

Site Visit Findings: Hamburg School District Hamburg Junior High School

Site Visit Overview

Hamburg School District is located in Ashley County in Southern Arkansas. During the 2004-2005 school year, the district served 1,828 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. The mission of the district is to “ignite a passion for learning in all students to prepare them for higher levels of academic, social, and economic success statewide, nationally, and internationally.”

Hamburg Junior High is a diverse environment with approximately 433 students enrolled in grades seven through nine for the 2004-2005 school year. Despite high levels of poverty and a primarily rural student constituency, the school and district continue to show growth. The school exceeded Arkansas averages in math and literacy assessments for the 2004-2005 school year. The school is aware of the challenges that the community, county, and students face, however, challenges are met with high expectations and hard work by a supportive staff with progressive ideas.

Student Demographics: (2004) *The school and district are diverse, and have more African-American and Hispanic students than the state as a whole.*

	Hamburg Junior High School	Hamburg School District	Arkansas
% White	66.5	56.0	70.1
% African-American	26.3	36.2	22.9
% Hispanic	7.2	7.9	5.3
% Other	n/a	n/a	1.7

School Support Services: (2004) *The school and district serve considerably more students than the state, as a whole, through Free and Reduced Lunch.*

	Hamburg Junior High School	Hamburg School District	Arkansas
% Free and Reduced Lunch	78.0	72.5	44.2
% English as a Second Language	3.0	7.4	2.8
% Special Education	11.1	12.3	11.3

Assessments by Grade: *The school shows outstanding growth in 8th grade literacy assessments.*

		Hamburg Junior High School	Arkansas
Literacy % Proficient (8 th Grade)	2002	58.6	32.0
	2003	69.4	42.0
	2004	73.6	52.0
Math % Proficient (8 th Grade)	2002	21.6	21.0

2003	19.4	22.0
2004	34.4	32.0

Curriculum and Academic Goals

- ✓ Teachers know what is to be taught in their grade by looking at the state frameworks and they focus on areas of student needs. Teachers report that they individually create their own curriculum for their classrooms but also report that they meet with other grades and within their subjects across the district to ensure vertical and horizontal alignment.
- ✓ Teachers are involved in the creation of the schools' ASCIP (Arkansas School Consolidated Improvement Program) plan. This plan drives school goals and is also a part of staff development evaluations.

Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

- ✓ The school reports a very low teacher turnover rate. Many teachers at Hamburg Junior High have been with the district for fifteen years or more. Teachers attribute their retention to a great working environment and a family-like atmosphere.
- ✓ The district provides teachers with all of their professional development needs including training in assessment at the classroom level, classroom management, and writing across the curriculum.
- ✓ The district has obtained a grant through the Foundation for the Mid South. "The Foundation for the Mid South is a regional development foundation dedicated to building the communities, resources, and leadership of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi." This grant has, for the past four years, provided teachers with a "great deal of hands-on" training and many useful tools, including training on working with low-income students and tools to develop quarterly common assessments. The grant has also allowed teachers to attend national conferences and to visit schools that "are about the same level" with the "same kid needs."
- ✓ The principal of Hamburg Junior High looks to teachers to request and help design professional development. Through discussions with teachers and classroom walkthroughs, the principal is able to target weaknesses and needs at the school level.
- ✓ All teachers in the school have common planning time by grade level. This time is spent developing interdisciplinary units, meeting with parents, discussing individual student needs, and coordinating curriculum.

Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building Comments

You have to find people that are willing to learn and have some great ideas that they're willing to put in practice.

Experienced Administrator

We don't only want the teachers to know about instructional models and concepts, the principals have got to know about the instructional models and concepts as well.

Experienced Administrator

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- ✓ Rather than relying on one particular program or textbook, teachers at Hamburg Junior High pull from a variety of instructional programs and materials to meet student needs.
- ✓ The school uses creative arrangements to meet the needs of students. For example, all students are placed into Algebra I at the appropriate grade level. At the end of the first nine weeks all students are assessed and those who have performed “very well” over the course of the grading period and are rated proficient on state assessments are moved into advanced Algebra courses.
- ✓ The school meets the needs of students. Special education students are included in regular education classrooms and are accompanied by special education teachers. The school has an ESL program and a full-time ESL teacher/coordinator. Additionally, the school utilizes 90 minute block scheduling on an AB schedule. The principal ensures that the 90 minutes of instruction are used effectively. Teachers report using timers in their classrooms to help them pace instruction and offer differentiated instruction for all students.
- ✓ The district reports the use of “Direct Instruction” as a major component of instruction that has benefited students. The program is used throughout the district as an instructional strategy. The program is not required, but strongly suggested, and the district employs specialists and consultants to evaluate and implement the program. The district also reports success with the “Accelerated Reader” program.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangement Comments

We're going to go and look at the program and see how it works...we liked some of the ideas so we just incorporated it into what we are doing.

Experienced Teacher

I can't order that an instructional program be implemented, the school board can't order that it be implemented, and you can spend a bunch of money and get no results. The faculty have to want to.

Experienced Administrator

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

- ✓ The district monitors instruction with the help of a testing coordinator. Teachers also receive assistance in monitoring, compiling, and analyzing test data from math and literacy coaches.
- ✓ The principal is active in teacher evaluation, and is a frequent visitor to classrooms. Struggling teachers are placed with informal mentors who can offer assistance and guidance.

- ✓ The district supports “landmark” testing throughout their schools. Teachers within each school develop these landmark tests, which are common core subject quarterly assessments, with the help of the Foundation for the Mid South. The assessments allow point-in-time monitoring and remediation. Teachers report that the assessments are a valuable tool for assessment, remediation, and curriculum refinement. The landmark testing was started at Hamburg Junior High, which has served as a model for the district.
- ✓ The district recently adopted a new assessment tool for administrators, where anonymous surveys regarding principal effectiveness are submitted by teachers. Test scores and leadership styles are also a part of the new principal evaluation tools.

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data Comments

I want to see what they're doing from week to week.

Experienced Teacher

It helps me to look at the data before school and know pretty much where my students stand.

Experienced Teacher

Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustments

- ✓ The school recognizes student achievement in a variety of ways. The school endorses a hall of honor, assembly awards, citizenship awards, and “best effort” awards. A winter carnival is also organized by the school’s leadership team, and students who show improvement are invited to attend. Field trips, special lunches, and the yearly bonfire are also ways that students are rewarded.
- ✓ The district offers tutoring throughout the school day as well as before and after school. Students may come for tutoring as needed. The district has also hired additional teachers so that students can “double-up,” getting assistance with their weaker subjects.

Influential Factors

- ✓ Recently, the school district voluntarily annexed another, smaller local school district. This voluntary consolidation has brought massive growth and new challenges. The district has a large amount of geographic coverage and currently has six elementary schools that feed into the junior high. The district has seen an increase in poverty and diversity, but the staff is positive and works hard to insure that the school is able to retain its family-like structure.
- ✓ The teachers at Hamburg Junior High have high expectations for student behavior. All students are expected to show respect and teachers unite to combat inappropriate behaviors and teach appropriate behavior.
- ✓ The school has recently employed a parent coordinator who helps parents, students, and teachers meet instructional and social needs. The school also makes use of community volunteers for tutoring and other instructional supports. Parents are frequent visitors to the school and teachers report that “that’s one of the best things we have done.”

- ✓ The school district, through the 21st Century Network, provides a developmental pre-kindergarten program and after school services for all students.

Influential Quotes

We welcome parent visitors any time to come in our classrooms.

Experienced Teacher

My opinion on that is we believe that every child can learn, truly, honestly.

Experienced Teacher

I think that these teachers all have the concept that we're all in this together.

Experienced Teacher

We're focused on increased opportunities for students.

Experienced Administrator

The students are our first priority.

Experienced Administrator