

## **Edward D. Trice Elementary Texarkana Arkansas School District**

### School Context

Texarkana is a mid-sized city located in Miller County in Southeast Arkansas. The city shares the state line border with its sister city, Texarkana, Texas. Each city has its own local government and school systems. Texarkana Arkansas School District serves approximately 4,590 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade on ten different campuses. Edward D. Trice is one of five elementary schools in the district and serves approximately 550 students in kindergarten through fourth grade. According to the superintendent, “learning never stops at the Texas Arkansas School District because we know that the future of our community depends on the preparation of our young people.” The district is always looking for better ways to improve the delivery of instruction and enhance the educational experiences for all students. The mission statement for Edward D. Trice Elementary, which supports the districts vision, is “to prepare lifelong learners for a changing world. We believe all children can and will learn.”

In 2003 and 2004, Trice Elementary met adequate yearly progress (AYP), as required by No Child Left Behind. In Arkansas, schools must make AYP on the state-mandated Benchmark exams, which are criterion-referenced tests in mathematics and literacy. In 2003 and 2004, the elementary level Benchmark exams were administered in grades 4, 6, and 8. Beginning in 2005, the Benchmark exams in math and literacy were administered in grades 3 through 8. Arkansas’ annual AYP goals are determined by the Arkansas Department of Education ([arkedu.state.ar.us/nochild/ayp\\_improvement.html](http://arkedu.state.ar.us/nochild/ayp_improvement.html)), and are part of the state’s plan, which has been approved by the U. S. Department of Education. The district and the school outperformed 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade state averages on Math and Literacy Benchmark exams in 2003 and 2004.

**Student Demographics (2004):** *The district serves 48.1% African-American students compared to the state average of 22.9%.*

	<b>Trice Elementary</b>	<b>Texarkana School District</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>
% White	59.6	49.6	70.1
% African-American	38.9	48.1	22.9
% Hispanic	1.1	1.9	5.3
% Other	0.4	0.5	1.7

**School Support Services (2004):** *The district serves 60.0% of their students through the Free and Reduced Lunch Program as compared to the state average of 44.2%.*

	<b>Trice Elementary</b>	<b>Texarkana School District</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>
% Free and Reduced Lunch	51.1	60.0	44.2
% English as a Second Language	0.4	1.0	2.8
% Special Education	14.3	17.1	11.3
% Migrant	n/a	0.1	1.5

**Fourth Grade Assessments:** *Trice Elementary exceeded 4<sup>th</sup> grade state proficiency averages for Benchmark exams in 2002 and 2003.*

		<b>Trice Elementary</b>	<b>Texarkana School District</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>
Literacy % Proficient	2002	76.5	65.8	57.9
	2003	81.7	64.5	62.0
	2004	65.3	65.0	69.3
Math % Proficient	2002	53.0	40.8	49.2
	2003	79.8	56.1	61.0
	2004	67.4	57.4	65.2

### Curriculum and Academic Goals

**Texarkana School District aligns their curriculum within the district.** Curriculum alignment is performed district wide, horizontally and vertically. Curriculum alignment is a process of “weeding” out unneeded content, to allow more time for quality instruction. No Child Left Behind legislation is seen as “a good idea,” but unrealistic.

**Trice Elementary is working to align curriculum so that all teachers will be responsible for helping with content on state Benchmark exams.** Vertical alignment that is done at the school is based on state standards and the principal gives teachers blocks of time for reading and language arts, which are currently part of the focus of state Benchmark exams. The school principal would like to see more specific frameworks, so that teachers could better plan. Teachers are given the curriculum to be taught and they are responsible for how they teach material, using their own creative strategies.

### Staff Selection & Capacity Building

**District administrators are assessed using a “Performance Competencies Assessment.”**

Texarkana School District uses a standard form to evaluate district administrators and building administrators. The forms evaluate administrators in the following areas: vision and continuous learning, school culture and instructional leadership, school climate and continuous

improvement, customer service and educational leadership, professional efficacy, and educational leadership and the law.

**Texarkana School District provides funding for professional development outside of the district and also provides training within.** At the time of the interviews, the district was preparing to send seven teachers to a conference in Dallas for the summer concerning disaggregating data. The district also provides four days of in-service and six days of staff development training.

**Trice Elementary teachers collaborate across grades and are a part of the staff selection process.** Trice Elementary teachers have worked together for a long time and frequently attend training together such as in-services, poverty studies, or strategy training. Summer workshops, such as training in state Benchmark studies, can also provide extra training. Trice teachers, in the past, have met weekly for collaboration or book studies, and may also visit other schools to see implementation of effective strategies. Teachers also assist in the selection of new principals, teachers, superintendents, and curriculum supervisors. New teachers go through the state's mentoring program.

#### Instructional Programs, Practices, & Arrangements

**Trice Elementary allocates the majority of its time to two core subjects, math and literacy.** Math and literacy are the focus at Trice Elementary, and the school day is planned to provide half of the day's instructional time for each subject. Other subjects, such as social studies and science, are integrated into the curriculum through reading and writing assignments. Themed units are also done at the school, with classrooms from different grade levels sharing activities for the project.

**Trice Elementary uses programs, practices, and arrangements to increase higher order thinking skills as tested by state Benchmark exams.** Fourth grade teachers at Trice have a higher order thinking skills class and a Benchmark prep class where teachers use the released state test items and students work on them in notebooks provided by the school. Reteaching is done as necessary and the program will soon be extended for third grade as well. The school also uses graphic organizers, such as Venn diagrams, to help students learn how to compare and contrast in their writing. Journals are also used and Step Up to Writing is on the agenda for use in second grade for the upcoming school year. The school also uses the Accelerated Reader program in first and second grades. Trice is considered to be an arts based school and uses the Arts Intensive Model (AIM) where students participate in art activities, such as working with artists in residence to create murals. Currently, the school is dealing with issues of overcrowding, hectic scheduling, and qualms with NCLB.

#### Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, & Use of Data

**The Texarkana School District and Trice Elementary use data to make decisions.** Testing data are used to identify weaknesses, particularly within subpopulations, and off-grade testing is used as well to help assess and monitor all grades. The district does not currently have many administrative positions to help with data management. After the district receives testing data,

the data are sent to buildings for disaggregating and use. When the principal of Trice receives the data, grade level meetings are held to analyze the data and disaggregate them. Findings are then presented to the rest of the building level staff. Teachers at Trice are formally evaluated, after being given 24 hours notice, using pre-made observation forms. Teacher evaluations also include the use of portfolios and a discussion with the principal of how their teaching is tied to Arkansas state standards.

**Trice Elementary uses Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) math assessments and portfolios for writing to measure student growth and assist in monitoring.** The NWEA assessment adapts to the student's ability, measuring what a child knows and needs to learn. The school uses these assessments to look at yearly growth, and also for monitoring every nine weeks. Teachers then use these data to report to the principal. At Trice, the goal is for teachers to learn how to disaggregate and monitor their own students. In addition, the school has two “focus teachers” who work primarily with test scores and serve as a resource for other teachers. Students in all grades have portfolios which are used to track progress in writing. The last piece of class work for the year is transferred to the next grade level using the portfolios.

#### Recognition, Intervention, & Adjustments

**The Texarkana School District and Trice Elementary recognize faculty and students for achievements and appreciation.** At the end of every school year, the district has a breakfast to recognize faculty and staff for years of service and awards received throughout the school year. Students are recognized for meeting Accelerated Reader goals, for proficient work, good character, and good behavior. Each grade level also has award assemblies.

**Trice Elementary uses a variety of intervention strategies to help students improve academically.** Peer tutors and volunteering grandmothers help struggling readers. The Get Excited About Reading (GEAR) program provides remediation students who perform low on Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas (ELLA) tests. Enrichment activities are provided for gifted and talented students through gifted and talented teachers and classroom teachers.

#### Other Factors Influencing Practices

##### *Organizational Knowledge & Core Beliefs about Teaching and Learning*

**The Texarkana School District and Trice Elementary are focused on providing high-quality instruction for all students.** The district believes that all students can and will learn, but at different rates. The school climate of Trice is inventive and exciting, with good working relationships among the staff and administration. The principal of Trice Elementary is described as a strong instructional leader and decision maker, with good interpersonal skills. All students are valued and celebrated and teachers have high expectations for every child. Current challenges facing the district include overcrowding and poverty, but also loss of students to nearby schools in Texas.

### *Local Influences, Relationships, and Communication*

**The school district has good relationships with local businesses and parents.** Although the district receives little outside funding, district personnel describe the relationships with local businesses as positive. Trice Elementary reports that many parents volunteer with a very active PTA sponsoring Christmas celebrations, a Read to Feed festival, and patriotic programs to recognize local soldiers overseas. One of the keys to the district's success is "being a people-oriented district."

**The Texarkana School District maintains an informative and attractive website to help disseminate information to students, teachers, parents and the community at large.** The district's website can be accessed at <http://txk.k12.ar.us/info> and is a helpful resource for the community. Teachers can check their email remotely through the districts webmail link and students can check their grades and recent announcements through the website. The site also contains employment listings, school board policies, district calendars, departmental information, and links to different school systems within the district.

**The Texarkana School District communicates effectively with the public.** In addition to maintaining an informative website, the district also communicates through a clear and well-organized annual report. The report has several functions. First, it reminds the public of the purpose, mission, vision, and goals of the district. Next, it lists the names of all administrators and board members, along with school addresses and other contact information. Additionally, the annual report includes the district's five-year plan and the latest information on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Teacher and student recognition and other various updates and new policies or plans are also included.