

Parkview Elementary Van Buren School District

School Context

Van Buren School District is located in the River Valley Region of Northwest Arkansas, and serves approximately 5,500 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Parkview Elementary is one of six elementary schools in the Van Buren School District. Parkview has a total enrollment of approximately 360 students in kindergarten through fourth grade and boasts an attendance rate of 97.6%. The mission statement for Parkview Elementary is to “provide a learning environment that enables students to attain their full potential and that promotes lifelong learning.” As stated on their website, Parkview Elementary has a “commitment to a friendly environment with high expectations for students.”

As reported below, the district’s population is notably different from the state as a whole. With respect to ethnicity, the Van Buren School District serves substantially fewer African-Americans and more Hispanic students than the state average. The number of students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch in the Van Buren School District is less than the state average. The district also serves more migrant students than the state as whole. The student population at Parkview is similar to the rest of the district in terms of ethnicity, but serves fewer students supported school services.

In 2003 and 2004, Parkview 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 grade state averages on Math and Literacy Benchmark exams in 2003 and 2004.

Student Demographics: (2004) *The Van Buren School District serves 2.9% African-American students compared to the state average of 22.9% students.*

	Parkview Elementary	Van Buren District	Arkansas
% White	87.1	83.9	70.1
% African-American	2.9	1.8	22.9
% Hispanic	5.5	9.4	5.3
% Other	4.5	4.9	1.7

School Support Services: (2004) *Parkview Elementary serves fewer students through the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, 41.8%, than the state as a whole, 44.2%. The district and school serve more students who speak English as a second language.*

	Parkview Elementary	Van Buren District	Arkansas
% Free and Reduced Lunch	41.8	45.0	44.2
% English as a Second Language	5.0	6.2	2.8
% Special Education	10.3	13.3	11.3
% Migrant	2.9	4.4	1.5

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

		Parkview Elementary	Van Buren District	Arkansas
Literacy % Proficient	2002	85.1	75.4	57.9
	2003	79.7	77.3	62.0
	2004	78.9	82.1	69.3
Math % Proficient	2002	77.0	71.7	49.2
	2003	82.8	72.7	61.0
	2004	74.6	79.1	65.2

Curriculum and Academic Goals

The Van Buren School District approaches curriculum development as an ongoing process and academic goals are developed using the state frameworks. Curriculum in the Van Buren School District is mandated by the district and is then designed by meeting with content specialists who take broad state frameworks and create more specific standards for teachers. Cross-content committees work on curriculum at the secondary level and grade level committees design curriculum at the elementary level. The district focuses on allowing teachers to design curriculum because they will be teaching the content.

Parkview Elementary curriculum is driven by the state frameworks and critical thinking.

The school has “broken down” the state frameworks, using such strategies as curriculum mapping, to ensure grade level accountability. Vertical team collaboration is a future goal. Standards are consistently communicated to students and the use of Bloom’s Taxonomy in lesson planning encourages higher level thinking.

Staff Selection and Capacity Building

The Van Buren School District places much emphasis on professional development while maintaining competitive salaries. Teachers meet in cluster groups of grade-level teams for professional development for 80 minutes, two times per week. Programs to assist new teachers

are currently being developed using input from first year teachers. The district recognizes that maintaining competitive teacher salaries is crucial for recruiting and retaining quality teachers.

Parkview Elementary interviews several candidates before choosing new teachers and uses a local university as a resource for finding new teachers. Parkview Elementary receives many applications when a teaching position becomes vacant. Typically six to eight individuals are called in for an interview with a committee. Every candidate is interviewed by at least one mentor or master teacher and one classroom teacher and recommendations are then made to the superintendent.

Parkview Elementary focuses on relevant professional development and promotes teacher collaboration. Parkview Elementary houses a professional development resource room and provides conferences on differentiated learning, assessment, effective teaching, and research based education. Teachers are provided with opportunities to attend training conferences and are expected to share new ideas with other staff members. Parkview encourages teacher collaboration to improve classroom learning strategies.

The Van Buren School District and Parkview Elementary utilize an innovative new program to attract, retain, and motivate high-caliber people to the teaching profession. The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) was introduced in 1999 by the Milken Family Foundation, and has been endorsed by the Education Leaders Council. TAP's goal is to draw more talented people to the teaching profession and to keep them teaching by making it more attractive and rewarding to be a teacher. Under the TAP system, effective teachers can “earn higher salaries and advance professionally, just as in other careers.” Currently the TAP program, called ARTAP to representative the Arkansas branch, is in practice in twelve model school sites within the state. Van Buren School District hosts eight of the twelve schools.

Instructional Programs, Practices, & Arrangements

The Van Buren School District focuses on instructional arrangements, both yearly and daily, that are driven by curriculum needs and state requirements. The schedule for the 2004-2005 school year was designed by a personnel and policy committee. The district allows each grade level to decide how to schedule the school day, in terms of how much time to spend on content, and ensures that the scheduling meets state requirements. The district is also interested in year-round scheduling.

Parkview Elementary uses several recognized instructional programs and aligns curriculum with state standards. Parkview Elementary teachers are currently implementing classroom research-based curriculum programs such as Step-Up-To-Writing (which is correlated to state standards), Shurley English, and Accelerated Reader. State Benchmark items are used to create learning prompts, which students complete weekly. Peer tutoring and grouping is utilized.

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, & Use of Data

The Van Buren School District has recently added new positions at the district level to effectively manage, analyze, and disseminate educational data. The district is committed to

improving the managing of student data and has recently created four new positions: director of secondary curriculum, director of elementary curriculum, director of special programs, and director of accountability and assessment. The district models their assessments after state assessments and shares assessment results in curriculum meetings. Data are used in these meetings to focus on modifications and instructional strategies.

Parkview Elementary utilizes data and has implemented unique strategies for monitoring and disseminating data. Parkview Elementary parents were surveyed about possible changes to student report cards. After obtaining feedback, standards based report cards were implemented and are now used to improve monitoring and accountability of student achievement. Parkview Elementary uses testing data and frequent assessments to identify student weaknesses, monitor performance and enhance teaching strategies. To assess student achievement at the school level, testing data are collected from the Arkansas Benchmark exams and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Classroom assessments are created using Bloom's Taxonomy and classroom "data boxes" are kept to house "representative" work chosen by students.

Recognition, Intervention, & Adjustment

The Van Buren School district recognizes successful teachers and provides intervention programs, as needed, for all students. Performance-based pay (provided by the Milliken Foundation through the TAP program) is available for participating schools' teachers in the Van Buren district and is based on scores from observations in three categories: responsibilities checklist (skills, knowledge, and responsibility), classroom gains, and school wide gains. Performance pay is also weighted: 50% is classroom based, 30% comes from teacher evaluations, and 20% is based on school performance. For students, the district provides after school programs, summer school, summer breakfast, and free and reduced lunch.

Parkview Elementary provides intervention and adjustment services through school programs and the classroom and recognizes student success. Students who need additional assistance may be grouped for further instruction or provided with a junior high mentor. Students may be retained if they are not meeting grade level achievement. The school teaches problem solving skills and uses "Reading Recovery" (a reading intervention program). Additional services are provided to meet special needs of students. Parkview's inclusion program allows resource staff to help special needs students adjust in the classroom and a gifted and talented program provides modified curriculum for identified students. Nature clubs, student council, and Quiz Bowl are available for students. Parkview Elementary recognizes student success. As a Great Expectations School, Parkview holds a daily morning assembly (Rise and Shine) to celebrate student success.

Factors Influencing Educational Practices

Local Influences, Relationships, & Communications

The Van Buren School Districts boasts an active and supportive school board, an energetic PTA, and parental support. The Board of Education for Van Buren Schools is very supportive and strives to meet school funding needs. Parents and the local PTA are

especially active at the school, district, and state level and the district focuses on educating parents on the academic needs of their children.

Parkview Elementary recognizes the importance of parental and community involvement.

Parkview parents are provided with specific opportunities to help the school. Parkview has 100% PTA membership with very active volunteers and was named PTA Unit of the Year in 2001 by the state PTA. In addition, a structure is currently in place for a “professional learning community.” To facilitate better communication with students, parents, and the community at large, Parkview Elementary maintains an attractive and informative website, which can be accessed at <http://www.vbsd.us/parkview>. The website provides information about curriculum, breakfast and lunch menus, supply lists, and accelerated reader quizzes. Parkview Elementary offers a practical brochure to all parents which contains achievement data, community information, the mission statement, school highlights, and a faculty listing.

Resource Allocation

The Van Buren School District has a local Educational Foundation, supportive local businesses, and the district works together to allocate funding. The Educational Foundation of Van Buren provides over \$160,000 per year for classrooms through innovative grants. The Foundation awards grants for entire grade levels as well. Additionally, several local businesses offer discounts for teachers or matching grants. Each year, principals meet with the superintendent to specify needs for their school; special needs are frequently met as well.

The Van Buren Community supports district wide efforts to improve financial resources.

On September 16, 2003, the community endorsed the “visionary work of many dedicated people across our school district. Supporting our proposal to bring outstanding facilities to each of our schools – a proposal that will positively affect every child in every school – required refinancing current debt and increasing millage by 3.9 mills.” The community supported the plan by a 3-to-1 margin showing its support for Van Buren public schools.

Core Beliefs About Teaching & Learning & Organizational Knowledge

The Van Buren School District believes all children can learn and focuses on how to make it happen. The district consistently seeks improvement at all levels and feels this is vital for helping every child learn. The strength of the district can be found in its school leadership and the strength of the schools is supportive teachers who are willing to work together and put in extra time to meet goals. Improving literacy is a major goal for the district and one of the major challenges the district cited is an increasingly diverse population.