



INITIAL EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT

FOR

WHITETHORN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

MERCER COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

MARCH 2009

WEST VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

An announced Education Performance Audit of Whitethorn Elementary School in Mercer County was conducted on February 11, 2009. The review was conducted at the specific direction of the West Virginia Board of Education. Section 4.5.2 of Policy 2320 discusses accountability of Kindergarten through Grade 2 schools. "The accountability of public schools without grades assessed (i.e., K-2 schools) will be based on attendance and test scores from the feeder school unless the West Virginia Board of Education specifically directs an on-site review of such schools which would substitute for AYP for a three (3) year period."

The Education Performance Audit Team reviewed the Five-Year Strategic Improvement Plan, interviewed school personnel and school system administrators, observed classrooms, and examined school records.

EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT TEAM

Office of Education Performance Audits Team Chair – Allen D. Brock, Coordinator

West Virginia Department of Education Team Leader – Linda Bragg, Coordinator, Office of Title II - School and School System Improvement

TEAM MEMBERS

Name	Title	School/County
Jeanie Ayers	Elementary School Principal	Fayetteville Elementary School Fayette County
Gary Hough	Elementary School Principal	Gauley Bridge Elementary School Fayette County

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

This section presents the Annual Performance Measures for Accountability and the Education Performance Audit Team's findings.

51 MERCER COUNTY

Dr. Deborah S. Akers, Superintendent

225 WHITETHORN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Lori Comer, Principal

Grades K - 02

Enrollment 189 (2nd month 2007-2008 enrollment report)

DIBELS RESULTS

SCHOOL LEVEL (% BENCHMARK)				
	BOY*	MOY**	EOY***	% GROWTH
2005-2006	51	54	58	7
2006-2007	55	51	83	28
2007-2008	51	68	80	29
2008-2009	66	72	NA	NA

KINDERGARTEN (% BENCHMARK)				
	BOY	MOY	EOY	% GROWTH
2005-2006	40	56	68	28
2006-2007	39	48	83	44
2007-2008	39	73	83	44
2008-2009	47	71	NA	NA

FIRST GRADE (% BENCHMARK)				
	BOY	MOY	EOY	% GROWTH
2005-2006	54	52	51	-3
2006-2007	75	48	87	9
2007-2008	71	63	77	6
2008-2009	84	75	NA	NA

SECOND GRADE (% BENCHMARK)				
	BOY	MOY	EOY	% GROWTH
2005-2006	63	55	53	-10
2006-2007	52	57	78	26
2007-2008	45	69	78	33
2008-2009	66	68	NA	NA

BOY - Beginning of Year

MOY - Middle of Year

EOY - End of Year

NA - Not Available

INFORMAL MATH ASSESSMENT (IMA)

SCHOOL LEVEL % SCORING MASTERY AND ABOVE	
2006-2007	80.66
2007-2008	84.376

KINDERGARTEN % SCORING MASTERY AND ABOVE	
2006-2007	84.78
2007-2008	87.47

FIRST GRADE % SCORING MASTERY AND ABOVE	
2006-2007	86.0
2007-2008	82.9

SECOND GRADE % SCORING MASTERY AND ABOVE	
2006-2007	71.23
2007-2008	86.34

The following professional development and/or training opportunities were provided as reported by the principal.

1. Standards Based Mathematics.
2. Ashlock Strategies.
3. Reading First.
4. Master Teacher Comprehension Training.
5. Vocabulary.
6. Use of mClass and Wireless Generation Data to Drive Instruction.
7. Read Naturally.
8. Training Teachers to Train Parents.
9. Phonological Awareness Program.
10. Oral Language Development.
11. Comprehension.

EDUCATION PERFORMANCE AUDIT

INITIATIVES FOR ACHIEVING ADEQUATE YEARLY PROGRESS

The Education Performance Audit Team reported that Whitethorn Elementary School had undertaken initiatives for achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The prominent initiatives and activities included the following.

- 7.1.3. **Learning environment.** The staff was knowledgeable, professional, and exhibited high expectations for student achievement. During teacher interviews and classroom observations, it was evident that all staff was concerned about their students.
- 7.1.5. **Instructional strategies.** Collaboration between the teachers was excellent. Teachers worked well together to plan lessons and examine student data.
- 7.1.7. **Library/educational technology access and technology application.** The Team observed varied use of technology in instructional delivery which was highly utilized throughout the building. The staff and students indicated that technology was an integral part of the daily instruction and that student learning was positively affected by this practice.
- 7.2.4. **Data analysis.** It was evident that student data guided the curriculum. DIBELS data were used extensively by all staff and WESTEST scores from the feeder schools were analyzed for curriculum enhancement. A summer academy was developed to assist students who had not met mastery based on the end of the year assessment after Tier II intervention.
- 7.8.1. **Leadership.** The Team commended the principal for professional behavior and devotion to student education. The principal was prepared and organized and exhibited commitment to education.

Best Practice

7.1.4. Instruction.

Whitethorn Primary School implemented Data Driven Instruction. Whitethorn Primary School teachers keep a Data Driven Instruction Notebook that includes data from Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) Benchmarking, Quick Phonics Screener (QPS), and the results of frequent Progress Monitoring. This data notebook allows the teachers to easily adapt grouping for Small Flexible Reading Groups (within the 90 minute uninterrupted reading block) and find groupings for Walk to Intervention.

In conjunction with the Data Driven Notebook, the staff created a Data Wall in the Conference Room. The wall is colored coded to match the DIBELS assessments (Green-Benchmark, Yellow-Strategic, and Red-Intensive). The students are noted by their Beginning of Year score. At Middle of Year benchmarking, it is recognizable during grade level collaboration meetings, which students have or have not made progress. This has been a wonderful visual for collaboration time to determine groupings and intensity of instruction.

The Summer Academy focused on the students that needed Tier III instruction during the summer. Students were chosen for the academy based on their End of Year DIBELS scores and the End of Year QPS scores. Students received instruction based on their needs as determined by the assessments and screeners listed. The Whitethorn Summer Reading Academy provided Tier III instruction using Read Naturally, Triumphs Intervention Kits, and other Research-Based Strategies such as Ashlock. The younger children (Kindergarten—some retentions) were instructed in Initial Sound Fluency and letter Naming Fluency. The older children (Grades 1 and 2) were instructed in high frequency words, initial sound, medial sounds, and final sounds.

Summary of Results

DIBELS results for the 2007-08 school term were 80 percent Benchmark at the end of the year which showed a 29 percent growth during the school year. Parent and student surveys indicated positive feedback. The children continued to be monitored throughout the school year.

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Note: While the benchmarking and data analysis are common to DIBELS, the Team found that Whitethorn Elementary School was applying these and other indicators in an exceptional and continuous manner to warrant recognition of Best Practice.

Indicators of Efficiency

Indicators of efficiency for student and school system performance and processes were reviewed in the following areas: Curriculum delivery, including but not limited to, the use of distance learning; facilities; administrative practices; personnel; utilization of regional education service agency, or other regional services that may be established by their assigned regional education service agency. This section contains indicators of efficiency that the Education Performance Audit Team assessed as requiring more efficient and effective application.

None identified.

Identification of Resource Needs

A thorough and efficient system of schools requires the provision of an adequate level of appropriately managed resources. The West Virginia Board of Education adopted resource evaluation as a part of the accreditation and evaluation process. This process is intended to meaningfully evaluate the needs for facilities, personnel, curriculum, equipment and materials in each of the county's schools and how those impact program and student performance.

- 19.1. Facilities, equipment, and materials.** Facilities and equipment specified in Policy 6200, Chapters 1 through 14, are available in all schools, classrooms, and other required areas. A determination will be made by using the Process for Improving Education (W.Va. Code §18-2E-5) whether any identified deficiencies adversely impact and impair the delivery of a high quality educational program if it is below the West Virginia Board of Education standards due to inadequacies or inappropriate management in the areas of facilities, equipment, and materials. The Education Performance Audit Teams shall utilize an assessment instrument for the evaluation of school facilities which generally follows the requirements of Policy 6200. Note: Corrective measures to be taken in response to any identified resource deficiency will of necessity be subject to the feasibility of modifying existing facilities, consideration of alternative methods of instructional delivery, availability of funding, and prioritization of educational needs through Comprehensive Educational Facilities Plans and the West Virginia School Building Authority. This policy does not change the authority, judgment, or priorities of the School Building Authority of West Virginia who is statutorily responsible for prioritizing "Need" for the purpose of funding school improvements or school construction in the State of West Virginia or the prerogative of the Legislature in providing resources. (*Policy 6200 and Tomblin v. Gainer*)

According to the items checked in the School Facilities Evaluation Checklist, the school was below standard in the following areas. The principal checked and the Team confirmed the following school facility resource needs.

- 19.1.1. School location.** The school site was not five acres, plus one acre for each 100 students over 240, and the site was not large enough for future expansion.
- 19.1.4. Counselor's office.** The counselor's office did not have adequate space.
- 19.1.5. Library/media and technology center.** Newspapers, periodicals, and pamphlets were not available for student use. (Did not adversely affect curriculum and instruction.)
- 19.1.7. K classrooms.** The Kindergarten classrooms were not adequate in size, were not located on the first floor, and did not have a sink and hot and cold water. (Impeded the Kindergarten program.)

- 19.1.10. Specialized instructional areas.** The music facility did not have adequate storage, a chalkboard/bulletin board, music stands, podium, or acoustical treatment. The physical education facility did not have a drinking fountain or display case. (Did not adversely affect curriculum and instruction.)
- 19.1.14. Food service.** A teachers' dining area of adequate size was not provided. (Did not adversely affect curriculum and instruction.)
- 19.1.15. Health service units.** A health service unit of adequate size was not available. Bulletin boards, toilet, lavatory, medicine chest, and refrigerator with locked storage were not available. (Impeded health services.)

Early Detection and Intervention

One of the most important elements in the Education Performance Audit process is monitoring student progress through early detection and intervention programs.

None identified.

Education Performance Audit Summary

The Team presented five commendations and one best practice. Under the leadership of the principal and the staff dedication, Whitethorn Elementary School may attain Exemplary Status in the future. The principal has a clear vision of the educational needs of the school and has a plan to address these needs.