



# ***Schools of Promise*** **Case Study Report**

**Struthers High School  
Youngstown, Ohio**

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# Struthers High School Youngstown, Ohio

Struthers High School in Youngstown, Ohio was selected as a *School of Promise* in reading and mathematics for the 2004-2005 academic year. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics for Struthers High School and the Struthers City School District.

**Table 1. School and district characteristics**

	<b>Struthers High School 2004-2005</b>	<b>Struthers City School District 2004-2005</b>
Percent Minority	6%	6.7%
Percent Poverty	64%	65.5%
Years as a School of Promise (reading and mathematics)	4	
District Typology		Urban
Student Enrollment	614	1,979
Attendance—All students	94.4%	95.3%
Attendance —Economically disadvantaged students	93.8%	94.8%
Attendance —African-American students	93.2%	94.2%
Attendance—Hispanic students	94.8%	95.8%
Student mobility: Students in building less than one year	5.9%	7.6%
Student promotion		
Ninth grade	96.0%	96.0%
Tenth grade	99.2%	99.2%
Eleventh grade	99.4%	99.4%
Number of teachers	38	121
Average teacher salary	\$48,386	\$49,055

Source: Ohio Department of Education

## School mission statement

The mission of the Struthers High School Family is to encourage and assist in the personal development of all learners by providing a nurturing, challenging, and safe environment, so that they may become productive and responsible citizens capable of meeting the demands of an ever-changing society.

## School history

Struthers High School is one of three schools in the small Struthers City School District. Struthers borders on Youngstown, one of the state’s major urban districts. Struthers High School is one of only four schools in the state to have sustained its designation as a *School of Promise* for four consecutive years, and is one of the few schools in the state to earn this title for student achievement in both reading and mathematics. In the past two years, Struthers High School has met all the state standards.

In 2006, Struthers High School was nominated as a Blue Ribbon School by the Ohio Department of Education. The No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence Program honors public and private K-12 schools that are either academically superior in their states or that demonstrate dramatic gains in student achievement. Table 2 summarizes the school and district performance on state indicators.

**Table 2. School and district performance on state indicators**

<b>State Indicators 2004-05 (10<sup>th</sup> Grade Ohio Graduation Test)</b>	
<i>State requirement is 75%</i>	
	<b>Struthers High School 2004-2005</b>
Reading	<b>97.4%</b>
Writing	<b>89.6%</b>
Mathematics	<b>90.4%</b>
Science	<b>85.2%</b>
Social Studies	<b>91.3%</b>
Attendance ( <i>State requirement is 93%</i> )	<b>94.4%</b>
Graduation Rate ( <i>State requirement is 90%</i> )	<b>92.3%</b>
Number and percent of state indicators met— <b>school</b>	7 out of 7
School rating	Excellent
Number and percent of state indicators met— <b>district</b>	12 out of 23
District rating	Effective

Source: Ohio Department of Education

The Struthers City School District has been undergoing a significant transition in recent years. The high school is located in a newly constructed building that opened in the past three years. In order to preserve the gymnasium from the old school building, the new school was built onto the old gymnasium and features extensive investments in computers and technology. In addition to the new high school building, the district has a recently opened the new Struthers Elementary School, which serves students previously served in four separate elementary schools. Besides new construction, the district also recently made major renovations to its middle school.

After the significant amount of construction and renovations in the last few years, Struthers City School District lapsed into fiscal emergency this year. As a direct result of the fiscal issues, a number of key administrative positions in the district were eliminated or reduced, including assistant principals, the district curriculum director and district technology coordinator. Open

enrollment is now offered to bring in new students and additional financial resources<sup>1</sup>; the first year of open enrollment at Struthers was 2005-2006, and approximately 22 new students joined Struthers High School, mostly from inner city Youngstown schools.

### **Teacher characteristics**

Based on responses to the teacher survey, about 60 percent of teachers at Struthers are female. Almost all of the school's 38 teachers are Caucasian. Teachers have, on average, 18 years teaching experience, and an average of 13 years teaching at Struthers High School. Two thirds of Struthers High School teachers have a master's degree, and 80 percent are highly qualified teachers (HQT).

## ***Schools of Promise Case Study Methodology***

On Feb. 9, 2006, a four-person research team conducted a one-day site visit to Struthers High School. Activities conducted during the day were as follows:

### **Classroom observations**

Six classes from Struthers High School were observed, each for 30 minutes: three mathematics classes (tenth-grade geometry, eleventh-grade Algebra II, and eleventh/twelfth-grade Algebra III), two English classes (ninth and tenth grade) and a public speaking/theatrical arts class. Class sizes ranged from 11 to 25 students.

Classrooms were randomly selected by SRG from a list of teachers and class times provided by school administrators using a random number generator. After sample selection, SRG consulted with school administrators and teachers to ensure that the observation period was valid, the selected teacher would be teaching at that time, and that observations would not interfere with examinations, quizzes, or other planned activities that day. In the event of a conflict, a different class period was selected by SRG. Two trained researchers conducted observations simultaneously, and their ratings were compared to determine inter-rater reliability for observation protocols. Inter-rater reliability across the six classrooms was determined to be 78 percent.

Observers used a subset of measures from the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS—Pianta, LaParo, and Hamre, 2005) to record qualitative observations and make quantitative ratings on classroom climate (positive and negative), teacher sensitivity, concept development, behavior management, and productivity. Following each observation, teachers were asked several questions via a one-page questionnaire about the particular class that was observed to determine if anything that happened during the observation period was unusual or remarkable; this information was taken into consideration during data analysis.

### **Teacher interviews**

Individual interviews were conducted with 10 teachers: six English teachers and four mathematics teachers. Interviews lasted 15-25 minutes, and followed a pre-determined discussion guide. Topics discussed included curriculum and instruction, professional

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<sup>1</sup> State funding is diverted from students' "home" districts to their new district when they opt to select a new school through the open enrollment process. In 2006-2007, approximately 40 students from Youngstown City Schools will be attending Struthers High School, and an additional 20-25 students will be attending other schools in the Struthers district.

development, school climate, policy and procedures, and characteristics of effective teachers. All teachers whose classrooms were selected for observations were interviewed, as well as four additional teachers.

### **Administrator interviews**

An interview was conducted with the school's two Co-Principals, Mary Ann Meadows and Joseph C. Fuline. The interview lasted approximately one hour. District Superintendent Sandra J. DiBacco was also interviewed individually. Interview topics included general school history and background, curriculum and instruction, characteristics of effective teachers, professional development, partnerships; school climate, policies, and procedures; and teacher recruitment and hiring.

### **Teacher survey**

A teacher survey was distributed to all classroom teachers (n= 38) approximately one week before the site visit. The survey was self-administered and asked questions about the teachers' background and training, professional development activities, school climate and culture, as well as perceived characteristics of effective teachers. A total of 34 surveys were received, representing a response rate of 89 percent.

### **Student focus group**

To gather feedback from students, one student focus group was conducted. Six students were recruited by school administrators from classrooms observed during the site visit. The group was a mix of students in grades 9-12 and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Topics discussed included school background, perceived teacher support, learning opportunities, and what students like best about their school and teachers.

### **Parent interviews**

After the site visit, SRG conducted 20 telephone interviews of parents. Interviewees were selected from lists provided by school administrators. Each interview followed a prepared survey instrument and was conducted by phone at a time convenient for the participants. Topics included curriculum and instruction, teacher relationships, and opportunities for student achievement. Interviews lasted 11-17 minutes.

## **Results**

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This report is organized using the "Five Lessons Learned" identified in earlier *Schools of Promise* research. These lessons emphasize the importance of providing rigorous instruction aligned with state standards, instituting strong leadership, designing instruction to ensure student success, engaging parents and the community to support student success, and establishing a school culture that values individual students. Struthers High School shows evidence of all these components.

In addition to investigating ODE's "Five Lessons Learned from Successful Schools" and how Struthers High School demonstrates these characteristics, a particular focus of the current research is on teacher quality and the role of the teacher in high-performing schools. Specifically, the present case study inquired as to how teachers, administrators, students, and

parents define teacher quality. What teacher characteristics are perceived as most important by each of these stakeholder groups? With these questions in mind, the present research also examines issues related to teacher quality in these schools and key stakeholders' beliefs and expectations regarding teacher quality.

Several characteristics of effective teachers repeatedly emerge. Struthers' principals, teachers, students, and parents consider effective teachers to share some common characteristics:

- Teachers should be enthusiastic and have positive attitudes about teaching and the students they teach.
- Teachers must be knowledgeable in their subject area.
- Teachers should apply varied instructional techniques and differentiate instruction to meet the needs of students with different learning styles.
- Teachers must know the Ohio content standards and align instruction to the standards.
- Teachers must be empathetic toward the students but hold them to high standards for achievement and accountability.
- Teachers should build and cultivate personal connections with their students and be able to develop a rapport with students.

These themes are recurrent throughout the following Five Lessons.

### ***1. The school delivers rigorous instruction aligned to the standards.***

The drive to align Struthers High School's curriculum with standards has been relentlessly pursued under the strong leadership of the Superintendent in Struthers, Sandra DiBacco, and her administrative staff. When Ms. DiBacco was hired as superintendent in 1999 she reviewed data and found that there was very little consistency between buildings. She felt the transition from elementary to middle and then to high school should be coordinated better; "There were a lot of disconnects," she said. There was also a high failure rate among freshmen. She decided that strong action needed to be taken to correct the situation. The superintendent credits her school principals' strong leadership as key in aligning curriculum in the district, as she explained:

I found there was a lot of disconnect, so my goal was to build a strong administrative team, which I will tell you I have the best in the state. I'm not saying the best in the county but the best in the state. They work hard and they make very little money.

To achieve success, the district utilized the services of a curriculum director<sup>2</sup> to work with teachers on alignment and provided teachers with significant release time and professional development to adapt their curriculum to standards. An educator from the local Educational Service Center (ESC) also met with the teachers to assist in alignment of courses including English, mathematics, science, and social studies. A mathematics teacher said:

Our administrators and curriculum director have all made sure that we are kept up to date on different aspects of what's going on in the state, [such as] how things are changing, and how to differentiate within the classroom, how to map your curriculum to have students better understand.

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<sup>2</sup> The district formerly had a full-time director of curriculum, but due to the district's financial problems the position was recently cut.

Reflecting the superintendent's belief in the power of reading and mathematics, the district has made what they consider to be significant investments in these core subjects. For example, as the superintendent said, "We took [grades] K, one, and two and focused on only reading and math. My belief is that if you can read you can do anything and the math helps you perform logical functions." The superintendent believes strongly in "seamless" delivery of instruction in grades K – 12. The district created a study skills class at the middle school to better prepare students entering high school in reading.

There is also an emphasis on teaching applied content. Superintendent DiBacco believes that the lessons should have a connection to students' future goals. The superintendent said:

Whether they're planning on being a doctor and they're now in English class thinking, 'who cares if I can write?' As a doctor, you're going to have to present yourself; you're going to have to do these kinds of things. And kids say, 'what am I going to do with math?' Well, you're going to have a life and you're going to have to do budgets.

Consistent with the district emphasis on a career focus and the superintendent's belief in seamless integration of instruction, the district has developed a technical program that spans multiple grades. For example, the district offers a technology program that starts in grade five called "career exploration." Students can continue on the path all the way through high school. Fifth and sixth graders can take career exploration; seventh and eighth graders take a sequential course called "Tech Design One." High school freshmen who have completed those courses take a secondary course called "Survey of Technology," and then students can either go into manufacturing technology (1 or 2) or information technology (1 or 2). After ninth grade these courses become electives. The principal estimates about 25-40 students complete the series.

Today, the district's entire curriculum and instruction is vertically aligned across grade levels and horizontally aligned within the grade level. During in-service sessions, mathematics teachers from the middle school work with the mathematics teachers from the high school. Teachers credit the alignment effort for removing the district from Academic Watch. The elementary school recently improved by meeting state standards in reading, which Superintendent DiBacco credits to the district's immediate implementation of all day kindergarten and strong leadership at the elementary level. She said, "We're talking about the *School of Promise* at the high school. We're a *School of Promise* but it all starts down there."

The use of technology is another important factor in the district's success. As mentioned, the technology program is initiated in fifth grade continuing through middle school and high school. Teachers from each school coordinate materials and textbooks to ensure consistency. They feel that students need to be comfortable using technology to maximize the educational experience and ensure the student's success after school. Additionally, teachers feel that technology in the classroom is an important educational resource for them personally. According to one mathematics teacher:

We've been very proactive with technology and I think that's a big part of our success. We've been using the graphing calculators for many, many years and we have computer access in our rooms and in a larger setting in the labs so that's been a big help. We have SmartBoard technology which I use frequently in my teaching.

Still, sometimes a "low-tech" investment can produce big results. For example, mathematics classes at Struthers High School use mini-whiteboards for students with a whiteboard on one

side and a graphing surface on the other. During a lesson, the teacher can check students' understanding of a concept by asking students to solve a problem and then hold up their whiteboards so he or she can see the students' solution. "It's very effective because you get immediate feedback," Principal Meadows says. "You can see right away who understands the equation, who can draw the graph." Teachers can intervene immediately if they notice students are not grasping concepts well.

Teachers emphasize learning over studying exclusively for the Ohio Graduation Test. The staff views the test as a tool to measure what students are supposed to be learning in subjects such as English, mathematics, science, and social studies. Assessment data is analyzed and used to improve instruction; teachers review state assessment data to determine weak areas, and this has been the focus of the school's professional development efforts with teachers in the last few years. As Principal Meadows described:

Our teachers looked at all their data, all their item analysis, they were able to look at their kids, we had everything run off for them so they were able to look and see where they were weak ... I had Science and we found that on question 13, 80 percent of the students missed it, and most made the same wrong choice. That was something, then, we really had to work on.

The school's report cards are standards based, further emphasizing student performance in terms of state standards. As a result of the school and district's communication about standards, more than half (60 percent) of the parents interviewed reported that they are familiar with Ohio's academic content standards.

The efforts to achieve curriculum alignment to the standards were not easy, but the benefits are well recognized by the district administrative team, teachers and parents. It's clear that a critical factor in the success of Struthers High School is the coordination of the teaching activities within and between schools and that this was created by strong leaders who were aware of the problem, committed to finding solutions, and willing to invest the necessary resources behind key initiatives.

## ***2. The school provides leadership that results in continuous improvement of instruction.***

Strong leadership at both the district and school level Struthers communicates a common vision based on high expectations for which everyone feels a sense of ownership. With the help of dedicated administrators, the superintendent, who has a background in career education and once directed a career center, has led the district in continuous improvement. Her emphasis on alignment comes from the applied academics emphasized in career education.

The high school has been under its current leadership since 1999, when principal Mary Ann Meadows was hired. For four years, several different teachers served part-time as assistant administrators in a role called TSA (Teachers on Special Assignment), but in 2003 Joe Fuline, formerly a TSA, became co-principal. The two principals form a "unified front" as they call it and work well together because they complement one another well. "We both have strengths and weaknesses, but it just so happens they are opposites," says Principal Meadows. Principal Meadows, who has a background in mathematics and science, deals primarily with administrative issues, curriculum, and scheduling. Principal Fuline typically handles discipline and athletics. The division of responsibility is equal, though, as Principal Meadows says, "We share everything. At times we disagree, but we make joint decisions."

Approximately seven years ago in the middle of their continuous improvement planning, the district hired a number of new administrators and principals in addition to the current superintendent. The new hires worked together (at the district level) to develop a plan of action to bring the district's rating up to "Effective." One of the consequences of this centralized leadership approach is that some teachers feel they are not centrally involved in decisions; on the teacher survey, just 43 percent agreed they are involved in decision making on important educational issues. Some teachers have expressed this lack of involvement as a sense of mistrust and lack of mutual respect between the central administrative team and the teachers. The principals, on the other hand, believe that it is their role to handle administrative issues so that teachers can focus on instruction, which the principals consider to be a more important priority. The drive for success hasn't been easy, but the results are real. A word of caution is offered by one teacher who wrote:

As educators we work in a relationship-driven environment. When teachers can trust administrators to do their jobs and vice versa, and teachers can trust students to do their jobs and vice versa, a positive school environment can result. Without mutual respect, the learning environment is hampered by negativity.

Because of the centralized nature of the improvement process, it is very important that the administrative team be highly effective at communicating the high standards and implementation objectives. One of the reasons for the school's success, according to the Superintendent, is her school principals keep their staff meetings focused on curriculum, not "housekeeping" issues. "If you are having a staff meeting you should be talking about the curriculum," Superintendent DiBacco stated.

The principals attribute the school's success to the teachers. Principal Fuline said, "What they do best is teach." Principal Meadows added, "And so they're the ones that are doing it. There's nothing magical that we do, except try to give them the support that they need; they are the ones that do the job."

An important practice used by Struthers' two principals is goal setting which is used to establish common objectives for the entire staff to coordinate and focus activity on the areas of greatest concern. Each year, before school begins, teachers complete three in-service days during which the co-principals work with each department and each teacher to identify goals and priorities for the coming year. The principals work with each department to review student test results and identify priorities and discuss plans for the year ahead. "We work together to see where we're at, where we want to go," says Principal Meadows.

Each year, the district administrators also set a broad goal for the entire district. For example, a few years ago the district focused on using data and making a switch to being "data driven." The principals kept that goal in mind when working with individual departments.

Goals are publicly stated and communicated through staff meetings. The principals encourage teachers to take action and to provide resources to implement creative ideas. "We really try to encourage the teachers to do whatever they need to do," says Principal Meadows, who provided some examples. The Spanish department, seeking to address the culture aspect of the standards, brought in a dance teacher for a day to work with students to teach them salsa dancing. "It was great—at prom the kids were doing salsa," she says. As another example, the school's French teacher enhanced a class project comparing and contrasting an American artist with a French impressionist artist by taking her class on a field trip to the local Butler Art Museum. Principal Meadows says:

It's all part of setting goals for the year—like making a road map. Here we are here is what we would like to do this year. We start with broad goals, then we break them down to departments, then we break them down to teachers.

Goal setting at Struthers High School also serves as a basis for consistency and communication. Based on results from the teacher survey, over 90 percent of the staff agrees that the principals are effective leaders who communicate expectations to faculty and staff clearly. Additionally, teachers also believe the school leadership team makes an effort to address teacher concerns, and there is nearly unanimous agreement among teachers that “my principal(s) consistently supports me when I need it.”

The consistent communication has also forged a common view of the school's vision which is shared by the overwhelming majority of faculty and staff. Teachers know they are going to be held to high professional standards for delivering instruction and believe they receive feedback that helps them to improve teaching and learning. They also know they are allowed to take reasoned educational risks and feel encouraged and supported when they do.

Teachers say they feel “encouraged” by the principals, who take an active interest in what goes on in the classroom. Teachers must submit unit plans to the principals which detail how standards are being covered in the classroom. Teachers commented on the active role the principals take, often sitting in on lessons, and teachers and students alike welcome their presence in the classrooms, as one mathematics teacher said:

[The principals are] in and out all the time. They have informal as well as formal [evaluations] and they're very supportive to me.... It's so much fun because Mary Ann will be walking and all of a sudden come sit down in the classroom and the kids like it, you know because it's a family type thing and I think that's important, I think it's important that they see administrators in their classroom. I love the informal-ness of our principals.

Some teachers feel that the frequent informal contact they have with the two principals gives the administrators a more accurate view of their teaching compared to a formal, structured, scheduled observation that might take place in a limited time frame. An English teacher said, “I think that they get a better view of the teachers through the informal observation than through actually sitting there and watching them teach for a class period. I think it's the overall picture rather than just one day.”

Teachers also believe the Superintendent has played a key role in the district and school improvements, but suggest that some in the community do not recognize the Superintendent's accomplishments. They believe she has been unfairly maligned by a certain segment of the population who constantly work against her and lack appreciation for her role in improving the district's ratings. An English teacher discussed the superintendent's active role and instructional leadership in raising the school and district's ratings:

We have progressively come up [in our ratings] but they won't give her that credit. She's the one who said that we need intervention, she has made intervention possible, and she's gotten extra teachers for intervention.

Keeping the momentum going at Struthers will be difficult as they deal with a fiscal emergency. Not only will it be hard to maintain the programs they have established, but also to maintain the strong leadership which has been driving force in the district's improvement. Already, due to budget cuts, there has been a loss of department heads for different subject areas and other key leadership positions could be lost in the future. At Struthers, the two principals will now also

serve as department heads in addition to their current duties. The Superintendent will assume the role of director of instruction, transportation manager, and building and grounds supervisor. Additional layers of responsibility will likely create new challenges for the leadership approach that has gained Struthers High School consistent recognition as a *School of Promise* over four years.

Professional development

When she was first hired, Superintendent DiBacco emphasized professional development by implementing wavier days and bringing in trainers and speakers. She did this because she learned the district was spending a significant amount of money on professional development on trips out of state with no evident results. Now, teachers must come back from training opportunities with a product. This must be something new they could use in the classroom or something they could present at the next staff meeting. The superintendent believes that the changes allowed the staff to excel by more directly connecting professional development to the classroom experience, and showing the results of their training.

Struthers High School teachers have in-services approximately once a month as well as internal professional development with the topic determined by administrators. At the beginning of the year, the school provides three in-service days for professional development during which time administrators also work with departments and teachers to set goals. The school also provides two full waiver days throughout the year. In 2005-2006, the waiver days focused on cultural diversity, cultural differences, and learning differences to support the switch to open enrollment. The staff also participated in Baldrige training for continuous improvement.<sup>3</sup>

A new area the school principals have explored in the past year is sensitivity training for teachers. As the school moves to open enrollment and more minority students from inner-city Youngstown elect to attend Struthers, understanding the perspectives and unique needs of students from diverse backgrounds is becoming increasingly important. (For more on this issue, see pages 17 – 19)

As part of the present research study, teachers were asked to select the one area to best describe the primary focus of their professional development in the previous year as well as other secondary areas. Confirming what administrators said, many teachers said their professional development emphasized understanding and applying Ohio content standards, in-depth study of their content area, and differentiated instruction. Table 3 summarizes the results.

**Table 3. Focus of teachers’ professional development**

Thinking about all your professional development activities last year, what was the focus of the activities you selected? <sup>4</sup>	Which areas apply to you?	Which <u>one</u> area was your primary focus?
Understanding and applying Ohio content standards to student instruction	68.8%	33.3%
In depth study of the academic content of the subject(s) you teach	62.5%	21.2%
Instructional strategies to meet the learning needs of diverse groups of students with different learning styles	71.9%	15.2%
Using assessments to gauge student mastery of Ohio content standards	62.5%	15.2%

<sup>3</sup> For more information on the Baldrige criteria, see [www.baldrigeineducation.org](http://www.baldrigeineducation.org).

<sup>4</sup> These response options were adapted from the Maryland Survey of Teacher Participation in High Quality Professional Development, 2003-04, Maryland State Department of Education

Collaboration for improving instruction	62.5%	9.1%
Strategies for creating and maintaining safe and orderly classrooms and schools	56.3%	3.0%
Using research results for decision making	40.6%	--
Strategies for engaging parents and families	18.8%	--
Strategies for engaging stakeholders as active members of the school communities	12.5%	--

When asked how they selected professional development opportunities, teachers said much of their professional development is directed by the school district or the administration. Continuing education was also important to teachers, in particular pursuing a master's degree or fulfilling the requirements to become Highly Qualified. Convenience of scheduling or location were also critical considerations, as the district has little funding for professional development that requires travel.

### Teacher preparation

Experience in the classroom is considered by Struthers' teachers the most important element in their preparation to teach. Teachers who believed that they were well prepared when they began teaching at the high school had previously taught in a similar school or had experience student teaching with a similar student population. A few had even conducted their student teaching experience at Struthers High School. Several teachers actually attended Struthers during high school themselves. Several teachers cited strong undergraduate preparation at the local Youngstown State University (YSU) as important. One teacher said:

I feel that YSU did an outstanding job in preparing future educators. Not only did they prepare us in the classroom we were required to complete many hours in the local schools.

When teachers were asked how well-prepared they were when they first started working with Struthers' students, a total of 74 percent said they felt prepared. When teachers were asked what recommendations they had for training and preparing future teachers to be effective in Ohio schools, many mentioned that teachers should gain as much direct classroom experience as possible because simply sitting in a college classroom is not adequate preparation. Respondents also said that these experiences should involve a variety of different class settings. Having a good veteran teacher as a mentor was also strongly recommended. Nothing provides the benefits of direct experience in the classroom, as one teacher said:

These college students need to be in the schools more. They need more interactions with students at all levels so that they can be sure teaching is what they really want to do. They also need to experience different levels so that they can be sure they are preparing to teach at the right level.

Future teachers, they say, should also visit schools to determine whether they have the "love of teaching" to make the necessary total dedication to the field. As one teacher said, "Show new teachers examples of other great teachers and make sure that soon-to-be-teachers want to be teachers."

### **3. The school designs instruction to ensure every student's success.**

When staff and administrators were asked what makes teachers at Struthers effective, they said teachers should be student-centered, believe the children can learn, and encourage students to set and attain goals. Principal Meadows said, "You have to work with kids that are struggling," to which Principal Fuline added, "I will not let kids quit." Both principals emphasize the importance of student-centered instruction, as Principal Fuline said:

When Mary Ann and I observe our teachers and hold the evaluation process the key thing in my mind is if I can tell a teacher is student centered... where the kids are in the center of the learning process; I think that's the most important thing in my mind, and I think we have a lot of student centered teachers.

Teachers must also have the skills to communicate effectively with students. Struthers' teachers demonstrate this skill and work hard to differentiate their instruction to reach their students. A third of all the Struthers teachers interviewed thought that differentiated instruction was the most important characteristic of effective teachers. As a mathematics teacher explained:

Obviously you have to have a good educational background; you have to know your material. You also have to be able to present it well...I don't want to pick on college professors but a lot of times you have [a] college professor who is brilliant, but can't deliver the material in a form that you can understand.

Students described teachers' efforts to help them and were aware that their teachers were sensitive to their sometimes unique needs. For example, one student commented that she had struggled in mathematics until her teacher helped her identify the source of her problem. The student said, "I flip problems backwards... my numbers get all scrambled.... Mrs. S notices my problems real quick.... no one noticed that I'd been doing math problems wrong for like how long."

Students described teachers as upbeat in the classroom and said they would basically do what it takes in the classroom to make learning fun. Teachers realize that students have different learning styles and showed a strong sensitivity to the individual students' needs. Teachers also showed a strong interest in the child as a person, and the students notice this commitment. In the words of one student:

Not only do I have him as a teacher, but he's my track coach as well. So he teaches me in the classroom and he teaches me life lessons out of the classroom, too. I think that's important, he's like a father figure to me.

In classroom observations, teachers constantly monitored their classes and made sure that all their students were following the lessons. Teachers repeatedly asked students if they understood the lesson. The students appeared to be very comfortable asking and answering questions as well as admitting when they were struggling with the concepts. Teachers appeared to be open to students' ideas and interested in student learning. Often, teachers picked up on students' comments and questions and included them in the lessons.

The majority of the observed classes also had a strong emphasis on concept development and higher order thinking. The teachers often integrated real word problems into the class to make the contents more interesting and practical for the students. Teachers often encouraged the students to explain the reasons for their decisions or their solutions. In an English class, students were required to work independently on a set of books and write a reflection on the readings including a summary, an analysis and a personal statement about the book.

Teachers clearly want to make sure that students understood the contents of the class, rather than memorizing the lessons and often encouraged students to come up with their own solution and find relationships between different concepts. In one of the mathematics classrooms focusing on coordinate systems, the teacher wanted the students to identify commonalities and differences between a rectangular and a polar coordinate system. The teacher told the students to try to predict the answer to a problem before they worked it out and explain the rationale for their predictions. Another teacher encouraged her students to think through the problem first rather than writing out an answer immediately.

Students notice and appreciate teachers' efforts to engage them in the classroom, noting how teachers use games and demonstrations to enhance lessons. For example, one student was impressed with how a teacher taught lessons by using Spanish game shows and got students involved. The student said, "I don't like lecturing; I'm a hands-on person."

Principals Meadows and Fuline recognized the effort put in by Struthers' teachers and their willingness to work extra hours to provide students with the additional help they need. They describe teachers as dedicated, willing to come in early and stay late at night, even as late as 8:00 PM, at times.

Parents also recognize the teachers' effort. During interviews, most parents agreed that the teachers provide extra help such as reviewing tests and quizzes, or counseling. Many also said that the teachers may provide extra work if necessary to help students understand.

Educators continuously assess students and provide immediate intervention for those who are struggling. Students say teachers provide most of the help and that plenty of tutoring is available with teachers helping them in the morning, after school and during study hall. Most students who participated in the focus groups received help outside the classroom by teachers before or after school, or by peer tutors. One student recalled how a mathematics teacher realized the student had an overlooked learning problem. Another student described the teachers as understanding; and said, "I've never heard of anyone as a teacher not giving someone a second chance unless you're just lazy."

Students also play an active role in helping each other learn the material by acting as tutors. One teacher estimates that half the students receive this service. In focus groups, students acknowledged peer tutoring eases the pressure on teachers. One student described the support: "A lot of times the teachers, if they have too much on their hands, they will assign a student who understands it real well and try to explain it to you and work with you." During classroom observations, a teacher, working with a student who was struggling, mentioned peer tutoring would help the student catch up. Another student in the class volunteered to help as a tutor. Tutoring takes place whenever and wherever possible. Students and teachers work before school, after school, during planning periods, over lunch—whenever there is an opportunity and extra help is needed.

Intervention can also come in the form of the Building Assistance Team (BAT) program, lead by Principal Meadows, brings together a struggling student with teachers, guidance counselors, and parents. Principal Meadows feels it's critical to involve the student, as she said, "We don't believe you want to have a meeting about a student without having the student in there. Who knows what help they need more than the student?" Principal Meadows initiates the meetings, which may be triggered by her review of interim reports, a teacher's referral, or a parent request. A student may even go to the guidance counselor for help if he or she is struggling.

At the time of the site visit, there were about 40 students in the BAT program, although some were carried over from the previous year and were being monitored to make sure problems did not re-occur. When interim reports are filed, the principal personally checks the records for all students on BATs and 504 plans.<sup>5</sup>

The BAT program is customized to the needs of the individual students, and provides students with personalized attention and a plan tailored to meet their specific needs. It also provides mechanisms to make students accountable for completing their assignments—often failing to do homework is a primary reason for students to enter the BAT program. Students in the program get daily assignment sheets they pick up in the morning. During the day they fill it in, and the teacher signs it off. If the student has homework, the parents also have to sign the form, which must be returned the next morning. Principal Meadows reviews the sheets, and involves parents if problems arise. “[The teacher] sets up a case conference and then we all sit down again and see what we can do to remedy it. Many times it’s because they are not doing their homework,” she said. “If I don’t get that form back signed by the parent, I’m going to pick up the phone and find out why.”

Interventions are customized for each student and the team works together to support and encourage the student while working through challenges; sometimes solutions require only simple changes to resolve their problems. As Principal Meadows noted, “Many times it’s as simple as getting them a different colored notebook and folder to put their work in so that they don’t forget it.” One mathematics teacher noted that she thought a student would do better on tests if he was removed from a traditional classroom setting. Working through the BAT process, another mathematics teacher volunteered to sit with the student while he took his test in a separate room. This was an effective solution which helped the student build confidence and improve performance. “He’s now taking test in the class. He’s gone from an F to a B,” the teacher said.

When it became clear last year that some students would not pass the OGT (Ohio Graduation Test) without a forceful intervention, the school took action and created special mathematics and science classes. On a routine basis, students who needed additional assistance in mathematics attended a mathematics lab during the first period where they worked on their problem areas and received teacher assistance when they ran into difficulties. The staff said this focused attention provided a more effective way to help students experiencing academic deficiencies.

On a regular basis, most of the school’s mathematics and science teachers utilize cutting-edge technology to gain student interest and offer visual exercises. Most classrooms have a SmartBoard, which is an interactive whiteboard connected to a computer and a data projector. Once the computer image is projected on the board, the SmartBoard can be used as a computer with access to several interactive sites with mathematics and interactive activities. Teachers also use the SmartBoard for interactive PowerPoint presentations. “We don’t have dry erase boards, it’s all run through a computer like the SmartBoard,” said a student. “I didn’t have that at my old school, we still have chalk boards. There is so much technology here.” Teachers say this is essential to prepare students for their future, as one teacher commented:

You have to expose them [to technology]; it’s a whole different way of teaching since I started fifteen years ago from pencil and paper to now: Projects on the web, Projects with calculators, Presentations on the Smart Board. They need to know how to use that. It’s so much more than the books.

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<sup>5</sup> Students with disabilities requiring only reasonable accommodation must have a written plan under Section 504; this is commonly referred to as a “504 plan.” Each public school usually has a representative who serves as the school’s “504 coordinator” and coordinates the development, maintenance, and implementation of 504 plans.

The school has at least four to five student computers in each room and two full computer labs. The students participate in many group projects and often use PowerPoint. Students like the school's technology, and say it keeps classes fresh and interesting.

Students with disabilities are fully integrated into the school's general population with the exception of one developmental handicapped unit. Principal Meadows reviewed the student rosters and clustered student into classes so that there are multiple inclusion students in a classroom (four or five instead of one or two) with an inclusion teacher providing assistance. The regular and inclusion teachers participate in common planning time to facilitate collaboration. The school's three inclusion teachers specialize in subjects such as language arts, mathematics, or social science, and they also assist students without disabilities while in the classroom. "They are there for anyone who needs help," Principal Meadows says. "Kids don't even know why [the inclusion teachers] are in there. To them, it's just a team teaching situation."

As for parents, almost all parents interviewed said the school was "excellent" (35 percent) or "above average" (55 percent). When discussing the school's ratings, most parents cited the teachers who they described as "hard working" and taking an interest in the students as the reason for the school's favorable rating. Clearly, the teachers' interest in students as individuals and their willingness to adjust the teaching approach is well received by both parents and students alike.

#### **4. *The school engages parents and the community to support student success.***

The school embraces a philosophy of partnership with the families of students and clearly communicates with parents. The strength of the relationship with parents and respect for the community's values are two of the main reasons that Struthers High School has earned and maintained its status as a *School of Promise* over four years.

Struthers' staff and administrators rely heavily on parents to support their classroom decisions and to provide a consistent message to students. Most teachers view parents as an important part of their success and have no hesitation about contacting them to discuss student behaviors and classroom performance. Teachers say the parents' participation is a natural extension of the community's values and work ethic. A mathematics teacher provided a clear description of the important role that parents play in the schools success:

The reason that we're low socio-economically is Struthers was a steel mill town. The mills have closed and they lost their jobs, but I don't think the community lost its values. They still have the mill work value system. So how that trickles into the school is that we get a great deal of parental support. They still have that old attitude that if you're in trouble in school you're going to get more trouble when you come home.

Although few of the parents who participated in the interviews had volunteered for specific events or school activities, they take an active role in their child's academic life and know they are welcome to come to the school any time. They appreciate the fact that teachers encourage open communication between teachers and parents, and they take advantage of that invitation. Clear proof of this is seen in the extremely high attendance rate of parents at parent teacher conferences. According to one teacher, "[For parent teacher conferences] many teachers, especially those of the underclassmen, are booked solid for the night."

The community that supports Struthers is described by teachers, administrators, parents, and students as “a small, close knit community.” It is a place where athletic events are well attended by parents and the community, and it is where most school employees choose to live and raise their own families. There is a strong sense of mutual respect and understanding that is gained through social interaction. According to one teacher:

I think we are a really caring community. Many of the teachers live in Struthers and are very proud, and have graduated from Struthers and they want to keep the quality of education up there. Our administration feels the same way too.

Since many of the teachers grew up in the community (several graduated from Struthers), the staff and administration have strong social connections within the community and a clear understanding of the history of their neighbors. As a result they are able to provide a learning environment that reflects community values; the school can quickly garner community support when needed.

Some teachers cite the community’s values as the main reason for the school’s progress. “I think that [a community that values education] helps us a lot; knowing that there’s the outside that’s going to back us up and is going to monitor the kids, and want the kids to do well,” said an English teacher.

The community supports the schools and the schools look to support the community. A clear example of the respect that Struthers has for the community and its values is seen in the way the dress code was created and maintained. The Superintendent says she has tried to adopt standards that best reflect her understanding of what the community, where she lives, would find acceptable. The dress code includes bans on earrings for males and prohibits “low rise” pants, visible tattoos, cell phones, unusually colored hair and holes in jeans. While this dress code might be received unfavorably in some schools, it is well suited for Struthers High School. Despite students’ displeasure, the rule is consistently enforced. As Principal Fuline explained:

It [the dress code] reflects the community, and when the community no longer wants it they’ll go to the board and say ‘Hey, I think we need to let the boys have their ears pierced, or let them wear beards.’ At that time we will change it.

##### ***5. The school creates a culture where each individual feels valued.***

Struthers students are immersed in a culture that establishes clear behavioral rules and respect for each other. Teachers and staff show a strong empathy for the child’s home situation, and work hard to help students feel part of the larger Struthers family.

The strong, supportive environment starts at the top with school leadership. Teachers feel supported and valued by the school’s two principals. As one teacher said, “The door’s always open with our administrators and you always know they’ll support you...” This support motivates teachers and students alike, as the teacher continued, “When you work for incredible people like that you can’t help but work hard.” Principal Fuline, who typically handles discipline issues, is seen as firm but fair, and has students’ best interests at heart, as one teacher described, “The kids know that he’s going to love them to death... but there’s no nonsense. “

As previously mentioned, the principals have worked to develop positive reinforcement to encourage students to exhibit positive behavior. The school gives year-end awards to recognize and celebrate student achievement, which also serves as peer modeling. At a year-end awards

ceremony, students with the highest GPA in each class and subject receive an award and students are rewarded for perfect attendance. Seniors receive special honors, among them scholarship awards, recognition for having the highest GPA in each subject, perfect attendance, and Army and Marine recognition awards. In addition, one male and one female senior student are recognized as “most improved over four years.”

The school creates and communicates clear disciplinary policies that reinforce good behavior and establish mutual respect between students and teachers. As previously mentioned, a dress code is rigidly enforced. The school’s discipline policies are understood by all students and consistently carried out by the entire staff. When situations do occur, problems are addressed quickly and resolved firmly. In classroom observations, teachers’ behavioral management strategies were strong. Observers noted only minor incidents of student misbehavior such as students chatting with each other during informal classroom time. The teachers of these classes did not need to reprimand the students and instead used effective proactive strategies such as walking through the classroom and stopping to observe students who might be approaching an unacceptable line of behavior, effectively preventing problems before they began.

One of this year’s school goals was to teach students to respect each others’ space. To accomplish their goals, the staff worked to develop a positive behavior modification program. Struthers High School received a grant from the Northeast Ohio SERRC (NEOSERRC) to support their efforts to reinforce positive behavior among students. The art teacher developed posters to promote good behavior and administrators increased the number of celebratory pep rallies as positive reinforcement for students’ good behavior at games. Administrators expressed great pride in the results they observed in student behavior at sporting events and say that other school principals have commended them on the good behavior of Struthers students.

Although there are strict disciplinary policies, Struthers’ teachers show a strong sensitivity to the challenges its student population faces growing up in a lower income community where parents are likely to have lower levels of educational attainment and to be preoccupied with work or other problems. Teachers recognize that there are differences in the way students are prepared for the educational experience at home, and thus they must adjust their teaching approach to address the needs of individual students to the best of their ability. The willingness to make this extra time commitment comes from a feeling that they are “responsible” for providing what the students are missing at home.

In focus groups, students described the challenges they face. They talked about parents who had not done well in school themselves so the parents were not able to help with homework or explain class assignments. Although few of the parents may have attended college, about 67 percent of Struthers’ students take the ACT or SAT and 64 percent of graduates enter college. In focus groups, students talked about being the first in their families planning to attend college.

Even with these challenges, students say their teachers at the school are sensitive to their home situations and willing to provide the extra support needed to help them advance. Some of the students come from homes with very difficult situations and the help they require in dealing with their circumstances is involved and complex. The support provided by the teachers and staff is frequently offered and can make a critical difference in the lives of the students. One student said:

In almost every class I’ve been in, they tell on the first day that if you’re having a problem at home or outside of the class to tell the teacher about it so that she can understand...she doesn’t punish you for something that may be bothering you inside.

The nurturing environment provided by the faculty, before and during class, results in interactions that were observed to be overwhelmingly positive. Teachers often smiled and joked with the students and demonstrated concern about the students and potential problems. For example, when one student came to class late, the teacher tried to come up with a solution so that the student could be on time to future classes. Teachers also frequently praised and gave affirmation to their students, telling them that they were “smart.” In one class, when a student said that he worked through the problem differently than the way the teacher showed them, the teacher praised his effort in front of his classmates.

Some classes operated in a casual and informal atmosphere. Students were allowed to answer questions without raising their hands during what was more a discussion than a lecture. Students seemed closely connected with each other. Although students occasionally talked with each other, it was not disruptive to the class.

The positive atmosphere was also displayed in student-to-student interactions. In several classes students were observed offering to tutor their classmates. Students were courteous to one another. For example, when two students raised their hands at the same time, one politely told the other to “go ahead” and when another student went to get himself a piece of paper he asked if anyone else needed any. In other classes, students helped each other when working on mathematics problems.

In focus groups, students said that their teachers were very honest with them when it came to their performance and their chances of getting into college. One student discussed teachers’ efforts to help them focus and improve:

She was the first teacher who sat me down and told me that I wasn’t going to make it in college if I didn’t actually focus. I was pretty much failing her class with like a 50 percent and she focused me and I ended up getting an A by the end of the year.

The Struthers experience for students extends beyond the classroom. Students are encouraged to participate in a variety of nonacademic activities. More than 100 students are involved with a club whose sole purpose is volunteerism. Other clubs encouraging the participation of the whole school include “Pi Day” for mathematics (pies are used to help celebrate it), Cinco de Mayo celebrations, and the French club has a Mardi Gras celebration. Principal Meadows said the non-academic activities are as important as the academic, as she said, “We try to have something here non-academic for all students... the kids have a [more] positive attitude and want to become a part of something.” Another student commented on teachers’ efforts to enrich lectures with art and film:

I love the fact that I’m not only well educated, but I’m well rounded because I’m well cultured as well. We’ve done so many different things with culture. Like we did a whole Film Noir study back in tenth grade and you learn so much from that.

One of the new challenges for Struthers has been the assimilation of students coming to Struthers through open enrollment. Struthers took proactive action to help teachers and staff develop skills and knowledge they will need to help students from different backgrounds feel valued as individuals in their new school. Struthers High School currently has about 22 students from inner city Youngstown. In order to help the students from primarily African-American schools adjust to the primarily White school, the staff went through professional development and sensitivity training. During the session, the staff brought in speakers and trainers to help with the transition in the student population open enrollment will bring.

To help students transition, prior to signing up for open enrollment at Struthers, parents and students were provided with a tour of the building and a chance to talk with teachers. Students then decided whether they wanted to attend the school or not. During orientation, the staff also met the students' parents and together they reviewed the school's handbook and policies. After the students had attended a few classes, the staff met with new students individually to see how they were adjusting and to determine whether or not they needed any additional assistance. As Principal Meadows described, "We just talked with them and said, 'Just want to make sure everything was going okay. Do you need anything? Let us know,' to try to give them the welcome feeling."

In an attempt to adapt to the information needs of the new parents, the school periodically sends newsletters to the homes of open-enrollment students that provide parents information about their child (academic deficiency, attendance problems, etc.). Principal Meadows said:

We believe the fact that they want to come to Struthers is a positive, is a plus. By all means it is a big adjustment, and I can tell you that from my whole career being in Youngstown city, and the majority coming from Youngstown city there are some big differences and they really have to adjust.

Struthers has created and works hard to maintain an educational environment where each student feels valued and supported. In watching the interactions between teachers and students it's clear they are happy to be together and that a great deal of respect, caring and understanding is shared each day.

## **Key Findings: Themes and Trends**

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Struthers High School, like other *Schools of Promise*, has been successful in raising and maintaining high levels of academic performance in mathematics and reading with economically disadvantaged students. This accomplishment has been achieved through a strong, sustained drive to align the school district's curriculum with state standards, effective leadership, strong personal connections between teachers and students, and community support based on a value for high-quality education.

When Superintendent Sandra DiBacco first arrived at Struthers City School District, she found that there was very little curriculum consistency between school buildings and no concerted effort to coordinate transition from elementary school to middle school and then to high school. The result was a high failure rate among freshman. She decided that aggressive action needed to be taken, including the addition of new administrative personnel, and credits her school principals' strong leadership as key in aligning the district curriculum throughout grades K – 12.

To implement alignment in the classroom, principals provide teachers with significant release time and professional development time so they could adapt to the standards. The district's curriculum director and leadership team provided assistance as needed and kept the entire district focused on the task at hand. Today teachers have embraced the changes and the concept of continuous improvement in instruction. They utilize technology and a variety of teaching approaches to keep the students engaged in the classroom.

Following the principals' lead and emphasis on a student-centered learning environment, teachers also work hard to remain in touch with the individual needs of their students, both in the classroom and at home. From walking the halls of Struthers High School and observing the

warm, respectful interactions, it is clear the students and teachers share a strong positive relationship.

Finally, the close relationship between the school district and the community plays an important role in the academic success of the students. Many school employees live in the community and some graduated from Struthers and thus they have a strong emotional commitment to the success of the students and are willing to invest extra time to meet with parents and work individually with troubled students. When teachers need parent support or assistance, the parents are quick to respond and tend to support the teachers actions. This sends a strong message to the students that respecting the teacher is important and the important people in your life feel that educational success is a valued achievement.

In conclusion, the team at Struthers has worked hard as a team to achieve higher academic performance. The students have responded well to the approach and parents have provided the vital support to teachers and the administration. Hopefully, fiscal emergency is just a small bump in a tradition of excellence at Struthers.

## **“Lessons Learned” at Struthers High School**

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### ***1. The school delivers rigorous instruction aligned to the standards.***

- All instruction is clearly and cohesively aligned to the state standards. The Struthers district was a leader in the state in alignment, and the high school currently meets every standard.
- The school district works hard to vertically and horizontally align instruction to the standards throughout the students’ experience within all three of the schools in the district; district leadership emphasizes “seamless” alignment and consistency in instruction from Kindergarten through twelfth grade in core subjects as well as technology.
- A central leadership team has set high standards for the district and provides support and professional development to teachers to help them adopt the standards and add creative content to the classroom experience.
- The school clearly communicates standards and expectations to the students and parents; students, parents, and teachers agree administrators convey standards clearly and effectively.

### ***2. The school provides leadership that results in continuous improvement of instruction.***

- One of the most distinctive characteristics at Struthers High School is strong leadership. At the district level, the superintendent is a passionate, dynamic leader who has assembled a very strong school leadership team.
- Struthers has two co-principals who present a “unified front” in terms of leadership; each focuses on different administrative issues but support the other. Together they make an effective team.
- Principals emphasize the importance of student-centered instruction in their interaction with and evaluation of teachers. They maintain a regular presence in teachers’ classrooms and support teachers through formal and informal evaluation.

- Administration emphasizes goal setting to establish common objectives for the entire staff and to identify and focus on areas of greatest concern; for example, one of this year's goals was to emphasize the importance of positive behavior among students.
- Professional development at Struthers emphasizes, foremost, curriculum alignment and use of student data to drive decisions. Teachers have also been provided sensitivity training, as minority students from neighboring Youngstown have begun to enroll in the school through the new open enrollment policy.
- The district faces a challenge being in financial emergency, and many administrative changes have been made at the district level, with the superintendent assuming many new roles and responsibilities as positions are reduced or cut.

### ***3. The school designs instruction to ensure every student's success.***

- Teachers collaborate with one another to improve or enhance their effectiveness. Teachers intervene directly with students when additional support is needed, providing immediate, coordinated intervention in which the student takes an active role.
- Teachers invest extensive additional time before and after school working with students in need of extra help; teachers build personal relationships and cultivate an atmosphere of trust between students and themselves.
- Students play an important role in helping each other learn by serving as peer tutors; about half the student population at Struthers participate in peer tutoring.
- A Building Assistance Team (BAT) program led by Principal Meadows creates opportunities for struggling students to work together with teachers, counselors and parents to identify solutions.
- Technology is important and frequently integrated into instruction at Struthers; the new school building is equipped with extensive technology including SmartBoards and computers to enhance lessons and engage students.

### ***4. The school engages parents and the community to support student success.***

- Struthers borders on a major urban district but has a "small town" culture with deeply rooted blue collar values. Families value education and support the teachers in their efforts to direct and encourage student success.
- Teachers and administrators frequently communicate with parents, involving them as soon as possible when students experience difficulty; parents actively support these efforts.
- Many staff members live in the community and some graduated from Struthers themselves, which gives them valuable perspective on the community and an understanding of unique challenges a student may be facing at home. Feeling part of the community creates a strong sense of responsibility and commitment to student success.
- Parents are very supportive of teacher actions in the classroom and parent teacher conferences are extremely well attended.

### ***5. The school creates a culture where every individual feels valued.***

- Teachers and administrators have very warm and nurturing relationships with the students in their care. The school culture establishes clear rules of student conduct and mutual respect, and positive reinforcement is used for encouragement. The school principals and teachers are united in their belief that it is critical to provide both emotional and instructional support to all students.

- Students are publicly recognized for success and encouraged to reach out to help other students who may be having trouble with class content or an assignment.
- Students, teachers, parents, and administrators agree that the culture at Struthers is very much a “community” atmosphere and the school district is an integrated part of the local community.
- As new students enter the district from neighboring Youngstown through a new open enrollment policy, the school has worked to create a smooth transition with additional support for new students and teachers alike.