

Magazine Elementary Magazine School District

School Context

Magazine School District is located in Northwest Arkansas in rural Logan County and serves approximately 530 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Magazine School District is a great example of a successful rural school system. Magazine Elementary is the only elementary within the district and serves approximately 290 students in kindergarten through sixth grade. The mission of Magazine Elementary and the district is to “strive to help all of our students realize their potential and be loyal, responsible citizens.” Magazine Elementary believes that every person in the school, “from the custodian to the bus drivers,” has a role in the education of students.

As reported below, the district’s population is significantly different from the state as a whole. With respect to ethnicity, Magazine serves very few minority students. A high number of students in the district, substantially more than the state as whole, are eligible for the Free and Reduced Lunch program. Magazine also has a higher percentage of migrant students than the state. The student population at the elementary is similar to the district population in terms of student demographics and services offered.

In 2003 and 2004, Magazine 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), 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 4th and 6th grade state averages on Math and Literacy Benchmark exams in 2003 and 2004.

Student Demographics: (2004) *The district serves 97.9% white students, compared to the state average of 70.5%.*

	Magazine Elementary	Magazine District	Arkansas
% White	95.8	95.6	70.1
% African-American	n/a	n/a	22.9
% Hispanic	n/a	0.8	5.3
% Asian/Pacific Islander	4.2	3.3	1.1
% American Indian/Alaska Native	n/a	0.4	0.6

School Support Services: (2004) *The percentage of students participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program (69.6%) and the percentage of migrant students (5.6%) at Magazine Elementary are both higher than the district or state.*

	Magazine Elementary	Magazine District	Arkansas
% Free and Reduced Lunch	69.6	65.6	44.2
% English as a Second Language	n/a	n/a	2.8
% Special Education	9.4	11.4	11.3
% Migrant	5.6	4.6	1.5

Fourth Grade Assessments: *Magazine Elementary continues to exceed 4th grade state proficiency averages for Benchmark exams.*

		Magazine Elementary	Arkansas
Literacy % Proficient	2002	77.1	57.9
	2003	87.9	62.0
	2004	80.9	69.3
Math % Proficient	2002	80.0	49.2
	2003	84.8	61.0
	2004	74.5	65.2

Sixth Grade Assessments: *Magazine Elementary continues to exceed 6th grade state proficiency averages for Benchmark exams.*

		Magazine Elementary	Arkansas
Literacy % Proficient	2002	50.0	26.1
	2003	31.4	27.1
	2004	60.0	41.7
Math % Proficient	2002	60.7	31.5
	2003	45.7	35.5
	2004	63.3	41.3

Curriculum and Academic Goals

Magazine School District utilizes vertical teaming across the district (through the Modern Red Schoolhouse) to interpret and include state frameworks in curriculum. The Modern Red Schoolhouse (MRSH) plan was used to align curriculum for kindergarten through twelfth grade. One of the ways that MRSH assists schools in improving student achievement is by

helping schools build coherent curricula that are clearly aligned with state and local standards. In Magazine, the MRSH process started by creating a scope and sequence for all grades to make sure that all the state standards were being covered. Curriculum was first vertically aligned and then horizontally aligned.

The curriculum and goals at Magazine Elementary are driven by standards and assessments and are in a continual state of revision. The school has goals within the curriculum units and within the school framework. Written goals also exist for community and parental involvement, needs assessment, professional development, and technology. Both curriculum changes and the school's annual school improvement plan are based on student test scores. "Having written goals has really changed the way the school does business."

Staff Selection and Capacity Building

Magazine School District looks within the district for principals and uses the local educational cooperative for training and resources. Magazine District looks for strong leaders from within the district, as determined by the community. Principals are selected by a committee of the superintendent, school board members, and teachers. For professional development, the local education cooperative provides many opportunities for networking, has an extensive library, and helps keep principals informed of educational news. The district does not mandate professional development for principals, but a pervasive attitude of keeping "abreast of things that are happening in education" exists, and professional development opportunities are provided frequently for principals.

Magazine School District focuses on providing opportunities for teacher training. Professional development programs that can directly impact student achievement and streamline activities for teachers to include in their daily instruction are preferred by the district. Staff development is commonly available during the summer to decrease the number of days that teachers are out of the classroom during the school year.

Magazine Elementary chooses quality teachers and the principal evaluates potential candidates by reviewing transcripts, certifications, and strengths. To recruit teachers outside of the district, the school advertises and collects a list of applicants. The principal reviews appropriate documents and forwards a list of candidates to the Finance and Organization Committee. The candidates are then ranked and the highest ranking candidates are offered teaching positions.

Magazine Elementary supports teacher collaboration and professional development by working time into teachers' daily and yearly schedule. Magazine teachers have 45 minutes to collaborate every day. Planning periods are arranged by grade level the first semester and across grades the second semester. Task forces were formed throughout the Modern Red School House process and these groups meet throughout the year. Professional development is now tracked, in terms of what was requested and actual attendance. Professional development is centered around weaknesses identified by teachers, the principal and/or counselor. Other teams also meet throughout the year to discuss curriculum. Many teachers fulfill their requirement of 60 hours of professional development through training offered during the summer. Teachers are also given

opportunities to share relevant training with other staff. Furthermore, all teachers and the principal are Pathwise trained and this state mandated mentoring and teaching program is strictly followed.

Instructional Programs, Practices, & Arrangements

Magazine Elementary’s textbooks, instructional programs, and units are chosen by teachers. As a method of empowering teachers, the principal at Magazine Elementary has given teachers top priority in selecting instructional programs and textbooks. This is done through a committee composed of teachers. Textbook representatives work with the school to meet the needs of learners. Units of study are based on the frameworks and an amalgamation of several different instructional programs. Some programs used at the school include Saxon Math, Accelerated Reader, and Accelerated Math.

Magazine Elementary develops units based on framework strands and curriculum is carefully tracked. Standards driven content is the focus of the school, and effort is made to avoid “overlapping” curriculum. A tracking system within the units of study allows teachers to see what has been taught and what has been mastered.

Magazine Elementary has an innovative plan in place to combat tardiness and increase attendance and readiness to learn. Every child at Magazine Elementary rides the bus to school, even if they live within walking distance. When the students arrive, at approximately 7:45 a.m., they are served breakfast, and all classes start at 8:00 a.m. with a reading selection. Through creative arrangements, Magazine is also able to exceed the state requirement for daily instructional time by nearly one hour (385 minutes versus 330 minutes). Classroom schedules are designed to make sure certain that objectives and standards in the curriculum are covered before state testing begins.

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, & Use of Data

Magazine Elementary uses data to evaluate and determine curriculum and to diagnose areas of weakness. Magazine Elementary recently disaggregated data by teams which helped determine curriculum. Student data are examined by the principal, curriculum coordinator, and then by a task force on curriculum and assessment. Representatives from the local educational cooperative help train staff on analyzing and interpreting data. In the classroom, pre- and post-assessments that are based on the curriculum are used. Assessments are teacher-created or purchased with textbook programs, and are designed to cover every standard. In addition, Curriculum Associates is used to diagnose where students’ weaknesses are, and Curriculum Associates’ Test Busters Model is used for practice tests. The school is in the process of implementing a policy to retain students who do not score proficient or above on the state Benchmark exams. Computerized testing and assessments throughout the year also help to analyze practices, materials, and achievement. Magazine teachers are evaluated through three evaluative visits based on the Modern Red School House model.

Recognition, Intervention, & Adjustment

Magazine Elementary recognizes students for good behavior. Every week, students are celebrated and given awards, but only for specific accomplishments. Student recognition programs include the Lion Club Math-a-Thon, Children's Hospital Testing, and the Kiwanis Program for Physical Fitness. The principal also writes articles for the local paper promoting student achievement and commending teachers. The librarian recognizes students who meet Accelerated Reader goals. Funding for recognition programs comes from grants recently received through innovative pairing with another small school in the region. Classroom teachers display high quality student work in hallways and rewards, such as field trips, are given to students for meeting nine week and semester goals.

Magazine Elementary uses test data to identify students who need intervention or adjustment. If it is determined that a child needs intervention, units of study are built to either remediate or enrich. After-school tutoring and test preparation classes are available for struggling students. Accelerated students are served through an active Gifted and Talented program that includes a local quiz bowl team and a chess club. During the 2003-2004 school year, Magazine identified students that needed remediation in math and tutored them in an after school program that also provided snacks and beverages. If identified students were unable to stay after school, they were provided with remediation during an elective course, such as band or basketball. Magazine Elementary offers several other services to assist in meeting student needs. The school has utilized grant money to develop an early childhood and preschool childcare program and offer scholarships. The preschool program has assisted in lowering the drop out rate, improving student readiness, and enhancing retention of quality teachers.

Factors Influencing Educational Practices

Local Influences, Relationships, & Communications

The Magazine District School Board is highly active and supportive. The school board has little turnover, and consists of members that highly value education. School board members attend nearly all district events and are very involved within the schools. A Personnel Policy Committee made up of teachers helps the School Board in setting educational policy.

Magazine School District and Magazine Elementary are aware of the importance of parental involvement. Although one of the problems reported by Magazine Elementary and Magazine District is lack of parent initiative, both the district and the school are working on improving parental involvement. The district has an on-site parent center and employs a human service worker. Magazine Elementary's principal makes a point of contacting every student's family. The school holds an open house at the beginning of every school year, sends out parent letters, and is working on making parents feel more comfortable at the school to increase parental visits to the school.

Core Beliefs About Teaching & Learning

Personnel at Magazine Elementary believe that all children can learn and it is the responsibility of educators to help students be their best. The teachers and administrators at Magazine Elementary focuses on making their school climate comfortable, as they believe this

positively affects learning. The school's number one reported priority is to provide a quality education that addresses the needs of all learners, not just the "middle learners." The school climate is hard-working and focused, but accepting. The principal wants students to know that "it is our place, everybody belongs, nobody is a prisoner, everybody is wanted, everybody is valued."