

The Community is McNabb Elementary

Greg Ross, Principal McNabb Elementary

McNabb Elementary is a PBIS school in southwest Kentucky. With the help of PBIS and community buy-in, we have been able to improve the social dynamic of our building, which in turn, has changed the buy-in of our community. The Kentucky Center for Instructional Discipline (KYCID) brought to us an emphasis of creating a school-wide program. As a school, we ran with it. Past administrators adopted the theories behind KYCID/PBIS and integrated it into every aspect of the building. We adopted the mindset, “We are one Family”. Although our students may not look like the majority of our teachers or live in the same community as the staff in the building, we make a point to make them feel they are an important part of our personal, out-of-school lives. This begins from the moment students and parents enter the doors. First and foremost, we start with a positive connection. Our teachers, staff, and even our school nurse conduct home visits throughout the summer to meet our students in the comfort of their homes. We want them to know we care about them. I have spent more time this summer in one of our local housing authorities than most people have spent in Wal-Mart. Sometimes my visits involve going door-to-door to talk to current students or meet new ones. Other times it is just playing basketball or talking with them on the playground areas. We also offer a summer reading program where students and parents can come into to the building and read Accelerated Reader books and take test or work on the computers, I-Pads, or I-Pods enjoying instructional programs and games. There are also other summer activities such as a math camp provided by our family resource department, a basketball camp that I put on, and individual instructional opportunities provided by our teachers.

Since the implementation of PBIS, we have seen many drastic changes within our building. Our PBIS leadership team attends trainings from KYCID and they return to train the entire school staff. We implement PBIS in every area of our school with fidelity. We assure that our teachers are trained yearly in research-based approaches to discipline and classroom management. We begin each day with a building-wide morning assembly reminding our students (and our staff) of the expectation of our school. Those expectations are re-taught in the classrooms with weekly “success opportunities” to celebrate the accomplishments of the students in our building. Since the implementation of PBIS, the overall progression of our school has been an example of what PBIS can do for a school culture. Initial office discipline referrals were slowly decreasing at the induction of the program. In 2007 the school had 374 referrals, with barely over 400 students. In 2008 no gains were made, and 441 discipline referrals were posted in the SWIS data bank. Fortunately, in 2009 a major decrease occurred in the number of referrals. Discipline referrals dropped by 82, with an ending total of 359. In 2010 a dynamic drop of 25 in total referrals was recognized, for a total of 334. When the figures were released in 2011, the school staff and district leadership were astonished. The referral difference from 2010 to 2011 was 148, for a total of 186. By June of 2012 the school had only 173 total in-school discipline referrals.

We also saw progress in assessment scores. Over the last 5 years, we have seen state assessment scores in reading as low as 70.56. In 2011, we received a score of 79.31, which was also the highest reading score in the district. Also, in math we had seen scores as low as 62.03. In 2011, we received a score of 75.29 on our state assessment, nearly 10 points higher than the next school in our district. Lisa Gross, spokeswoman for Kentucky Department of Education, stated in an article in the *Paducah Sun* that the we scored extremely well on the 2011 CATS Test,

Kentucky's previous state assessment. "Of the 612 schools that had the same number of goals as the school in the research, only four other schools in the state also had large enough populations of blacks to be held accountable for those students' performance," Gross said (Feldhaus, 2011, p.A6). Of those four schools, Gross indicated that only one other school attained all ten NCLB goals.

Once the school year begins, we make sure the community knows McNabb is their school; their family. We open our building to our community any way we possibly can. This is very demanding for our staff, but they know the expectation from the beginning. In every interview there is one question that is always asked, "Can you look across a desk and have the same goals, expectations, and desires for our students you would have for your own child?" It usually takes applicants by surprise, but that is the way our building feels about our student. We truly have the most passionate and qualified teachers on the planet. With that in mind, we do not mind putting in the extra time to make sure our family feels appreciated. We allow church services, family functions, community meetings, and even social events in our building. With 450 K-5 students and another 130 Head Start students, we have a lot of families to cater to. Our after-school programs are also a major connection to our community. A few of them are McNabb Artist Program (MAP), K.I.N.G.'s Club (Keeping Inner-city Neighborhood's Great-Boy's Leadership), CHARM School (Girl's Leadership), 4-H, Good News Program, Knock-on-Wood (Drum Corps), Boys & Girls Basketball, Cheerleading, Academic Team/Future Problem Solvers, Honor's Choir, Keyboard & Guitar Lab, Zumba, Poetry & Creative Writing, and Dance. All of which are completely free. We supply an after-school bus to our local Boys & Girls Club of America which takes over 50 students daily to their location.

We supply our community with many entertaining opportunities. Our movie nights are a huge hit! Dances, game nights, and our showcases such as our Black History Month Extravaganza keep our community engaged in what we are doing. Our local United Way sponsors a Reading Pals program. Ashley Wright, Director of United Way Paducah/McCracken County and Reading Pals Director Monique Zuber put this opportunity in front of us 2 years ago with our second grade students. Now, as we begin our third year, those reading pals have continued to stay with those students and now we have community business people, retirees, college students, community helpers, and even government officials reading with students in our building in grades 2, 3, and 4. These Reading Pals become a part of the lives of these children outside of school as well. We know it takes a village. That is why we have teamed up with a local church that has their members come in and work weekly with our students who may need a mentor. Pastor Mark Rowe came in to work with some of the children from his church and fell in love with our school. Now we have over 20 volunteers from the Ninth Street Church of Christ in Paducah, KY.

As you can see, we truly are a family. From Baptisms to funerals, birthday parties to family reunions; our teachers and staff are there to celebrate with our students. That is just what families do. Because our students and parents see how much we care, they do not mind putting in the work to be the best.