

Jefferson County Public Schools

Accomplishments

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2007–2011



Deep systemic change takes time. Over the past four years, the district has set a clear path toward deeper learning and long-term improvement. We have put much time and effort into lifting the district's entire staff to a new level of proficiency and setting a new vision in which every school provides every student with a high-quality education regardless of family background and economic barriers. We have embarked upon a new era that is bringing a higher level of learning to Jefferson County's children, and creating a national model of how an urban district can revitalize public education and spark a renaissance in challenged neighborhoods. The initial results have been positive, with each of the initiatives—including reduced class size, CARE for Kids, high school restructuring, and the new magnet schools—already producing academic gains. As a result, the strategic initiatives we've pursued have laid a solid foundation for the future. These strategic initiatives and the action steps serve as a cornerstone for the future work of the district.

Over the past four years we have:

*Fostered the development of a cohesive and **coherent direction, reform agenda** and set of **quality indicators** for the district so that there is a unity of effort for **advancing student achievement**.*

- **Vision and Theory of Action:** Created a powerful statement of where the district needs to go and what we need to do to get there.
- **Classroom Instructional Framework (CIF):** Delineated how teachers can design lessons to enhance rigor, engagement and meaning.
- **“Shaping the Way”:** Developed a document that enables faculty and staff to see the connection between the vision and theory of action, the goals and strategies of the district, and daily classroom instruction.
- **Quality Indicators:** Designed a set of quality indicators so that the district and the public can track performance in both contributory and outcome indicators such as student and teacher attendance rates, suspension rates, retention rates, graduation rates, teacher professional development, and performance on state assessments. These indicators are currently being compiled into a data dashboard for the district and for each school so that the public can better understand our performance and so staff can drill down and determine where to focus their efforts.



*Improved the **culture and climate of our schools** so that students are better able to succeed.*

- **CARE for Kids:** Implemented a comprehensive social development and school culture program that fosters caring communities in classroom and schools and encourages greater student engagement and connection with school.
- **Cultural Competence:** Launched a major professional development program that enables teachers to better understand and address the needs of a culturally and racially diverse student body.
- **Reduced Class Size:** Reduced teacher-student ratios in eleven of our most challenged elementary schools and four of our most challenged middle schools so that students receive more personal attention to address their individual needs. In addition, we set in motion a school renovation schedule that will allow all elementary schools to reduce average class size to 20:1 within six or seven years.

- **Nurses in Schools:** Added twenty nurses to our most challenged schools to support improved health and attendance of students. This step has also contributed to improved academic performance at these schools.



- **Family Resource and Youth Service Centers (FRYSCs):** Allocated the resources, in spite of state funding cuts, to sustain all of the existing FRYSC coordinators to serve families in need.
- **Freshman Academies and Advisory Programs:** Implemented freshman academies to provide a supportive transition from middle school and better ensure successful completion of the freshman year. In addition, we instituted advisory programs to further personalize the high school experience and support students in pursuing post-secondary education.

*Improved **curriculum and instruction** to enhance rigor and engagement so that students are more interested in learning and teachers are better prepared to deepen students' understanding and conceptual development.*

- **Math and Science Reform:** Implemented new and comprehensive math and science curricula—from pre-K through grade 12—that are more rigorous and engaging and foster high levels of conceptual development.
- **Reading:** Enhanced instruction in reading through the integration of additional non-fiction texts, a focus on vocabulary development, an emphasis on writing across the curriculum, and investment in the next phase of Every 1 Reads.
- **Elementary Social Studies:** Developed and piloted an innovative, inquiry-oriented, cohesive and coherent elementary social studies curriculum framed around community, culture, civics and history.
- **Middle School Social Studies:** Prepared for implementation of History Alive at every middle school in 2011-12.
- **High School Social Studies:** Implemented a powerful freshman-level civics course that integrates the thought-provoking Facing History and Ourselves curriculum with community-based service learning. In addition, we integrated Choices social studies materials into U.S. History courses to engage students in more rigorous levels of thinking about history and social science.



- **Formative Assessment:** Launched an initiative that enables teachers to effectively apply formative assessment so that they better understand what students know and are able to do and are able to adjust and differentiate their instruction to address individual student needs.
- **Trimester High School Schedule:** Implemented a trimester schedule that reduces the student-teacher ratio, supports more in-depth instruction, enables students to focus on fewer courses at one time, and provides greater flexibility for remediation and acceleration.
- **Career Theme High Schools:** Launched career-theme foci in fifteen high schools to improve the instructional program, motivate students to achieve by envisioning their potential future, strengthen the attractiveness of these schools, and prepare students for careers identified through regional workforce studies.



Business and Information Technology



Medicine, Health, and the Environment



Communication, Media, and the Arts



Engineering (Aerospace/Architecture/Manufacturing and Construction)



Human Services, Education and International Studies

- **Early College:** Established an early college program, with 137 Western High School students taking college-level courses in the program's first year. This program has already dramatically changed the direction and attractiveness of the school and its potential for supporting student success.
- **Project Proficiency:** Launched an initiative to ensure that all high school students achieve competence in literacy and math through faculty collaboration, tracking of student performance, adjusting instruction to address learning needs, and intensive support to students who have yet to reach proficiency.
- **College-Going Culture:** Collaborated with the Mayor's office, local universities and business leaders to launch the 55,000 Degrees initiative and was the first institution to set bold targets for graduation, college entrance, and college or career readiness.



*Improved the **professional growth opportunities for the faculty** and set high expectations for quality instruction.*

- **Gheens Academy:** Reorganized the Gheens Academy to provide more subject-specific support to teachers and thereby improve the quality of instruction.
- **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs):** Organized teachers in most schools into PLCs that focus on how they can best assess student understanding (using formative assessment) and revise their instruction to meet student needs.
- **Gheens Institute:** Created an institute focused on stimulating a culture of innovation through cutting-edge projects and innovation awards. As a result, we won several major grants to launch work in high school reform, elementary social studies curriculum, universal design for learning, and elementary environmental magnet schools. In addition, the Institute led the Improving Practice Committee, which focused attention on the instructional strategies with the greatest potential for improving student engagement and achievement.
- **Learning Walks:** Expanded the use of classroom observations among principals and faculty members, with follow-up discussions to promote collaboration and reflection on ways to advance instruction for students.
- **Employee Evaluation:** Raised expectations and standards for quality evaluation in the district. The evaluation process for staff is critical to professional growth at all levels in a learning organization. Evaluations of employees' work must reflect not only strengths, but also any areas where skills need substantial enhancement. To do less is to impede progress and growth and to deter staff from developing skills that may one day lead to job advancement. The district transitioned from a perfunctory use of the evaluation process to one that is much more discriminating and directed at professional growth. These higher standards were applied to teachers, administrators, and support staff throughout the system. In addition, the district re-established the



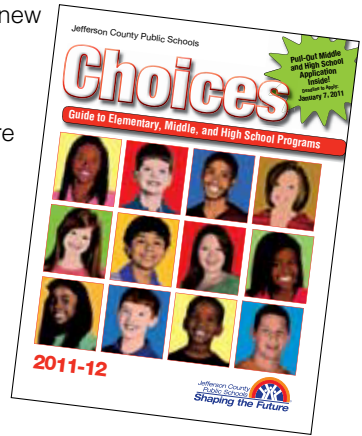
right to non-renew non-tenured teachers on the basis of performance. By helping employees identify areas where improvement is needed, the district is actively pursuing better performance outcomes from every role group and is demonstrating accountability to the community.

- ***Set in motion an effective plan for raising performance at those schools identified as persistently low-achieving.***
- **Comprehensive High School Reform:** Developed a comprehensive approach to addressing the needs of persistently low-achieving schools that encompasses personalized support to students through freshman academies, advisory programs, trimester schedules, schools of study and more rigorous instruction through new curricula in math, literacy, science and social studies.
- **Restaffing:** Organized the restaffing of the persistently low-achieving schools to ensure that these schools are staffed with faculty and administrators committed to turning the schools around in a rapid and substantive manner.
- **Investing in Innovation (i3):** Won a highly competitive federal \$5 million i3 grant and then garnered a \$1 million local match, and also secured two Smaller Learning Communities grants—all to support high school restructuring in our most challenged schools.



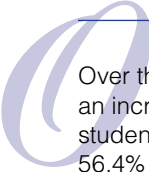
*Developed a new **student assignment** plan to better address the diversity goals of the district and to do so within the guidelines set by the U.S. Supreme Court.*

- **Geographic-based Assignment Plan:** Developed a cohesive, multi-factor plan that better meets the diversity goals of the district.
- **New Magnet Schools:** Launched 22 new magnet schools, providing them with significant additional resources and building renovations to create highly attractive choices in schools that were previously considered at-risk.
- **Operation Efficiency:** Improved the operational efficiency of the plan by devising a multi-pronged approach that encompasses shorter average ride times, more effective communication equipment and strategies, improvements in routing, improvements in tracking students, and enhanced choice for parents.
- **Future Improvements:** Presented to the district's consultant revisions to the plan that would enhance parent choice and address many of the issues raised by some members of the community concerned about their ability to attend neighborhood schools.



*Improved the **operational efficiency and effectiveness** of the district.*

- **Financial Stability:** Provided additional stability for the district, in spite of the most severe recession in many decades, by almost doubling the fund balance to ensure that the reforms outlined above could be sustained over the long term.
- **Upgraded Facilities:** Moved forward with significant renovations at Valley, Eastern and Iroquois high schools and at Lincoln, Roosevelt-Perry, and Cane Run elementary schools to support their new magnet programs. In addition, we delineated a ten-year plan for renovating elementary school media centers and adding classrooms to provide sufficient space to reduce elementary class size to an average of 20:1 across the system. Finally, we continued to aggressively pursue preventive maintenance and repairs to roofs, heating and cooling systems, and building systems in general so as to ensure high-quality facilities throughout the district.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Increased our energy savings and environmental sustainability efforts through green construction, hybrid buses, and energy-saving technology in collaboration with our partners in the Partnership for a Green City.
- **Communications:** Enhanced district communications to and with parents and the community and expanded our use of technology-based communications.
- **MUNIS:** Effected the required transition to the MUNIS financial and personnel management system, following many years of debate and negotiation with the Kentucky Department of Education
- **Infinite Campus and Parent Portal:** Provided oversight and coordination for the implementation of Infinite Campus to provide consistency with the state and to enhance our student management and parent communication system.
- **Policy Influence:** Strengthened significantly the district's working relationship with Kentucky legislators so that our concerns and needs are better understood and addressed through legislation.



Over the past four years, we have sought to meet the needs of an increasingly challenged student population. The proportion of students receiving free or reduced-price meals increased from 56.4% in 2007 to 63.8% in 2011; the number of students who were homeless at least once during the preceding year increased from 7,341 in 2007 to 10,555 in 2010; and the percent of students who were classified as Limited English Proficient grew from 4.0% in 2007 to 4.7% in 2010.

In spite of these changing demographics, the results of our systemic efforts and initiatives are beginning to be realized. Some trends have already emerged:

- JCPS attendance has improved slightly from 93.71% in 2007 to 93.78% in 2010. However, those schools with nurses showed significantly greater increases in attendance rates.
- Those schools with high implementation of CARE for Kids showed significantly greater gains in students' overall school satisfaction, school engagement, school belonging, school discussion, personal safety, and positive character, as measured by the district's comprehensive school survey as well as reductions in suspensions and greater gains in attendance and academic achievement.
- JCPS reduced the percentage of students dropping out of school in grades 9-12 from 6.35% in 2007 to 4.95% in 2010.
- The district's overall rate of retention-in-grade decreased from 5.18% in 2007 to 4.74% in 2010. However, the high school retention rate decreased even more significantly from 8.9% in 2007 to 8.2% in 2010. The overall result is that students are better equipped with the skills and knowledge to tackle the work of the next grade level.



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- The proportion of graduating students attending college increased from 63.9% in 2007 to 66.2% in 2010.
 - The average ACT score increased from 18.0 in 2008 to 18.5 in 2011.
 - The number of Advanced Placement exams taken increased by 1805 (40%) between 2007 and 2010, going from 4,444 to 6,249. Meanwhile, the number of exams earning a college-credit-qualifying score of 3 or above increased by 710 (30%), going from 2,425 in 2007 to 3,135 in 2010.
 - Scholarships awarded to graduating seniors rose from \$81 million in 2007 to \$111 million in 2011.

Most of these results don't include data from 2011. The 2011 results will likely show even greater improvements in each of these areas, as well as in KCCT results.





In essence, the district is in far better condition in 2011 than it was in 2007, with even brighter prospects for the future. A solid foundation has been laid over the past four years that can be built upon over the coming decade, leading to the recognition of JCPS as the highest-performing and most innovative urban district in the nation.