Parent and Community Characteristics
				X	High percentage of parents attended the school
				X	Staff are graduates or part of community
		X	X	X	Alliance with area colleges