



# CPS 'hits it out of park'

By Jessica Brown • jlbrown@enquirer.com • August 16, 2010

**CORRYVILLE** - Cincinnati Public Schools may become a national model for how a district can turn around struggling schools.

Six of CPS' worst performing elementaries have risen out of "academic emergency" for the first time in years, according to preliminary 2009-10 test scores released by the district last week. For five of them it was the first time they've risen above that category since the state started categorizing schools seven years ago.

CPS Superintendent Mary Ronan in 2008 targeted a total of 16 struggling elementary schools for special help - a move termed the "Elementary Initiative." Preliminary Ohio Report Card data shows all but three of those schools posted gains in overall test scores in 2009-10. For six of them, the improvements were good enough to lift them into a better Ohio Report Card category.

Ethel M. Taylor Academy in Millvale, Rockdale in Avondale, Roll Hill in East Westwood, Rothenberg in Over-the-Rhine and Taft Elementary in Mount Auburn rose two categories from "academic emergency," the worst category, to "continuous improvement," the fourth of six categories.

Frederick Douglass in Walnut Hills rose one category, from "academic watch" to "continuous improvement."

The other 10 remain in academic watch or academic emergency.

The Ohio Report Cards are annual reports rating how Ohio's schools and districts are doing academically based on test scores, graduation rates and other statistics. The Ohio Department of Education is making its final calculations and

will release final report card scores Aug. 27.

While CPS still has room to improve, the quick success of the six schools prompted a national team of experts from the University of Virginia to say Monday that it may consider using CPS as a national model for how districts should run academic "turnaround" programs.

"Cincinnati is hitting it out of the park right now," said LeAnn Buntrock, executive director of Partnership for Leaders in Education, a partnership between University's Darden School of Business and Curry School of Education. "We've had pockets of excellence but not at this scale or degree of consistency," Buntrock said. "They're (CPS) just doing this in the way you'd like to see it done," she said, calling it the best example of implementation her partnership has seen to date.

In 2003 the partnership crafted a national School Turnaround Specialist Program, a training program that teaches districts how to improve test scores at their struggling schools. It has implemented the program at 48 school districts - a total of 100 schools - in nine states.

The partnership's program teaches school leaders how to lift achievement in schools by applying the same strategies used by failing

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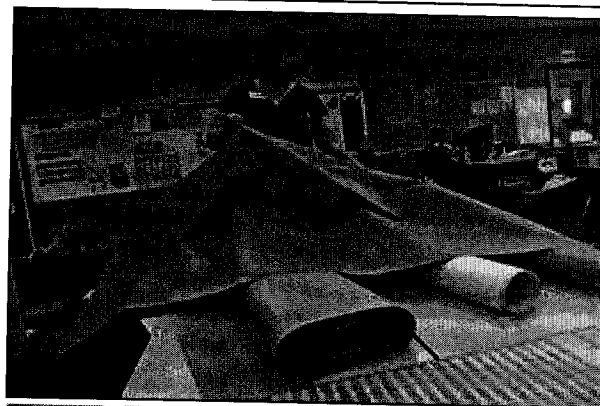


companies to turn themselves around.

A major milestone in this success was when the children started taking an interest in their test scores, said Vicki Graves-Hill principal at Roll Hill elementary school.

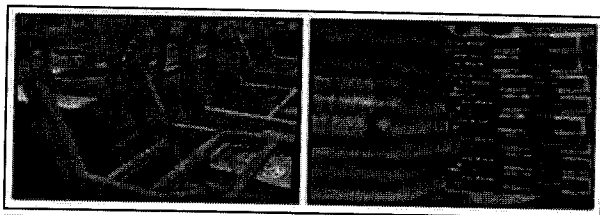
"They really wanted to improve and they really took their education seriously this year," she said.

The district awarded cash bonuses to the staff at the six improved elementary schools. It plans to continue the initiative in all 16 schools and may add two middle schools this year, depending on the final Report Card scores. The initiative is funded with donations from the G.E. Foundation and with federal stimulus funds.



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The Enquirer/Michael E. Keating  
Preschool teacher Angela Kimberlin reads bulletin board paper while preparing for her students that will arrive Monday.



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The Enquirer/Michael E. Keating  
Stacked school chairs and stacked textbooks await students at Roll Hill Academy, a PreK-8 school at 2411 Baltimore Avenue in East Westwood that was among six academically struggling elementary schools in the Cincinnati Public School District to leapfrog one to two state categories last year.

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