

## Jefferson Elementary Little Rock School District

### School Context

Little Rock School District is located in Pulaski County in the central region of Arkansas. Little Rock is the state capital and largest city in the state with a metro population of 583,845. The Little Rock School District serves approximately 24,500 students in pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. Jefferson Elementary is one of thirty-four elementary schools located in Little Rock and serves approximately 400 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Jefferson's mission is to "provide a safe nurturing environment in which all the children will develop academic, emotional, and social skills that will lead them be productive citizens." Jefferson has a very active PTA which is "an integral part of the school and works to enhance the educational experience of every child" at the school.

As reported below, the district's student population is substantially different than the state as a whole, and Jefferson is different than the district. With respect to ethnicity, the Little Rock School District serves more African-American students than the state and fewer Hispanic students. Jefferson Elementary serves fewer African-American students than the district, but more than the state. The district serves more students than the state through the Free and Reduced Lunch Program. Jefferson serves fewer students than the state or district through the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

In 2003 and 2004, Jefferson 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 Little Rock School District and Jefferson Elementary serve substantially more African-American students than the state.*

	<b>Jefferson Elementary</b>	<b>Little Rock School District</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>
% White	55.3	25.2	70.1
% African-American	43.4	68.7	22.9
% Hispanic	0.3	4.2	5.3
% Other	1.0	2.1	1.7

**School Support Services: (2004)** *Jefferson Elementary serves a considerably lower percentage of students through Free and Reduced Lunch than the district or state.*

	<b>Jefferson Elementary</b>	<b>Little Rock School District</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>
% Free and Reduced Lunch	32.7	55.5	44.2
% English as a Second Language	1.0	3.4	2.8
% Special Education	13.3	10.9	11.3
% Migrant	n/a	n/a	1.5

**Assessments by Grade:** *Jefferson Elementary continues to exceed 4<sup>th</sup> grade state proficiency averages for Benchmark exams. The Little Rock School District shows growth in both math and literacy, averaging 45.0% Math proficiency in 2002 and 61.6% proficiency in 2004.*

	<b>Jefferson Elementary</b>	<b>Little Rock School District</b>	<b>Arkansas</b>
% Reading 2002	80	34.3	57.9
2003	72.9	44.4	62.0
2004	82.6	49.9	69.3
% Math 2002	62.7	45.0	49.2
2003	67.8	57.6	61.0
2004	76.8	61.6	65.2

### Curriculum and Academic Goals

**The Little Rock School District has a “Division of Curriculum and Instruction” devoted to improving the quality of instructional programs.** As stated on their website, the mission of the division is to “provide curriculum leadership, instructional support, and results driven professional development across all content, as well as improve the quality of instructional programs resulting in higher student academics.” Within the Curriculum and Instruction division there are 16 specialized departments including Adult Education, ESL, Exceptional Children, Math and Science, and Social Studies.

**Jefferson Elementary sets academic goals and works toward those goals through curriculum revision.** Jefferson Elementary creates detailed goals in ACSIP (Arkansas Consolidated School Improvement Plan) basing decisions on state standards and assessments. Weak content areas are identified through assessment and targeted during curriculum revision. Grade level meetings are used for horizontally aligning curriculum and curriculum mapping is used for vertical alignment. Jefferson is currently focusing on setting goals for younger grades, improving attendance, and integrating a Lesson Study program for the upcoming year.

## Staff Selection and Capacity Building

**The Little Rock School District has a standard process for selecting new principals and provides training and evaluation.** Principals are occasionally chosen from within the district. All principal interviews are conducted by a committee of district personnel, parents and teachers and the majority of questions asked are curriculum oriented. All district principals have participated in the Leadership Academy. The mission of the Leadership Academy is “to develop and sustain a cadre of leaders in public education in Arkansas through collaborative governance by Academy partners resulting in an expanded vision, statewide system change initiatives, synergy among stakeholders, and leadership development institutes.” Little Rock School District principals meet once a month to identify “focus areas” and to develop professional development plans. Principals are also evaluated twice a year through a non-threatening process in which leadership skills within their school are evaluated. Evaluation is also based on areas that principals have previously identified as needing improvement.

**The Little Rock School District actively recruits qualified teachers, but all decisions are made at the school level.** The district holds a job fair to recruit teachers and also employs a recruitment specialist who travels to universities and other job fairs to recruit teachers. Initial teacher applications are reviewed by a screening team of principals before the actual interviews and selection takes place at the school level. The district reports that NCLB has definitely impacted the teacher evaluation system in the district, and their evaluation tool is now much stronger than it was in the past.

**The Little Rock School District “devotes the time and other resources necessary to a comprehensive Professional Development Program.”** The district realizes that the key to a quality professional development program is the creation of an “environment that facilitates and nurtures continued learning, customer service, data driven decisions and continuous improvement at all levels.” Professional development is encouraged through study groups and seminars, workshops, informational for awareness sessions, in-depth study, access to resources and distance learning, in class coaching and follow-up. Additionally, the district requires 30 hours of professional development above state requirements and strives to offer training at convenient times.

**Jefferson Elementary teachers impact professional development programs and the principal is a supportive participant.** The principal requests that teachers recommend development activities and frequently attends professional development with teachers. The principal focuses on supporting teachers, while providing them “creative space” for continued growth. Teachers also have common planning times, at least once a week, for collaboration.

**Jefferson Elementary uses lesson study to encourage collaboration.** Lesson study is a professional development process which originated in Japan. Teachers collaboratively plan, observe and reflect on actual classroom lessons. Participation in the lesson study process is voluntary, but participating teachers believe it is a major factor in their success.

## Instructional Programs, Practices, & Arrangements

**The Little Rock School District employs a Director of Curriculum who researches different instructional programs.** Programs are first researched by the director, then programs are offered to principals. Principals make the decisions and are responsible for implementation of new programs.

**Jefferson Elementary utilizes effective classroom materials and “hands-on” methods that meet state frameworks.** Students use research-based programs such as Accelerated Reader and ELLA (Early Literacy in Arkansas). Investigations are used for math and “science boxes” are used for “hands-on” activities in science. Professional dialogue is a key factor in assessing effectiveness of programs and supplementing where necessary. Teachers identify weaknesses in current programs and supplement as necessary. Teachers focus on learning how to deliver curriculum to their students in meaningful ways while making learning enjoyable.

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

**The Little Rock School District disaggregates data and a representative from each school receives the data along with training on interpretation.** Student data are typically analyzed at the strand and item level, rather than the teacher level. The state Benchmark, ITBS (Iowa Test of Basic Skills) and SAT-9 are used for testing and test scores are used to identify weaknesses in instruction or curriculum. School goals are data driven and adjustments focus on student needs.

**Jefferson Elementary teachers use testing data and lesson study to improve student achievement.** Test scores are used to identify weaknesses and data is also used for vertical alignment. Teachers also use the lesson study process to learn about their students and examine how they are learning. Teachers monitor students to see if they are developing as lifelong learners.

## Recognition, Intervention, & Adjustment

**The Little Rock School District operates two alternative school campuses to meet student needs.** The Alternative Learning Center (grades 6-12) is set up to meet the behavioral needs of students in place of long-term suspension or expulsion. The Accelerated Learning Center provides a high-tech instructional program for students who are close to finishing their high school courses but need a learning environment different from the traditional classroom setting.

**Jefferson Elementary offers a variety of services to meet student needs.** The STAR tutoring program helps kindergarten through second grade students improve reading. A full-time Gifted Specialist works with advanced students in third through fifth grades. Reading specialists and speech therapists offer on site services for students. After school care is also available on site until 5:30 p.m.

**Jefferson students are recognized for good behavior and academic achievement.** Awards are given to students through the Accelerated Reader program. Essay contests and other competitions are used as a part of their character education program. Additionally, a “Beat the Clock” program was instituted to combat tardiness. Children are recognized every nine weeks if

they have fewer than three tardies. Jefferson “Star” students are recognized each week by the school counselor for being good citizens.

### Factors Influencing Educational Practices

#### *Local Influences, Relationships, & Communications*

**Jefferson has a very active PTA which sponsors several events and services.** The Jefferson PTA sponsors events such as Field Day, Spaghetti Supper, and the Spring Carnival. The PTA also provides student recognition for outstanding school work, most improved school work, and good citizenship behavior. The PTA provides and pays for an art teachers, as well as needed supplies. Jefferson sees its PTA as an “integral part of the school.”

#### **The Little Rock School District manages a volunteer assistance program in all schools.**

“ViPS (Volunteers in Public Schools) was founded in 1972 to provide assistance to teachers and other staff members of the LRSD by promoting school volunteerism. ViPS serves as a link between the District and the community while providing patrons and citizens an opportunity to be significantly involved in the education of children. During the 2003-2004 school year, over 18,000 volunteers contributed 464,000 hours with an estimated worth of \$7,674,000.00. ViPS provides support and coordination for school volunteer programs and for connecting students to volunteers in the community” ([www.lrsd.org](http://www.lrsd.org)).

**The Little Rock School District maintains an attractive and helpful website.** The district’s website can be reached at [www.lrsd.org](http://www.lrsd.org) and it provides a wealth of information, at the district and school level. Visitors can view and print “refrigerator curriculum” or obtain a listing of attendance zones. A listing of staff and departments, along with current programs is offered. An information link provides listings including: a district calendar, telephone numbers, lunch menus, course catalogs, graduation requirements, and testing and evaluation information. The site is well-constructed and extremely informative.

#### *Resource Allocation*

**The Little Rock community supports the school system financially.** In May of 2000, voters approved a millage increase designed to help fund facility renovations, repairs, and additions. A fund was also dedicated for maintenance and technology enhancements for instruction and administration.

**Jefferson Elementary’s PTA provides funding for staffing and activities.** Currently, the Jefferson PTA is funding an Art teacher for the students and provides all art supplies. Additionally, the school provides 2-3 books for each student to keep each school year. An annual year book is also sponsored by the PTA.