

Fort Recovery High School

Fort Recovery School District

Fort Recovery, Ohio

Superintendent: David R. Riel

Principal: Edward E. Snyder

<http://www.noacsc.org/mercercer/fr/FRHS/highDEF.htm>

The many successes of Fort Recovery High School reflect explicitly the mission of the 900-student district to “involve all stakeholders in providing a fluid, well-integrated, well-articulated PK-12 curriculum, embraced in a rich environment “where

| SCHOOL PROFILE | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 2003-2004 Building Rating | Excellent |
| Enrollment | 290 |
| Grade Levels | 9-12 |
| Students with Disabilities | 13.4% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 4.7% |
| White Students | 98.8% |

1. Educators provide for students’ varied learning styles and multiple intelligences;
2. Students are full partners in designing relevant learning experiences;
3. The climate is caring and supportive; and
4. The district-wide commitment is to high expectations and continuous improvement.”

To carry out the mission, “the goals of the District are that

1. All students will learn to the best of their abilities;
2. All students will learn in a safe, supportive, caring environment; and
3. All students will graduate with the skills/knowledge to compete successfully in work and school.”

The district, with the help of parents, students, and the business community, has been going through a continuous improvement process for eleven years. For the past five, it has earned the designation of “Excellent” on their Local Report Card. In so doing, Fort Recovery is one of an elite group of 23 districts that has earned this prestigious distinction for five consecutive years.

| FORT RECOVERY LOCAL DISTRICT PROFILE | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| 2003-2004 District Rating | Excellent |
| District Enrollment | 969 |

The staff, administration and the school board, continuously wanting to make things better, has recently developed a framework for continuous improvement planning that is based on the Baldrige National Quality Program Criteria for Performance Excellence--Leadership: Strategic Planning; Student, Stakeholder, and Market Focus; Measurement, Analysis, and Knowledge Management; Faculty and Staff Focus; Process Management; Organizational Performance Results. Application of these criteria has assisted the district in identifying what has made them a very good school as well as areas they want to continue to improve in. An impressive Chronology of Improvement Efforts, reflecting grants received, is posted on the district’s Web site.

Also posted is a 2004 PowerPoint presentation that includes each of the Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) goals, bar graphs depicting data collected to measure performance, and conclusions/implications drawn from the data. This information was presented and discussed with the staff at their 2004 Orientation Day.

The district credits their success to data-driven decision-making, to their staff development program and to school board members who have “an extraordinary dedication to our kids.” David Riel, superintendent, states, “Our district has learned the importance of collecting, analyzing, tracking and using data. We have learned that our action plans must be driven by data since this information is essential in assessing student achievement.” The staff development program has focused on aligning the curriculum and assessments, using technology, using data to make instructional decisions, and implementing successful classroom techniques and practices. The Board of Education has collaborated by working to remove policy barriers.

Located in an historic, rural area in central western Ohio, Fort Recovery is characterized by long-established families, their affiliations within the community and their respect for education. Many strong, family-centered and religious influences are evident in the Fort Recovery High School where staff members are often graduates of the high school. Their dedication to the school is reflected in their high attendance rate. They are very proud of the fact that over seventy percent of the Fort Recovery graduates go on to further education.

Leadership

Ed Snyder, the principal, himself a graduate of the high school, is credited with taking an active, visible role with students, staff and parents by whom he is highly regarded. Staff members report him to be very supportive and dedicated as well as active and involved in all parts of the community. They also report that he listens to them and asks them to play a part in the decision-making process at the school. Students report that he provides strong leadership to the building. Parents are pleased with him because he listens to them and makes it a point to include them in their students’ academic efforts.

“Mr. Snyder is amazing! He is a true leader when it comes to finding ways to help and to inspire students with special needs. He goes above and beyond. He personally reminds everyone that we must always try to do what’s best for the individual student.” Fort Recovery Mathematics Teacher

Snyder has several goals for the 2005-2006 school year:

1. Continuing work on alignment to standards;
2. Increasing student performance on the Ohio Graduation Test (OGT);
3. Continuing to look at climate issues (identified as concerns through student and staff surveys);
4. Devising a better system for gathering post-secondary data (end of first year of college and end of fifth year after graduation);
5. Conducting an exit survey for seniors; and
6. Developing an alumni page on the school’s web site that allows for graduates to easily update their posted status.

Snyder stressed the value of sharing responsibility within the building and district. He stated the district is very much site-based, with the district leadership team comprised of members from each building. At Fort Recovery, teacher-leaders are developed in specific areas. For instance, a team of teachers is working on developing a new grade book. Mr. Snyder meets with any new employee every two weeks during their first year. He also assigns mentors for all employees. The principal also meets with special education teachers once per month and chairs all Intervention Assistance Team (IAT) and Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings. Mr. Snyder makes himself available to take over classes for teachers when they attend meetings or professional development opportunities so he can keep himself in touch with what is going on in the classes.

With staff input, Mr. Snyder writes grant applications. Some examples are Venture Capital Grants, Technology Grants; Raising the Bar Grant (\$125,000); Learn and Serve Grant: "This helped get our school TV station going. Now we do the programming for our local cable channel;" and the Effective Schools Grant: "This started a number of years ago and helped us do a lot of teacher planning;" and the district's original CIP was based on the Network for Systemic Improvement Grant application of 1998.

Curriculum and Instruction

Teachers at Fort Recovery High School have been involved in curriculum mapping for a number of years, with the emphasis now on aligning the curriculum and assessments with the academic content standards. The high school teachers have worked with the middle school teachers to vertically align the science curriculum. The theme for the 2004 summer In-service week was "A Honor Roll--Alignment, Assessment, and Accessibility." During this session, Christine Keller, the district's technology coordinator, unveiled the district's Curriculum Alignment Tool (CAT). This tool was developed locally in response to teachers' requests for help with aligning their curriculum to the state standards. The standards' benchmarks and indicators were preloaded into the CAT database.

The teachers are now concentrating on documenting their alignment to the standards by adding information that identifies the instructional strategies, assessments and resources they are implementing. The program is designed to include additional information--unit themes, enrichments, adaptations/modifications, resources, technology, and reflections. Unlimited reports can be generated from this program (for example, reports by grade level indicator, by timeline, by unit themes and by assessment). This tool assists staff in aligning their curriculum horizontally and vertically and in identifying benchmarks and indicators that may not be covered. The technology coordinator is working with the Northwest Ohio Area Computer Service Cooperative (NOACSC) to convert the program to a server database stored at the Cooperative. The long-range goal is to incorporate the CAT as a module in the Data Analysis for Student Learning (DASL) software program.

"Standards make our job easier. It's not just a stab in the dark."

A teacher at Fort Recovery

The Fort Recovery School District strives to integrate technology into all grade levels and subject areas. As stated in their technology plan, they believe "the use of technology engages students at a level that is impossible without technology."

Increased student engagement leads to more real, authenticated learning which leads to greater student achievement.” At Fort Recovery, all of the classrooms are equipped with computers that students use to do research, and develop documents, multi-media presentations and web pages. Teachers use GradeQuick (an electronic grade book) to calculate, print and send grades electronically; DASL to make instructional decisions based on student performance data; e-mail to communicate with other teachers, and the Teacher Intranet to access test results, district forms, and the school calendar.

Curriculum offerings at the high school include five computer-programming courses and one computer-assisted drawing (CAD) class. Additionally, students can elect to take a technology assistant class and/or a co-lab class. The technology class prepares students to provide support to the high school staff. These students are the tech kids and are involved in installing equipment, troubleshooting all PC and printer problems, creating software applications, and providing technical training to teachers and other students.

Students receive one-fourth credit for being a technology assistant. Additionally, they receive several perks throughout the school year for their hard work--an occasional pizza party, a yearly field trip, and recognition at the annual awards banquet. Some of these students serve as summer tech kids and are paid an hourly rate based on the expertise needed for a specific job and their experience. Payments are made from the general fund. The summer tech kids moved and reconfigured over 600 PCs when the district moved into their new elementary/middle school.

“Tech kids perform a very valuable service to the school.”

Christine Keller, Technology Coordinator

Ms. Keller teaches this class. Her work with this class, formerly know as the Fort Recovery Technology Assistants Program, as well as the leadership she has provided for using technology throughout the district to enhance productivity and increase learning, was recognized by the Southwestern Ohio Instructional Technology Association (SOITA) in 2005 when they presented her with their Technology Leadership Award.

A student describes co-lab as “a one-of-a-kind class. The mission statement says it all about our local co-lab: to increase communication and create stronger ties between the school and the community. The vision will be accomplished through service which enhances student learning.” The students in this class manage the local cable access channel. They produce a weekly broadcast, tape all school events, and are available upon request to tape community events. Tapes are broadcast over the local channel to keep the community informed. Parents whose work or family commitments keep them from attending a school event may watch them at a later time on the cable channel. One parent of a student with disabilities reported that involvement in this class “really helped” her daughter to communicate more effectively and to work with others.

The high school took advantage of their technology resources and offered distance-learning classes. One of the classes offered is American Sign Language, for which the students receive foreign language credit.

Fort Recovery English teachers stress the importance of providing high school students with more opportunities to read and point out that students who read do better academically. The Summer Reading Enrichment Program is one way in which Fort Recovery High School encourages students to increase their independent reading.

Students select books from the High School Reading Counts list that includes over 1200 books. Each book on the list has an assigned point value based on length and reading difficulty. Students are expected to read as well as to pass the test on books worth at least 20 points. Any points earned over 20 are extra credit. These points are included in calculating a student's first fall quarter grade. Students can take the computer-generated tests covering the books during the summer months in the high school office or the high school library. When school is in session, everyone--principal, teachers, students, and classified staff--reads for fifteen minutes every other Friday.

Opportunities for All Students to Achieve

Focusing on the needs of all the students is of highest importance at Fort Recovery. Two intervention specialists (one full-time and one half-time) and one instructional aide provide services to students with disabilities and others at risk. The intervention specialists provide services in the regular classroom, either team-teaching or available to provide individual assistance to any student in need of help. When not in the regular classroom, the intervention specialists are in the study skills room where they may 1) provide small group instruction for guided practice, 2) administer tests, or 3) assist with homework.

The instructional aide, a retired teacher, serves as the English teacher for two students with cognitive disabilities. These students are included in the regular education classrooms for all other instruction. Additionally, the instructional aide assists with administering tests and provides support to students in organizing and completing their assignments. This team teaching and inclusion specialist model has provided students with much one-on-one attention. Students report that having the intervention specialist in the regular education classroom is helpful.

The intervention specialists and the content area teachers begin work regarding their students long before the students walk in the door of the high school. Binders for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 Plans are provided to all who will be teaching those students. A half-day is spent organizing information, identifying the student's strengths and weaknesses, and planning for any accommodations per the IEP that may be needed in the subject area. Gifted students at Fort Recovery have Written Educational Plans (WEPs), and copies of the WEPs are given to all teaching those students to plan for differentiating instruction and providing enrichment activities.

Teachers and students use multiple ways of presenting material or getting feedback. Teachers have learned to ask questions in a variety of ways so that all students are participating in class discussions. Teachers are then able to correct any misconceptions students may have as new material is introduced. Students work in teams to encourage discussion and cooperation.

Teachers plan activities so that there are at least two breaks in a fifty-minute instructional period. Breaks could mean having students stand and do some kinesthetic learning, having students work with partners at the board, or allowing students to get out of their seats to vote on the latest projects. There are many opportunities for students to be involved in hands-on learning activities. Examples shared by the students included a physics experiment with kites and an ice cream taste test in a nutrition class.

Most textbooks have a CD to accompany them. Books also are available on tapes. Students can borrow these and play them in the study skills room or listen to

them at home. If a student is absent or needs assistance with note taking, classmates volunteer to share copies of their notes with them.

The mathematics teacher reports that she incorporates visual aids or movement into lessons any time she can and has the students “talk the math” using the correct mathematical terminology. She shared an accommodation she had made for a student with physical disabilities. “When I use a document camera to show geometric constructions, my copy that I create, with all the steps numbered on it, is given to the student who has trouble manipulating a compass and straightedge.”

“Our teachers are dedicated. Our standards are better than other schools’. It is a small classroom environment. You can ask for help and get it.” A Fort Recovery student with disabilities

During a team-taught English class, the teacher identified exceptional writing samples that included sensory details. These were displayed on an overhead and discussed with the class. Students were then given an opportunity to rewrite their samples to include more sensory details. One student whose work was selected responded, “That amazes me!” This lesson was followed by a vocabulary review. Students who needed assistance with their vocabulary assignment reported to the study skills room to do additional work with an intervention specialist.

“Our kids have an unbelievable number of opportunities to succeed because of our teachers.” Ed Snyder, principal

Rubrics, used by many of the teachers, are posted in the classrooms. Teachers grade students based on their progress as opposed to comparing their performance to that of other students. Students indicated they like the rubrics, as they provide them with expectations for assignments and the requirements to meet those expectations. One teacher noted, “I think the reason that it works is that I have the same expectations for students with and without IEPs. It’s about the modifications and test results for Fort Recovery’s students with disabilities provide proof that it is working. During the 2003-2004 school year 81.8% of the students with disabilities passed the math section of the OGT and 90.9% passed reading. These students are achieving at high levels.

The Fort Recovery teachers report they are able to use the data generated from various sources and together are able to adapt instruction for all the students, not just students with IEPs. If they encounter a situation with a student who really is having difficulties, ranging from a student displaying a negative attitude to a student struggling academically, they may refer them to the Intervention Assistance Team (IAT). The guidance counselor also provides support for students and is reported to be “wonderful at helping students through difficult times.”

Professional Development

For some time, professional development at Fort Recovery was a hit or miss situation. However, as a result of the findings of an audit that was conducted with assistance from the curriculum director at the Mercer County Educational Service Center (ESC), staff development was turned over to individual building teams. These teams research and find professional development activities that will be areas of focus each year.

Teachers are required to have ten hours of in-service activities. Beyond that, they receive salary enhancements for additional hours. A formal evaluation system helps identify areas where teachers want to improve. The principal then provides the support they need to make those improvements. Mr. Snyder reports, "I go to practically every professional development activity that the teachers go to. This is the best professional development activity I could possibly do."

"I go to practically every professional development activity that the teachers go to. This is the best professional development activity I could possibly do." Ed Snyder, principal

Teachers are currently taking an adolescent literacy course that is being taught by a fellow teacher who became trained to assist others. At times speakers are brought into the school to help teachers with their development. Some small grants allow teachers to take training in areas of their interests. Teachers also participate in the summer in-service week in July. The theme of summer 2005 training was data driven decision-making. In the past, the focus has been on instructional research and best practices. Reading and discussing a common book is frequently the focus for some of the trainings and follow-up meetings throughout the school year.

Culture

According to Mr. Riel, "It seems like every time we turn around, Fort Recovery students are achieving success somewhere." Fort Recovery Schools consistently recognize the achievements of their students and teachers. The district publishes, in print and online, a monthly newsletter, *The Fort Site Journal*. This publication includes *Happenings in the High School*. Recent issues acknowledged an excellent rating at the district solo and ensemble contest, Future Farmers of America (FFA) receiving first place awards at the public speaking contest, and students doing an outstanding presentation at the Ohio Community and the Varsity TEAMS (Test of Engineering Aptitude, Mathematics and Science) finishing third out of 18 teams at the regional event. Each issue includes an article written by student reporters as well as the recognition of teachers. Students have the opportunity to participate in one of the many extracurricular activities offered by the high school, and most all students, including those with disabilities, are involved in at least one of these activities.

Other forms of recognition include that given by the Board of Education at its monthly meetings, broadcasting on the local cable station and on the high schools internal scrolling announcements that appear on monitors stationed throughout the halls. Additionally, high school students may elect to participate in the First Rate Card program by applying for one of three cards--First Rate Purple, First Rate Striped, or First Rate White, based on their grade point average, attendance, lack of disciplinary actions, community service or improvement in classes. Those who earn the cards receive special awards. Students report that a lot of the kids are involved.

The high school and the district also value student and teacher input. Various surveys are conducted including an exit survey of seniors. Information gathered through these surveys is used to measure progress toward meeting one of the district's CIP goals: all students will learn in a safe, supportive, caring environment. Additionally, without any high school staff present, the board of education meets with the entire senior class to gather information regarding the students' perceptions of the education they received at Fort Recovery.

All these factors contribute to what teachers describe as a positive learning environment.

Partnerships with Parents, Families and Community

Fort Recovery is a very stable community with little mobility. Some of the families date back generations, and many of the students have known one another since early childhood. Families and businesses are actively involved, and the support the schools in the Fort Recovery District is indicated by the recent passage of a one-half percent income tax.

The high school communicates with parents in a variety of ways: the *Fort Site Journal*, a monthly letter from the principal, a letter from each of the high school teachers explaining his/her classroom policies and procedures, the local cable channel, e-mails communicating student progress, the web page posted on the district's web site, parent conferences, and EdLine, an online program that provides parents with access to their child's grades and homework assignments.

Fort Recovery staff members actively seek ways to involve all parents in school functions. Should any parent be reluctant to work with the school, school staff members continue to make contact with those parents to encourage them to participate. Mr. Snyder reports, "We do pretty well with parents, but you just don't rest until 100% of them feel good about what is going on." Parents report that they are active participants in the IAT and IEP meetings and their concerns and ideas are respected. A recent Post IEP Meeting survey that included 19 parents of high school students with disabilities reveals that parents feel welcome at the school, are satisfied with the services being provided and feel their input is included when educational decisions are being made.

Parent input is received through parent surveys, Parent Advisory Council meetings that are held quarterly and the Academic Booster Club, a very active group that sponsors numerous events throughout the year. One of these events is the Fort Showcase. The Showcase features student work that has been done in all of the core classes as well as art, vocational agriculture and industrial technology. Work is displayed throughout the building. Exemplary projects receive cash awards presented by local banks, and students have an opportunity to sell their artwork or other work included in the exhibits through a silent auction. Another popular event sponsored by the Academic Boosters is the Battle of the Brains. This community scholastic bowl involves business-sponsored teams of community members. The winning team receives a plaque that is hung in the sponsor's place of business for a year until the next Battle is held.

Another group that plays a very important and active role in the high school is the Business Advisory Council. This council, considered by the district to be "an integral part of their team," has been instrumental in developing and implementing a survey of local businesses. This survey provides direction to the council, as well as the school system. Results from the most recent survey show pride and support for the teachers and a concern that students need to improve their writing and communication skills. The council also sponsors career days, twice a year teacher visitations to local businesses, and Teacher Appreciation Day.

Fort Recovery High School and the district continue to be involved in the systematic change process and the implementation of their Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP) as they strive to "develop world class learners."

What does the data say?

