

Reagan Elementary Rogers School District

School Context

Rogers School District is located in a growing community in Northwest Arkansas, and serves 12,351 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. Reagan Elementary is one of thirteen elementary schools in the Rogers School District and serves 433 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The mission of the Rogers School District is “to provide an environment of educational excellence, where all belong, all learn, and all succeed.” The district has been carefully structured to provide the best possible learning environment and classes are kept to a reasonable size. Reagan’s school motto, “Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow,” focuses on the “training of students in order to deal responsibly with the challenges of an ever changing world.” Reagan is dedicated to relevant professional development, parental involvement and community membership, recognition of student growth and potential, respect and responsible behavior, and belief in student success with high expectations. Furthermore, education is important to the residents of Rogers, and the community is “united in its effort to give our children the best.”

As reported below, the district’s student population is significantly different than the state as a whole, and Reagan Elementary is different from the district. With respect to ethnicity, Rogers School District serves substantially fewer African-American students than the state average and considerably more Hispanic students. The number of students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch is also lower in Rogers School District than throughout the rest of the state. In addition, Rogers School District serves more migrant and ESL students than the state and a similar percentage of students with disabilities. The student population at Reagan Elementary is different from the district, as it serves less Hispanic and fewer migrant students. Reagan Elementary also serves fewer students, than the district and state, through the Free and Reduced Lunch Program.

In 2003 and 2004, Reagan 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 district serves .7% African-American students compared to the state average of 22.9%. The district serves 28.6% Hispanic students compared to the state average of 5.3%.*

	Reagan Elementary	Rogers School District	Arkansas
% White	76.2	68.7	70.1
% African-American	2.3	0.7	22.9
% Hispanic	17.5	28.6	5.3
% Other	1.3	2.1	1.7

School Support Services: (2004) *The Rogers School District serves 42.9% of its students through Free and Reduced Lunch, compared to the state average of 44.2%. The Rogers School District serves 22.8% ESL students and the state serves 2.8% ESL students.*

	Reagan Elementary	Rogers School District	Arkansas
% Free and Reduced Lunch	39.9	42.9	44.2
% English as a Second Language	N/A	22.8	2.8
% Students with Disabilities	11.3	12.5	11.3
% Migrant	N/A	7.9	1.5

Fourth Grade Assessments: *Reagan Elementary and the Rogers School District continue to exceed 4th grade state proficiency averages for Benchmark exams.*

		Reagan Elementary	Rogers School District	Arkansas
Literacy % Proficient	2002	81.3	65.7	57.9
	2003	88.0	74.2	62.0
	2004	86.2	76.1	69.3
Math % Proficient	2002	71.9	61.4	49.2
	2003	93.3	78.7	61.0
	2004	89.2	78.9	65.2

Curriculum and Academic Goals

The Rogers School District has standards driven curriculum and curriculum alignment is an essential component of district success. The district works with state and local committees to develop curriculum that matches state standards. Partly because of high student mobility within the district, a focal point has been curriculum alignment across the district. Curriculum alignment has improved student achievement across the district, not just in individual schools. The district is currently working to integrate standards based report cards. Rogers School District is one of the top academic performers in the state and consistently exceeds state AYP requirements.

Reagan Elementary is involved in the curriculum development process and focuses on vertical and horizontal alignment. Vertical and horizontal alignments are used to help students and teachers stay on track and avoid redundancy and the school provides time for this process. Curriculum is based on standards, and some standards are covered in depth, as decided by the school and individual teachers.

Reagan Elementary has high expectations and sets academic goals that exceed state requirements. Expectations are high for all students at Reagan. Academic goals are higher than state requirements, for example a child reading on level 16 may be adequate for the state, but Reagan may set its reading goal at level 20. Part of the school's mission also includes setting a

student trend for consistent quality work. Students are encouraged and expected to approach all tasks with integrity, instead of only focusing on completion.

Reagan's teachers use testing data to develop and revise curriculum. Teachers at Reagan work collaboratively to analyze testing data for weaknesses. This information is then used to develop and revise curriculum. Effort is also made to identify why students are performing poorly in certain areas to help the revision process. The school is also focusing on spending more time aligning curriculum with district middle schools, junior highs, and high schools. Teachers are given freedom in teaching style, but are expected to follow state standards.

Staff Selection and Capacity Building

The Rogers School District has a rigorous process for hiring administrators and is committed to their continued professional growth. When an administrative position comes open in the district it is advertised on the district webpage and potential candidates from within the district are considered. Advertisements are also placed statewide and/or nationally. Potential candidates undergo an extensive reference check, including a review of references not listed on their resume. Interviews are then conducted by the superintendent and assistant superintendents, and second or third interviews take place as needed. Teams of parents and teachers may also interview potential administrators, providing feedback to the superintendent and board, who makes the final decision. Candidates considered are strong instructional leaders with instructional expertise. All new principals have a mentor, and are trained on budgeting, personnel procedures, and classroom walk-through guidelines. All principals attend leadership studies, and are a part of the Arkansas Leadership Academy. Principals are encouraged to seek professional development based on their goals and needs, but the district also helps find and fund appropriate training. The district also provides time for principal meetings which allow time for discussion of curriculum, test scores, and expected outcomes. The Rogers School District promotes a culture of professional growth, lifelong learning, high expectations, and good administrative salaries which help to retain effective instructional leaders.

Reagan Elementary and Rogers School district have a standard process for selecting teachers. The central office for the district screens all applicants, rating them on the same criteria by examining transcripts, experience, skills, technology and foreign language skills. The applicants are then listed in a local database which is accessible by all principals. An annual job fair also gives the district and principals the opportunity to network with potential teachers. Reagan's principal tries to include building teachers in the interview process. Interview questions are designed to test applicants instructional knowledge and leadership capabilities. Reagan Elementary insists it has always focused on hiring the best, even before NCLB.

The Rogers School District and Reagan Elementary offer teachers a variety of professional development opportunities and work to include teachers and schools in choices. Teachers are given training for instructional programs, parental involvement, and some professional development is provided at the school level or during the summer. Technology training and local cooperative workshops also give teachers time and choice to improve their skills. Substitutes and funding for programs are provided, as approved, by the district, and teachers with less than three years experience are guided by the district on their professional development choices. All new teachers have mentors. New teachers also complete an ongoing detailed assessment that allows them to work closely with the principal and requires some documentation.

Professional development opportunities may be mandated by the district or school for teachers, or they may be based on need, as stated by Reagan's principal, "I had a teacher say I really need to know more about standards based grading and reporting, a first grade teacher, before next fall, and so I talked with other principals and talked with our assistant superintendent And they are getting the opportunity so you know, it doesn't just come from the top down, it may be from the bottom up.....But we're all trying to be on the same page."

Instructional Programs, Practices, & Arrangements

The Rogers School District chooses instructional programs that match standards with the help of representative committees that include most or all grade levels. The district is conscientious about choosing programs and textbooks that match state standards. Teams of committees, made up of different school staff and grade levels, help the school board in choosing the best programs and materials. The school board may also allow materials to be "on view" for review by the community for thirty days before voting and approving. Supplemental materials are frequently provided by schools and teachers. Administrative meetings also allow time for elementary principals to meet and examine new programs or revise existing instructional programs.

Reagan Elementary chooses programs based on identified student weaknesses. Although Reagan uses programs mandated by the district, it may also chose programs designed to meet weaknesses revealed by testing data at the school level. The principal is very open to letting teachers try new ideas in the classroom, but explanations are sought as to why and how a program or strategy will work. The principal may also assist teachers in obtaining grants for programs or other opportunities. Curriculum supervisors and committees at the school are constantly communicating with teachers, and revising programs. Some of the programs used by the school include: ELLA (Early Literacy in Arkansas), ELF, McRaff, Step Up to Writing, AB Math, and Saxon Math. Books on tape are also available for use and for checkout by students, this helps struggling readers and also serves as a good springboard for those wanting to read a level above their comfort zone.

Reagan Elementary uses innovative grouping arrangements to improve student achievement. Classes from different grade levels at Reagan are sometimes grouped together for accelerated reading time, physical education, and music. This gives younger students an older model and allows older students time to teach new skills and form bonds. Many children list this as a "memorable" event from their time at Reagan and it also gives teachers the opportunity to use different grouping arrangements.

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, & Use of Data

The Rogers School District uses data to make decisions, involves schools and the community in examining data, and monitors all schools. Kindergarten through fifth grade students are given quarterly assessments in literacy and they are scored in the same fashion as state benchmark exams. Staff with data expertise share information with others and the district shares testing information with the public. Individual subgroups are also disaggregated and examined for progress by the district at board meetings, by individual schools and their staff, and at parent council meetings. Instructional programs are also evaluated for alignment with frameworks using data. The assistant superintendent is active in all schools; every classroom

was visited at least twice last year. Administrators are monitored using rubric forms and professional growth is expected.

Reagan Elementary monitors instructional programs, curriculum, and tracks student achievement using data. Monitoring of instructional programs is done by looking at test results, observations, and reflection; although teachers at Reagan stress the need to also look at individual student situations. Assessments made at the classroom level and district level are used and profile sheets are kept current for all students. Profile sheets include student scores on STAR reading, Math and Reading Benchmark scores, Smart Start, SAT, district and quarterly prompts, and pre-and post-tests. Profiles are available to teachers from a computer database at the start of the school year. Teachers are required to update student profile sheets on the database throughout the school year and should also be able to communicate interventions for students to the principal. Additionally, the principal of Reagan is, according to the teachers, constantly in the classrooms assisting and monitoring.

Reagan Elementary and Rogers School District focus on academic weaknesses using testing data. Test scores also help determine if curriculum revision is needed, if the school is not performing to a standard the school finds out why—and looks to see if it is a whole grade level or a particular classroom. Student testing data are not used in teacher evaluations unless a teacher continues to show consistent low scores in a particular area, such as three or four years of low scores in one area. Recently, three principals from the district formed a small team to examine and monitor variables such as gender, subgroups, and individual student testing scores. Reagan also uses standards based report cards for kindergarten and first and second grade will start usage soon. Academic improvement plans are also kept by teachers for students identified as at-risk. At Reagan Elementary, responsibility for improving academic achievement belongs to the whole school, not just the grade level being tested.

Recognition, Intervention, & Adjustments

The Rogers School District supports student and teacher academic success through award assemblies, community recognition, and newsletters. All elementary schools within the district host a monthly award ceremony for students. Students also gain recognition through a district supported Challenge Reader Program. The Chamber of Commerce and Rogers School Board award teachers and a local newsletter offers teacher recognition.

The Rogers School District offers support services for students. After school programs, extended programs, and interventions during the day help students and parents as needed. A district wide “Soar for Success” program provides after school reading intervention, and the Challenge Reader Program is designed for those who want to go above and beyond their routine readings.

Reagan Elementary has many avenues for student recognition and reward. Students at Reagan are recognized and rewarded through assemblies, notes home, emails to parents, bulletin boards, coupons, computer time, verbal praise, and treasure chests. Resource students may serve as ambassadors or fire marshals, and all students are eligible to serve on the principals honor guard.

Other Factors Influencing Practices

Local Influences, Relationships, and Communications

The Rogers school board is an extremely important component of the district's success.

The school board is very hands-on and frequently visits schools for walk-throughs. A board policy study session meets each month prior to the board meeting for policy review. Board membership has been consistent, with little change in the past five years. The board keeps in touch with principals, and communication is made through submission of a weekly update, from each school principal, on academic achievement, building concerns, staff concerns, special events, and scheduling.

Rogers School District has excellent parental involvement and community support at all levels. A district wide parent council meets monthly in addition to PTA and PTO, which are formed at the building level. A district wide parental involvement plan and building level parent coordinator work to improve parental participation. Reagan also uses phone communications and letters to contact and involve parents. Additionally, over 100 businesses are a part of Roger's Partners in Education Program.

The Rogers School District maintains an informative, attractive, and well-designed website for teachers, students, parents, and the community. By visiting the website at <http://www.rogers.k12.ar.us>, it is possible to retrieve information such as district updates, links to individual schools, a district-wide calendar, lunch menus, and job openings. Students can visit the site to use or view the Gale Research Series, EBSCO, CollegeView, and recent report cards. Teachers can use the site for research, grade reporting and class profiles, and technology statistics.

Reagan Elementary strives for parental participation and a positive climate. The school works towards goals such as 100% participation in parent teacher conferences and hosts orientations and open houses or field days to increase parental involvement. The school also has a program called "Watchdog Dads," this program allows dads to come to classrooms and assist students and teachers. The climate of Reagan has been described as happy, positive, hardworking, team oriented, collaborative, caring, and respectful. The staff and administration have an open door policy and the faculty is described as close knit and caring.

Organizational Knowledge & Core Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

One of the key components of Rogers School District and Reagan Elementary, as reported by staff, is the accessibility and hands-on collaborative nature of the administration. The superintendent and assistant superintendent for Rogers School District are very involved in every school. Administration and the school board are frequent visitors and the district will go to any length to improve learning for all students. Collaboration across the district has been going on for some time, and continues to grow. There is a good sense of connection between the district, school, and teachers, which illustrates effective team-work and strong leaders.

Success is achieved when all students learn. The Rogers School District and Reagan Elementary are committed to academic achievement for all students. While students learn at different rates and growth is measured on more than test scores, the district and the school make it a point to reach all students, giving attention, as needed, to subgroups within the population, such as ESL students, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students. One

way they do this is by careful examination and application of information gathered from testing data. This common goal and high expectation, that all students will learn, can be seen at the district level, and is embedded in Reagan's mission. Fulfillment of the mission can be seen in creative scheduling, hardworking teachers and administrators, and successful intervention strategies.