



GRANDVIEW HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL

Principal: Steven M. Andersson

www.grandviewschools.org/hs

Grandview Heights Schools

Columbus, Ohio

Superintendent: D. Steven Allen

Grandview Heights High School is centrally located in a small village setting with mature neighborhoods and beautiful, tree-lined streets. The small-town atmosphere is often described by its residents as 'Mayberry like'—a place where people generally know and care about each other. The main street, Grandview Avenue, is a popular spot for trendy restaurants and shops and is conveniently located adjacent to urban Columbus arts and entertainment venues. The district enjoys a strong level of support from its families and community, in terms of both genuine concern for the success of the community's youth and willingness to add to the tax base needed to maintain the level of quality education programs, even during times of financial strain.

The high school is nestled in a quiet neighborhood. The original building was constructed in 1923, with an addition in 1957. The two-story brick structure is immaculately maintained and has a unique interior décor of small narrow hallways with colorful hand-painted wall murals. Visitors immediately take note of the exceptionally quiet atmosphere in this contemporary high school, where the average graduating senior class is limited to about 100 students.

The district's mission statement is "to maximize and personalize every student's education," as shared by Steve Allen, the superintendent, "and that's exactly what we try to do!" He adds, "Our size allows us to do that along with the support of our

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Leadership

Supporting the district’s mission statement are three Action Teams that focus their work squarely on targeted results:

Action Team #1: Improve student achievement for all students in reading

Action Team #2: Improve student achievement for all students in math

Action Team #3: Continually improve the level of quality learning

Each Action Team is held accountable by a “Smart Goal,” defined as “Specific + Strategic, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Oriented, and Time Bound.” A set of well-articulated indicators, measures, and targets are outlined for each goal. The overall strategic plan was developed with stakeholder involvement using a data-based process.

According to Steve Andersson, the principal, the first and most important ingredient for success is the people, both staff and parents. Beyond this, he believes that the school’s success can be attributed to three primary strengths. First, the staff possesses personal characteristics of “digging deep” to help students; they’re continually looking for the latest research to meet the needs of their students. Second is the curriculum itself. All teachers, including special education teachers, have delved into the state content standards and worked on differentiating instruction and providing appropriate modifications and accommodations. And third is attention to pedagogy. The teachers are very good at incorporating the most current strategies into their instructional practices and courses.

Steve Andersson has served as principal for three years and, over time, has seen a significant level of trust and collaboration develop between regular and special education teachers. “Our special education teachers are ‘people persons,’” he shares, “and they have the flexibility to work with opposition.” The

principal has built special education-related questions into the interview process for hiring regular education teachers, and a special education teacher is always included on the hiring committee. “We consistently ask applicants about how they work with special education teachers in their classrooms.”

Curriculum and Instruction

“We’ve really focused a lot on data, particularly during the last three years,” shares the superintendent. The district is in its fourth year with Project SOAR (Schools’ Online Assessment Reports), providing a focus on instruction to improve performance and raise student achievement levels. This work is underway in partnership with the Battelle for Kids school improvement collaborative—a nonprofit organization committed to enhancing student learning by bringing clarity to school improvement. Project SOAR uses value-added information to reliably measure students’ individual progress; identify at-risk students; and analyze the impact that various educational, instructional, and program practices have on student achievement. “The value-added concept is really the way to go,” believes the superintendent. “We must track achievement every year to the point that we’ve filled in the gaps. We’ve begun the process of teaching staff how to read and disaggregate data, how to use pre-assessment and short cycle assessments, how to use templates to prioritize elements that must be taught in theme units, and how to track their own data for use in making instructional decisions. The only outside ingredient, then, is to identify and benchmark best practices for making upward improvements.” The district is exploring ways for parents to access Project SOAR data online.

Grandview Heights High School will be implementing Progress Books for the first time in the 2006-2007 school year. The Progress Books, piloted at the middle school, will be extended to the elementary schools as well. Students will use a Progress Book to

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track their own academic progress and to lead their own individual student/teacher conferences.

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Providing Opportunities for All Children to Achieve

“We truly have a continuum of special education options here,” shares the director of pupil services, Kathy Binau, who has 15 years of experience in the district. On the topic of the

achievement tests, she admits, “I never would have guessed that our students would do as well as they have, and I’ve always been

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Kathy, Binau, Director of Pupil Services

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The high school employs the services of two guidance counselors, three intervention specialists (resource room teachers), two SLD (Specific Learning Disabilities) tutors, and a work-study coordinator in addition to the district-wide services provided by an occupational therapist, school nurse, speech and hearing therapist, and school psychologist. Special education and related services are available throughout the district, beginning with an itinerant pre-school teacher and extending through the district’s two elementary schools that feed into its middle school and high school.

The special education teachers and tutors practice a continuum of inclusion models, including co-teaching, consultation, and teaming arrangements. As one teacher puts it, “We have a variety of options for LRE (Least Restrictive Environment)—we haven’t gone one way or the other.” Support activities include modifying or assisting in modifying tests, preparing study reviews for tests, administering tests orally to students, and/or preparing

guided notes from teachers' notes, assisting students during classes, providing copies of class notes for other tutors, and communicating with parents. A list of the means by which classroom teachers can support inclusion is articulated so that expectations are clear. For easy reference when new tasks or lessons are prepared for students

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Special Education Teacher

matrix outlining accommodations deemed appropriate for individual students, for easy reference when new tasks and lessons are introduced.

"When Individualized Education Program (IEP) students are not making progress, it's usually our special education teachers who bring that to our attention," shares the principal. "They're very good about communicating with regular education teachers to analyze problems." An informal Intervention Assistance Team is in place and the counselor and psychologist are actively involved. Given the small size of the school, it is possible to operate more informally. Teachers know the parents and families very well, so there is a natural tendency for ongoing communication when there are issues of concern. Alternate Assessments are administered for some students as deemed appropriate; all students taking these tests during the 2005-2006 school year scored in the proficient range.

The Promise Program, designed to meet the needs of at-risk students in grades seven through twelve, consists of three programs make up the Promise Program: INSPIRE PATH, Guided Studies, and the Grandview Works Program. The multi-component INSPIRE PATH program for disenfranchised middle school students integrates school, community, and home. The Guided Studies program targets non-achieving students in grades nine and ten to establish a framework of social, emotional, and academic support. The work-study Grandview Works Program offers students in grades 11 and 12 an opportunity to gain work

experience as well as a focus on integrating school, community, and home to help students succeed academically, socially, and personally.

Students describe a continuum of sanctions for unproductive behavior that includes “Wednesday School” (from 3:00-6:00 PM), service hours, and out-of-school suspensions. Sitting on the bench in the hall is also an option. From the principal’s point of view, “We have the typical problems with absenteeism and truancy, usually limited to a small

group of students. We don’t have much violence at all, limited to an occasional fight. Dropping out is not a problem here.” When

asked about the issue of dropping out, one student with an IEP responded with surprise, “Why would I go to school for 11 years and then drop out?”

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Student with IEP

For students who do experience problems, there is the Rockbridge Academy for at-risk students, an alternative school that “helps to bridge the gap between where some kids are and where they need to be.” Operated by a five-district consortium, the Academy has as its mission “to meet the educational and emotional needs of at-risk students in grades 7-12.” Online courses provide an accelerated pace to help kids catch up.

Grandview Heights High School sponsors a variety of clubs and activities, including special interest areas such as Art Club, Chess Club, French Club, Spanish Club, Science Club, and the Key Club service organization, as well as the academically-oriented National Honor Society, leadership-oriented Student Council, and drug-free Youth to Youth Club.

The district mission of personalizing every student’s education has resulted in many academic awards at the high school. The annual Scholarship Assembly was so successful that it was moved to the evening to allow for three hours of uninterrupted celebration! In addition, special awards help to motivate. Students are recognized through “Citizen of the Month” and “Yes I Can” awards

for volunteer work and for participation in fine arts activities and vocational programs.

Professional Development

Recent professional development has focused throughout the district on standards-based classrooms, unit planning, and assessment. A topic is selected for priority attention each year; the focus was on unit planning and alignment to academic content standards during the 2005-2006 school year. Teachers report that they like this approach, because it helps them to focus their efforts. A Professional Development Committee outlines goals for the year. “We have a very professional community that understands the value of professional development,” according to the teachers. Both the school and the community are very supportive in this way. In an effort to maintain continuity, the district chooses to sponsor most of its own professional development opportunities. Early dismissal is scheduled periodically to allow time for workshops. In addition, fee waivers are available to attend classes at The Ohio State University, and reimbursement is provided to cover partial tuition costs at other colleges.

The principal recently went through “The Three Minute Walk Through” training sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa to build capacity for focused classroom observations. In regard to staff, Mr. Andersson noted, “We’ve had an unusually high level of turnover recently with a number of staff retiring. It’s an exciting opportunity for a principal to be able to select and develop his/her own staff.”

Partnerships with Parents/Families/Community

“The schools belong to the community,” shares the superintendent, “and I have the privilege of managing the school district for the community. It’s not my school district—the schools belong to the community.” This philosophy is central to the exceptionally strong reciprocal relationship between Grandview Heights High School and its families and broader community.

The commitment of this community to its schools was put to a test when the village lost its largest contributor of tax revenue two years ago. The district

reorganized and pared back its expenses to stay off the ballot as long as possible. However, the inevitable need to increase property taxes became apparent. A parent describes her experience chairing the committee that was successful in getting the needed levy passed. "The biggest challenge was to get people to understand the need for increased support. Committee members and school staff members put in many long hours to explain school finance in terms people could easily understand, and the levy had terrific support," she said. "I have a particularly strong commitment to the Grandview Heights schools as I have a large family of adopted children with a variety of special needs, including the need for special education, and they all have had successful school-related experiences here." The Grandview Heights/Marble Cliff Education Foundation has also been very supportive in terms of generating additional revenue for the district.

A variety of strategies are employed to connect with and maintain a productive relationship with the community. For example, the principal facilitates a Principal's Advisory Council and he listens carefully to their input. He regularly reports on school events and related topics to the Bobcat Boosters Group, made up of parents of current and previous students. The superintendent actively participates in the Rotary and Chamber of Commerce, facilitates the Business Advisory Council, serves as president of the county superintendents' association, and tracks both local and state political and legislative agendas.

The Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is very active and organizes extra curricular activities such as after-prom and after-graduation parties.

Teachers and parents stay in very close communication about student progress. As determined through a survey, 85% of Grandview homes have Internet access, and most information is posted either on the school Web site (for building-wide information) or individual teacher Web sites (for class information). Regularly scheduled progress reports, interim reports between grading periods, and frequent phone calls are standard procedures. The principal publishes a monthly newsletter called *The Harbinger*.

These efforts to build relationships are fruitful for the district, as articulated by one parent with twin boys, both of whom receive special education services.

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Parent of twin boys receiving special education services

Culture of the School

“Try as hard as you can to know your students and their families,” advises the principal when asked how other schools might experience similar successes. “Our success is based on how well we know our students.” The superintendent shares similar sentiments. “Every single decision must be made on what’s best for the kids. Sometimes schools tend to act like bureaucracies and do what’s best for the staff. You have to prioritize what’s best for the kids!” The culture of the school might best be described as very child centered, with exceptionally strong relationships among staff, students, families, and the community. Success is not achieved without high standards, however, and recent challenges associated with the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT) have been met with much dedication and hard work to align the curriculum, enhance instructional rigor, and implement data-based decision-making practices.

There is a strong sense of personal touch evident throughout the day-to-day business of educating students in this relatively small and intimate high school setting. Again, the superintendent illustrates in his own words: “Kids just don’t fall through the cracks in this school. We refuse to

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Graduating Senior who has an IEP

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homework; they're coaches, tutors, and neighbors. We've known each other our whole lives. We are very close-knit."

Grandview's Data

SCHOOL PROFILE	
2004-2005 Building Rating	Excellent
Enrollment	402
Grade Levels	9-12
Economically Disadvantaged Students	8.6%
Students with Disabilities	18.2%
White Students	95.1%

GRANDVIEW HEIGHTS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT PROFILE	
2004-2005 District Rating	Excellent
District Enrollment	1147

Schools of Distinction

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) named 21 schools to the first (2004 – 2005) list of Schools of Distinction, celebrating high-achieving schools that have significant numbers of students with disabilities. To make the cut, schools must:

- Have at least 75 percent of students with and without disabilities score proficient or above on a combination of all proficiency, achievement, and Ohio Graduation Tests administered during the past three years;
- Have at least four percent of their students identified as having a disability;
- Serve students of varying disabilities;
- Earn a combined performance index score of 100 or more out of 120 for the most recent reporting period;
- Meet adequate yearly progress (AYP) requirements for the last school year; and
- Not be involved in any investigation that would call their test scores into question.

The 21 schools earning the award during 2004-2005 included nine elementary buildings, one middle school, one junior/senior high school, and 10 high schools located in both large urban and small town settings. At 13 schools, students with disabilities made up 10 percent or more of the student population.