

Hermitage R-IV School District

Missouri

Superintendent: Shelly Aubuchon

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346 students, K-12, rural

District Description

The Hermitage R-IV School District is located in the small city of Hermitage in Hickory County, Missouri. With a population of nearly 500, Hermitage is increasingly becoming the home of retirees, including many from Kansas City who are looking for country life and a more reasonable cost of living. In the 2000 census, Hickory County was rated as having the highest percentage of residents over the age of 65 in the state of Missouri. These demographics could negatively affect the future enrollment of school-age children and citizen support for local taxes.

The Hermitage district is very small, enrolling just 346 students. The district has one school building, which is divided into three schools: elementary, middle school, and high school. Each grade enrolls a small number of students, about 27 on average. Only the elementary school receives Title I funds.

Key Findings

- The Hermitage district has only two subgroups that are large enough to count for adequate yearly progress at the district and school levels—white students and low-income students. Although the test performance of Hermitage students has fluctuated over the past four years, both subgroups have consistently made AYP because the percentage of students in these groups scoring at the proficient level has remained above state AYP targets.
- In past years, Missouri tested in grades 3, 7, and 10 in reading and grades 4, 8, and 11 in math, but in 2006, all grades 3 through 9 plus grade 11 will be tested in both reading and math. This change could raise the subgroup sizes to the point that they will count for adequate yearly progress at the individual schools.
- Hermitage receives a substantial amount of funding from Title IV of No Child Left Behind, the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, which supports an extensive after-school program. In fact, the Title IV grant of \$166,000 is larger than the district's Title I allocation of \$115,000. Although the Title IV funds decrease each year, consistent with the program's requirements for local communities to pick up more of the costs, the after-school program continues with district support, because district officials believe it has positively affected student achievement and attitudes about school.
- In the well-attended after-school program, which extends the school day by two hours, students participate in enrichment activities and small group instruction, tutoring in core subjects emphasized by NCLB. The district provides buses that take the students home. Hermitage teachers are required to work in the program one day a week as part of their contract duties, but many volunteer their services for additional hours.

Overall Impact of NCLB

Overall, NCLB has not had a large impact on the Hermitage district, according to Superintendent Shelly Aubuchon, because much of what the district is doing in instruction and accountability was in place before NCLB. The superintendent would like to see achievement improve in the middle school and high school, and she is hopeful that testing students every year will bring this about. “We strive to do what is best for our students,” said Aubuchon. “We provide learning opportunities and remedial instruction when needed. We would continue to do it if NCLB ended tomorrow.”

However, district officials are concerned about the schools’ ability to make AYP when Missouri begins testing all students in grades 3-9 and 11 in both communication arts and math. Until now, students only took one state test at selected grade levels: reading (part of the state communication arts test) in grades 3, 7, and 10, and math in grades 4, 8, and 11.

NCLB and Student Achievement

The percentage of Hermitage students scoring at the proficient or advanced level on state tests has fluctuated over the past four years, as shown in **table 1**, but remains higher in 2005 than in 2002 for both communication arts and math. In communication arts, the percentage proficient went down between 2002 and 2003, rose steeply in 2004, then dropped slightly in 2005. In math, the percentage went up between 2002 and 2003, dropped significantly in 2004, and then rose sharply to reach a four-year high in 2005. As table 1 illustrates, these patterns are similar for the only two subgroups large enough to count for AYP at the district and school levels—white students and low-income students. (Although students with disabilities comprise 8% of the district’s enrollment, this amounts to 27 students, too few to count for AYP at the district level.)

Table 1. Percentage of Hermitage Students Reaching Proficient Level or Above on State Tests

Communication Arts	2002	2003	2004	2005
State AYP proficiency target	18.4%	19.4%	20.4%	26.6%
District total, all tested grades	34.6%	32.7%	40.9%	38.2%
White	35.1%	32.0%	40.0%	38.2%
Low-income	30.6%	24.2%	40.6%	32.5%
Math	2002	2003	2004	2005
State AYP proficiency target	8.3%	9.3%	10.3%	17.5%
District total, all tested grades	29.0%	36.6%	22.7%	38.2%
White	29.0%	37.3%	23.0%	38.5%
Low-income	29.4%	33.3%	15.9%	31.0%

Table reads: On the Missouri state communication arts tests administered in 2002, 34.6% of the students in the Hermitage R-IV School District scored at the proficient level or above. This percentage dipped to 32.7% in 2003 testing, rose to 40.9% in 2004, then dropped to 38.2% in 2005.

Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2005 Annual Performance Report for Hermitage R-IV School District, <http://dese.mo.gov/planning/profile/apr/2005043004.html>

Table 2 shows performance by school level. As the table illustrates, a greater share of elementary students reached the proficient level than middle or high school students in 2005 testing.

Table 2. Percentage of Hermitage Students Scoring Proficient or Above by School Level, 2005

School Level	Communication Arts (Reading and Writing)	Math
State target, all grades	26.6%	17.5%
Hermitage Elementary	54.5%	81.8%
Hermitage Middle	50.0%	13.3%
Hermitage High	12.5%	34.5%

Table reads: On the state communication arts test administered in 2005, 54.5% of Hermitage elementary students, 50.0% of Hermitage middle school students, and 12.5% of Hermitage high school students scored at the proficient level or above.

Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Hermitage R-IV, Final Adequate Yearly Progress, <http://dese.mo.gov/planning/profile/apr/aypo43004.html>

Adequate Yearly Progress

The three Hermitage schools, as well as the district as a whole, made adequate yearly progress in 2005, as they have for the past four years. The two subgroups large enough to count, white and low-income students, made AYP at both the school and district levels. As shown in table 2 above, two grade spans did not meet AYP targets—middle school students in math and high school students in communication arts. But in both cases, their performance fell within Missouri's confidence interval, according to AYP data on the state's annual performance reports, so the high school and middle school still made AYP. (A confidence interval is a statistical technique that makes allowances for natural fluctuations in test scores by creating a window around a test score target, similar to a margin of error. A group that misses the target but scores within this window will still be considered to have made AYP.) The high school graduation rate, including students who attend the alternative school that is considered part of the high school, was 100%.

Impact of NCLB on Curriculum and Instruction

Much effort and many resources have been devoted to improving reading instruction in all grades in the Hermitage district; in fact, literacy preparation starts before kindergarten with programs for three- and four-year-olds. The link between the preschool and the primary programs is strong, said Shelly Aubuchon, and she is pleased with the teacher collaboration and frequent communication among the staff members.

Students who are experiencing learning difficulties, such as those who move frequently because of parental employment or family issues, get extra help in both the classroom and the district's after-school program. No schools in the district are required to offer supplemental educational services, but the district has its own after-school program funded through a combination of the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center program, a state childcare grant for school-aged children, and district funds.

The after-school program has been put in place over the past three years with a state grant to serve students in PreK through grade 8 five days each week from 3:00 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. or later, if needed. A district-funded bus takes the students home. A student can receive as many as 10 hours of additional instruction per week in reading, math, and other subjects. During the extra hours, students receive tutoring and help in skill development, and they also participate in enrichment classes. The 21st Century Learning Program funds support the after-school program as well as programs on Saturday and summer school. The after-school program is managed part time by a teacher who also serves as the Title I teacher at the elementary school during the regular school day.

“This is a very good program for our students,” said Shelly Aubuchon of the after-school offerings. “In addition to the help that students receive with their homework and skills, and the enrichment classes and the clubs, there is so much that students gain from the relationships they develop with teachers in the after-school hours. It’s an informal time, but the kids love to be around their teachers in a setting that is so different from the traditional classroom. A lot of learning takes place there, and the kids really enjoy learning after school and just being there.”

In addition, all Hermitage teachers provide tutoring assistance to students one afternoon a week as part of their contracted adjunct duty. Many teachers volunteer their time on other days as well, a demonstration, according to the superintendent, of their commitment to do whatever they can to make sure that student needs are met and that they are learning.

The Hermitage district has also expanded its early childhood program, because district officials find that it contributes to children’s readiness for school. Children who have been in the program come to kindergarten with literacy and numeracy preparation, and they are ready to learn. The program is open to all, but most children who attend are from low-income families. In the 2005-06 kindergarten class, 16 of the 31 children—more than half the class—attended the preschool program as four-year-olds.

Other than these efforts to improve reading instruction, expand opportunities for early literacy and preparation for school, and maintain the after-school programs, Hermitage has not made major changes in curriculum or instruction due to NCLB, according to Superintendent Aubuchon.

Teacher Qualifications, Support, and Professional Development

All Hermitage teachers are “highly qualified” according to the NCLB definition. The district had a teacher opening in math in 2005-06, and officials were concerned about finding a math teacher who met the qualifications, but the position was filled by a highly qualified teacher from the community.

Professional development for teachers is focused on reading and aligning grade-level expectations to the Missouri state standards. Title II funds are used for training in technology.

Paraprofessional Qualifications and Support

Hermitage has seven paraprofessionals, but only one is paid with Title I funds. All of these employees have associate degrees, so they meet the NCLB qualifications. This was the case even before NCLB.

Funding and Costs

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, Title IV of NCLB, provides substantial funds to Hermitage schools. The grant is for five years, and this is the fourth year of operation. The earlier \$200,000 allocation has dropped to \$166,000 because the program is designed so that the federal share of allocations decreases each year. However, with district support, the program continues to function well and it serves many students each week.

The district receives less from Title I than it does from the 21st Century schools program. The Title I funding amounts to \$115,000, although the percentage of low-income students has ranged from 66% to over 70% in the past three years.

With additional state tests coming onboard in 2006, the costs of scoring the tests will be partially paid by the district. This is a cost that will have to be absorbed, and the superintendent recognizes that funds will have to be diverted from other uses. Previously, the district paid for the scoring of six tests (six grade levels, and one test for each student). From now on, though, a total of 16 tests will be administered (eight grade levels and two tests for each student), and that means a lot more tests to score and pay for.

Capacity Issues

As the Hermitage school district changes from a population of farm families to a community of senior citizens and commuting parents, it is difficult to anticipate the student enrollment and the tax base for the future, according to Superintendent Aubuchon. District enrollment has grown by 8% over the past three years (an additional 12 to 14 students each year). Aubuchon attributes the growth to parents recognizing the “outstanding program and high-quality education that we provide.” Whether the growth trend will continue is not known, and with poverty at more than 50%, the superintendent knows that Title I funds will not be able to meet the many and growing needs of the students.

Data File—Hermitage R-IV School District

Location: South-central Missouri

Type: Rural

Number of Schools

Total: 3

Elementary: (PreK-6)

Middle/junior high: (7-8)

High school: (9-12)

Number of Title I Schools: 1

Student Enrollment and Demographics

Total enrollment: 346

White: 98%

Other: 2%

Low-income students: 66%

Students with disabilities: 8%

Teachers

Total number of teachers: 32

Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Paraprofessionals

Total number of Title I instructional paraprofessionals: 1

Percentage meeting NCLB “highly qualified” requirements: 100%

Total Number That Did Not Make AYP Based on 2004-05 Testing

Total number of Title I and non-Title I schools that did not make AYP, including those in improvement, restructuring, or corrective action: 0

Number of Title I Schools in Improvement, Restructuring, or Corrective Action

	Based on 2003-04 testing	Based on 2004-05 testing
Schools in year 1 of improvement (Did not make AYP for two consecutive years):	0	0
Schools in year 2 of improvement (Did not make AYP for three consecutive years):	0	0
Schools in corrective action (Did not make AYP for four consecutive years):	0	0
Schools in restructuring (Did not make AYP for five or more consecutive years):	0	0

Number of Schools Offering Choice and/or SES

	Based on 2003-04 testing	Based on 2004-05 testing
Schools offering choice <i>only</i> :	0	0
Schools in year 1 of school improvement offering SES <i>instead</i> of choice:	0	0
Schools offering SES <i>and</i> choice:	0	0