

# Research & Evaluation Brief

Department of Accountability, Research & Planning

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## Did you Know?

...3.5 (out of a 4.0 range) of parents believe that their child will be prepared to attend college.

...JCPS manages over 15 million square feet of facilities (equivalent to over 250 football fields).

ISSUE EDITOR:  
DEVEN VAUGHT

## Introduction

- Bob Rodosky

Greetings from the JCPS Research & Planning Department. We are now in our second year of publishing our Research and Evaluation Brief. Our aim is to communicate the research & evaluation activities that are occurring in JCPS, and in the wider educational research world.

In this brief, you will find:

- ◆ evaluation results of various programs in JCPS, such as a service learning program at two high schools, school-based

- mental health counselors at elementary schools
- ◆ an evaluation design for the health and fitness elementary magnets
- ◆ reflections on upcoming national standards in Reading and Math
- ◆ a summary of new accountability rules for schools (House Bill 176)
- ◆ practical evaluation tools for practitioners to learn how to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs (3<sup>rd</sup> in series).

Stay tuned to upcoming issues where you can learn about the impact of other district initiatives such as Elementary Student Assignment and Magnet Programs, Cultural Competence, High School Freshmen Academy and much more.

Our Research & Evaluation Briefs are published three times per year and are available on our website. Please feel free to contact the Research Department if you have any feedback about the briefs or would like to learn more about any of the topics we cover.

## Building Bright Futures: Service Learning Program

- Judi Vanderhaar

The *Building Bright Futures* service learning program (2007-2009) provided students at Waggener and Iroquois High schools with the opportunity to apply the skills learned in their construction and pre-architecture magnet program classes towards service to the community. The program was funded by State Farm and coordinated by the JCPS Volunteer Talent Center. The projects of the program were grounded in a student-driven model of service learning. The students were involved in all aspects of each project including preparation, action and reflection.

The *Building Bright Futures* Program generated a positive and mutually beneficial relationship between Waggener Traditional, Iroquois Career Academy, and local community partners. Interviews with community partners revealed that the student's work satisfied community needs and raised awareness about the nature of the complex issues surrounding those needs.

*"Working with the students was an amazing adventure! Being part of the Project gave me such an incredible insight into untapped talent. Watching the students' expressions as they drilled, measured, sawed, and hammered truly made me realize their sense of accomplishment. Kosair Charities was so fortunate to be part of this amazing program. I hope our paths cross again with these students and future architects."* -Vicky Weber, Vice President Business Relations at Kosair Charities.

The results of the program evaluation demonstrate that the *Building Bright Futures* program had a sizeable impact, particularly on the students who participated in the program for two years. The findings illustrate that the program served students placed at risk and that the participant's attendance rates increased from baseline → year 1, and from year 1 → year 2. Importantly, the qualitative data reveal a tremendously positive impact with respect to students' perception of the impact that the program had on their learning experiences (i.e., made learning

more fun/interesting), their problem solving skills, their awareness, and their understanding of people. Additionally, the program served as the impetus for improvements in the curriculum development for the construction and pre-architecture magnet program classes. With respect to long term impacts on students, a large majority of students indicated that they intend to pursue architecture and/or construction in post secondary institutions, and critically, that they were likely to continue doing community service and volunteer work. The *Building Bright Futures* Program has strengthened ties between the school district and the community, allowed students to apply classroom learning to real life projects, improved student attendance, and allowed students to address and reflect upon significant issues in our community.

## School-Based Mental Health Counselors in Six Elementary Schools

- Florence Chang

Through a three-year federal grant received in 2009, Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) has started implementing Project Prevention Assessment and Counseling for Elementary Students (PACES), a program designed to expand counseling programs in six elementary schools through the delivery of a continuum of counseling and prevention services. Six elementary schools in JCPS were selected as target schools for participation in the project: Breckinridge-Franklin, Cochran, Roosevelt-Perry, Slaughter, Wellington, and Young. These schools were selected because they were ranked high on the district's internal needs index that is based on student variables which research demonstrates can affect academic achievement, as well as for their participation in the CARE for Kids program. The vision of Project PACES is to provide students with beneficial counseling services that will contribute to their personal growth, educational development and emotional well being.

In Summer of 2009, Project PACES funds were used to hire three school-based counselors. Each counselor served two schools where they helped identify children with behavioral issues and provide them with support that will help prevent future problems. Each counselor was assigned to work 20 hours per week at each of two schools where they were utilized to provide assessment, intervention, individual, and group counseling for students. Because of the hiring of these counselors, the schools have closed the gap between the student/mental health professional ratio from 1 counselor for every 441 students prior to the project to 1 counselor for every 283 students after the hiring of the PACES counselors. The national recommended ratio is 1 counselor for every 250 students.

A primary goal of Project PACES is to reduce the number of discipline referrals in the schools. To date, the Project

PACES schools are on target to meet the goal of reducing the average number of referrals per grant site for disciplinary reasons. Prior to the grant, the average number of referrals across the sites was 441 or about 44 per month per site. As of the date of this report, the average number of referrals across the sites was 287 or about 41 per month per site, representing about a 7% drop. Given that this is the first year of the project, the data thus far are showing a positive trend towards improving student behaviors. For the upcoming school year, 2010-2011, the goal will be to continue to streamline the mental health delivery system and establish consistent protocols to yield the most efficient and beneficial system possible.

## New Accountability Rules Lead to Tougher Consequences for Schools

- Dena Dossett

In January 2010, Kentucky passed House Bill 176 which provides for different intervention models that target the state's lowest-performing schools. The bill defined "persistently low-achieving schools" and outlined consequences that schools would face if they fall into this category. For the next two years, persistently low-achieving schools are defined as:

1. A Title I school in any school improvement category under NCLB (tier 1-5) which has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for three consecutive years and falls in the lowest five or five percent, whichever is greater, based on averaging the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher in Reading and Math.
2. A non Title I middle or high school that has at least 35% of students on free/reduced price lunch and has not made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for

three consecutive years and falls in the lowest five or five percent, whichever is greater, based on averaging the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher in Reading and Math.

3. A high school whose graduation rate has been under 60% for three or more consecutive years.

According to the above definition, JCPS has 6 schools that fall into the category of "persistently low-achieving schools." These schools, as well as the district, have participated in an audit conducted by the Kentucky Department of Education. The audit teams will make a determination about the school council and principal's ability to lead the interventions in their schools. The schools will be eligible for "school improvement grants" to help implement one of four different intervention models:

1. External management option - requires that the daily management of the school is transferred to an education management

organization that may be a for-profit or nonprofit organization that has been selected by a local board of education from a list of management organizations.

2. Restaffing option - may require the replacement of the principal and the SBDM depending on the audit report; screening of existing faculty and staff with the retention of no more than fifty percent (50%) of the faculty and staff at the school; as well as other school improvement initiatives.
3. School closure option - which requires the closure of an existing school and the transfer of its students to other schools within the district that are meeting their accountability measures
4. Transformation option - may require replacing the school principal and SBDM depending on the audit report and instituting an extensive set of specified strategies designed to turn around the identified school.

## Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning Academies

-Beverly Winsch

The *Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning Academies* are innovative magnet schools that began in the fall of 2009. The magnet program is housed at Rangeland and Wellington Elementary schools and features (at a minimum): a full-time Magnet Coordinator at each school; grade specific health curricula on nutrition, fitness and wellness; opportunities for enhanced physical fitness and nutritional experiences during the school day; weekly utilization of a Wii fitness lab; extra-curricular fitness activities with provided transportation; guided nutritional choices in renovated cafeterias and exposure to health food snacks/tastings; and parent/community partnerships.

The evaluation is designed to investigate the following research questions:

- To what extent does participation in a health magnet program contribute to improved academics and behavior in students?
- To what extent does participation in a health magnet program contribute to improved nutrition awareness and physical fitness/athletics in students, staff, and parents?
- To what extent does a health magnet program contribute to improved ratings of school climate and satisfaction as perceived by students, staff, and parents?

Formative and summative evaluation data are collected using surveys, tracking school nutrition choices and activity levels, and state assessment and student behavior data. A

longitudinal design supports the measurement of improvements in health behavior, attendance, academic performance, and discipline problems over time. An Advisory Committee spearheads a continuous process improvement model to guide refinements to the program. The table below summarizes expected outcomes and measurement sources that will establish the impact of the *Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning* magnet program. To date, pre-test data were disseminated to the Advisory Council and other key stakeholders and post-test data are being collected. Year one results will be provided in an upcoming newsletter.

### Evaluation Design for Health and Fitness for Accelerated Learning Magnet-Year 1

Areas of Improvement	Expected Outcomes and Audience	Measurement Source
Health Behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved self-reported nutritional and physical fitness health behaviors (student/staff/parents)</li> <li>• Improved aerobic endurance (student)</li> <li>• Maintain physical activity to at least 200 minutes per week (students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Y5210 Survey</li> <li>• Classroom Physical Activity Logs</li> <li>• Utilization data for Innovation Lab and before/after school activities</li> <li>• Physical Best Testing</li> <li>• JCPS Comprehensive Survey</li> </ul>
Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced novices (students)</li> <li>• Improved academic index (students)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State Accountability Scores</li> </ul>
Non-Academics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced discipline referrals (students)</li> <li>• Reduced suspensions (students)</li> <li>• Increased school-level attendance (students/staff)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District database (Infinite Campus)</li> </ul>
School Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved ratings of climate/satisfaction items (students/staff/parents)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• JCPS Comprehensive Survey</li> </ul>

## Reflections about the Forthcoming National Standards in Reading and Math

-Marco Muñoz

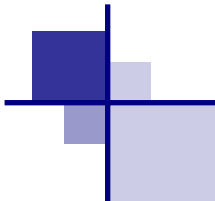
The national standards represent our first nationwide coordinated attempt to make sure that all students are college and workplace ready by following a similar curriculum. As long as there is true quality on the national standards, it will move our educational reform efforts forward and make our students internationally competitive. The key question is if these national standards will capture the essence of what we expect our children to know and be able to do to be successful in college and/or the workplace. If the answer is yes, the development of a strong set of assessments aligned with the standards would be the next logical step. If the answer is no, the national standards will be another good idea that never landed on solid terrain. Fewer, clearer, high standards and their corresponding assessments are critical to guide educational change in a competing global economy. The national standards will give us an opportunity to raise expectations and instructional quality at all levels of the educa-

tional system. Our students deserve the opportunity to graduate from high school with the set of knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in the increasingly demanding college and/or workplace environment.

An important outcome, based on the commonality of standards, is that the process will allow states to more readily share best practices that significantly improve teaching and learning. Effective collaboration in teaching is one of the most important drivers of student achievement. The best school systems in the world focus tirelessly on increasing the quality of teaching practices by using professional learning communities of teachers. As a result, the levels of collaboration and common learning will increase as never before since we will now have an authentic national discussion about improving teaching and learning. I know that rigorous standards are critical to student achievement, but standards alone do not transform teaching and learning as we originally believed when the standard-based

reform began in the 1990s. In that regard, it will continue to be true that only at the local school level—with administrators, teachers, students, and parents working together—will real educational progress be made.

Down the road, it would be wise for the national movement to advocate including other essential areas of schooling, such as social-emotional learning and civic engagement. This is already happening in some legislation (see for example, HB 4223, the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act). It is critical that the national standards and concomitant assessments promote a whole-child approach to education that extends beyond academics. The broader framework weaves together the threads that connect not only reading and mathematics, but also the important social-emotional, civic, and moral connections that tend to be fragmented in a test-based accountability-oriented approach.



# How Will You Know if your Program is Really Working ?

- Dena Dossett

Now that you have selected an evaluation approach for your project based on your evaluation questions, available resources and stakeholder interests, you are ready to choose an evaluation design. You will need to consider the pros and cons of each design and beware of common pitfalls as you get started.

Design	Pros	Cons
<b>Experimental</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can make conclusions about causality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to implement</li> <li>• Withholds treatment from some groups</li> </ul>
<b>Quasi-Experimental</b> (matched control group; Non-equivalent control group)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimizes alternative explanations by having a comparison group</li> <li>• Easier to implement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot infer causality</li> </ul>
<b>Pre-Experimental Design</b> (pre-test and post-test; Post-test only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May assess whether change occurs, but not why it occurred</li> <li>• Can be improved by connecting implementation of program (dosage) with outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very difficult to determine what would have happened without the treatment</li> </ul>

In the JCPS Research Department, we use mostly quasi-experimental design. This design doesn't involve randomly assigning students to programs, but does still allow us to make conclusions about the impact of the program on students. For high-stake decisions it is important to have a strong design that includes assessing program implementation and sets aside adequate resources to conduct the evaluation.

In the next series, we will cover gathering and analyzing the data that you have collected as part of your evaluation. In the meantime, please feel free to contact the JCPS Research Department if you have any questions about program evaluation.

## Accountability, Research and Planning

The Accountability, Research & Planning Department produces research & program evaluations of numerous federal, state and local grants as well as district initiatives. Please check our website for reports on these programs: <http://www.jefferson.k12.ky.us/Departments/Planning/ProgramEvaluation/ProgramEvaluation.html>



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### Our Mission Statement

*In support of the District's Vision and Goals, the Accountability, Research and Planning Department will enhance the utilization of data-driven decision making, quality indicators, programmatic evaluation and district wide accountability measures that will lead to continuous student, school and district improvement.*