

'MAKING A DIFFERENCE' 13 CLEVELAND SCHOOLS THAT WORK

PUBLIC: Louisa May Alcott (K-5), Baltic Road, Edgewater-Cudell neighborhood; Cleveland School of the Arts (7-12), Stearns Road, near University Circle; Benjamin Franklin (K-8), Spring Road, Old Brooklyn neighborhood; Joseph Landis (K-8), Hampden Avenue, Glenville neighborhood; Miles Park (K-8), East 93rd Street, Union-Miles neighborhood; Orchard School of Science (K-8), Bailey Avenue, Ohio City neighborhood; SuccessTech Academy (9-12), Lakeside Avenue, downtown Cleveland | **CHARTER:** Citizens Academy (K-5), Ansel Road, near University Circle; The Intergenerational School (K-8), Fairhill Road, near University Circle | **PAROCHIAL:** St. Francis (K-8), Myron Avenue, St. Clair-Superior neighborhood; St. Thomas Aquinas (K-8), Superior Avenue, St. Clair-Superior neighborhood | **PRIVATE:** St. Martin de Porres (9-12), Lausche Avenue, St. Clair-Superior neighborhood; Urban Community School (K-8), Lorain Avenue, Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood. | **TO FIND MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE SCHOOLS TURN TO PAGE A4**



ST. FRANCIS Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School junior Katie D'Angelo gets hugs from fourth-graders the plain dealer of volunteering at St. Francis School, praised in a new report on education in Cleveland. Bidding her farewell are, from left, Arieyanna Nelson, Alesha Franklin, Raven Short and Ashley Williams.

THOMAS OTT
Plain Dealer Reporter

Education is not a lost cause in Cleveland, and schools across the city have the track record to prove it, says a study to be released today.

"Cleveland Schools That Are Making a Difference" features 13 schools that have turned in strong achievement test scores while teaching mostly low-income children.

The Cleveland and George Gund foundations commissioned the study to counter negative perceptions and provide models for other schools to copy. The two foundations have pledged up to \$20 million for new and innovative schools in Cleveland but wanted to point out some of the existing schools that deserve praise, said the Gund Foundation's Ann Mullin.

The foundations' report



CHRIS STEPHENS | THE PLAIN DEALER

sought to highlight a cross-section of high performers that are public and charter, parochial and private, East and West sides. They wanted students who collectively represent Cleveland's poverty and racial mix.

What do these schools have

in common? Researchers from the New York-based Institute for Student Achievement and Columbia University found that the schools have strong leaders, principals who collaborate with teachers and coursework that challenges students.

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BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

Left, a second-grader moves a coin on a SMART Board during a lesson at Benjamin Franklin School. Teacher Jacqueline Dietrich obtained a grant to buy the electronic board.

THE STUDY

The study features 13 schools that have turned in strong and rising achievement test scores while teaching mostly low-income children. The Cleveland Foundation and the George Gund Foundation commissioned the study to counter negative perceptions and provide models for other schools.

cleveland.com/pdmultimedia

An audio slide show takes you inside Benjamin Franklin School.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LISA DEJONG | THE PLAIN DEALER

Sister Karen Somerville, principal of St. Francis School in Cleveland, and teacher Scott Embacher help fourth-grader Alan Duncan with a research project.

SCHOOLS

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13 Cleveland schools that work

The research team visited schools; interviewed staff, students and parents; and analyzed achievement test results.

Their report sifts success stories from mounds of dismal data on urban schools, says Gerry House, the institute's chief executive. She will discuss the findings today at the City Club.

"You have to show people there are places where what we all want can happen," said House, former superintendent of schools in Memphis and Chapel Hill, N.C. "It gives people a sense of confidence that this can be done, it has been done and you can continue to do that."

Researchers who visited the schools found them all to be safe havens where students had a chance to concentrate on learning. In particular, they praised two public schools for carrying on after events that attracted notoriety — in one case nationwide.

The more serious incident was at SuccessTech Academy, where a teenager opened fire in October, wounding two teachers and two other students before killing himself. In February, the principal at Orchard School of Science bruised her shin trying to break up a fight after school. Sounds minor, but initial reports, based on incorrect information from the district, said she broke her leg.

A parochial school in the report, St. Francis, makes peace its mission, said Sister Karen Somerville, the principal.

St. Francis is near East 71st Street and Superior Avenue, a dangerous neighborhood. Most of the 200 students are not Catholic and pay their tuition with vouchers. The school tries to screen out violence by encouraging praise and having the students recite a peace pledge.

"We work very hard to create a safe environment for these children," Somerville said.

The schools highlighted in the report typically go through the days quietly, noticed and appreciated only by those who have children there or regularly walk the halls.

Benjamin Franklin School, in the Old Brooklyn neighborhood on Cleveland's West Side, has 700 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The building, built in 1923, looks its age, but the spirit obscures missing ceiling tiles and other blemishes.

Jacqueline Dietrich's second-graders sat cross-legged on a blue carpet Tuesday, too caught up in a discussion of dollars and cents to care about classroom visitors.

They puzzled out how to divvy up \$2.30 while buying imaginary goods. They also debated why a pair of sunglasses would cost more than a ball or pencil. The children manipulated images on an electronic SMART Board, purchased with a grant that Dietrich got on her own. She and other teachers run down technology that the district may be hard-pressed to afford.

Teachers say they offer ideas to their colleagues and are willing to consider suggestions sent their way. They also look for

Cleveland schools making a difference

These 13 schools make a difference by helping students succeed, according to a new study supported by the Cleveland and George Gund foundations. Research was conducted by the New York-based Institute for Student Achievement and the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching at Teachers College, Columbia University.



The full report is available at: gundfdn.org and clevelandfoundation.org

KEY

- Cleveland Municipal Schools
- Parochial
- Charter
- Private

- 1 Louisa May Alcott**
10308 Baltic Road
Edgewater-Cudell neighborhood
Kindergarten through fifth grade
"The school's philosophy is based on the idea that all children will learn and can reach their potential through high-quality instruction. ... The teamwork and commitment of staff contributes to the sense of shared leadership."
- 2 Urban Community School**
4909 Lorain Ave.
Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood
Pre-kindergarten through eighth grade
"The school believes in fostering school, family and community partnerships to guide the growth and development of each child — academically, emotionally, morally, physically and spiritually."
- 3 Benjamin Franklin**
1905 Spring Road
Old Brooklyn neighborhood
Kindergarten through eighth grade
"Teachers seek to engage student thinking in multiple ways. ... Instructional practices at Benjamin Franklin are based on a high degree of professionalism and collegiality."
- 4 Orchard School of Science**
4200 Bailey Ave.
Ohio City neighborhood
Pre-kindergarten through eighth grade
"Orchard's curriculum is designed to promote high levels of learning for all students. ... (a) hands-on approach that emphasizes small group and cooperative learning."
- 5 SuccessTech Academy**
1440 Lakeside Ave.
Downtown Cleveland neighborhood
Grades nine through 12
"Setting is competitive and academically rigorous. Students seem to openly embrace being part of the culture. ... There is a high level of parental involvement."
- 6 St. Thomas Aquinas**
9101 Superior Ave.
St. Clair-Superior neighborhood
Pre-kindergarten through eighth grade
"The principal and assistant principal talked of students' enthusiasm, love and energy. They attributed student success to high expectations held by their teachers ..."
- 7 St. Francis**
7206 Myron Ave.
St. Clair-Superior neighborhood
Kindergarten through eighth grade
"The atmosphere at St. Francis is warm and teachers appear at ease. The PeaceBuilders Program contributes to a peaceful learning environment by increasing positive, respectful and thoughtful behavior ..."
- 8 St. Martin de Porres**
6111 Lausche Ave.
St. Clair-Superior neighborhood
Grades nine through 12
"The school leadership attributes its success to its mission-driven, energetic staff, all of whom have a stake in each student's success. Working at St. Martin de Porres is clearly much more than a job; rather, it is a calling."
- 9 Joseph Landis**
10118 Hampden Ave.
Glenville neighborhood
Kindergarten through eighth grade
"A strength of this school is its warm environment; the principal and teachers like are committed to the well-being and success of the students. ..."
- 10 Citizens' Academy**
1827 Ansel Road
University Circle neighborhood
Kindergarten through fifth grade
"In this 'no excuses' culture, teachers do whatever is necessary to help their students succeed. ... The strength of Citizens' Academy lies in its collective vision to prepare every student to go to college."
- 11 The Intergenerational School**
12200 Fairhill Road
Near University Circle
Kindergarten through eighth grade
"Learning is organized so that students are given the opportunity to learn in their own ways at their own paces. ... Older students are encouraged to serve as mentors, or role models, to younger students. ..."
- 12 Cleveland School of the Arts**
2064 Stearns Road
University Circle neighborhood
Grades seven through 12
"Cleveland School of the Arts is a dynamic, thriving educational environment. ... Students at CSA learn in an open, warm and uninhibited environment."
- 13 Miles Park**
4090 East 93rd St.
Union-Miles neighborhood
Pre-kindergarten through eighth grade
"Miles Park is a unique setting where data and technology are used enthusiastically, leadership is flexible and the students demonstrate citizenship. Students ... reflect the high expectations placed on their academic and social performance."

ways to incorporate elements of each other's subjects.

For example, art instructor Annamae Heiman requires her seventh-grade students to design recreation centers for Cleveland's varied neighborhoods. It's an exercise in architecture, but models must be engineered to accommodate a roller coaster, and the style has to fit the neighborhood's cultural identity. The children also have to give presentations that win classmates' approval.

Denice Kaminski's sixth-graders were animated Tuesday — for a good purpose. They sat in threes, dissecting the kinds of math questions they would face

on the next day's Ohio Achievement Test.

Kaminski talked her way out of jury duty that morning and went to work, even though a substitute was on the job and it would have been a paid day's rest. She told the judge she'd like to help her students get ready for the exam.

"The teachers want to be here," said Kaminski, who has been with the Cleveland schools for 20 years.

"It's a magical place. It really is."

Students say the teachers brace them for the future and encourage them to succeed. Eighth-grader Asha Whitfield

hopes to be a pediatrician, lawyer or fashion designer. Melissa Cuadrado, in seventh grade, plans to become a librarian. Seventh-grader Steven Clark will study business in college, though he longs for a career in pro football.

Principal Kimberly Cantwell does not pretend that Benjamin Franklin is always trouble-free. But she will stack it up against suburban schools any day.

"We're doing the same things they're doing," she said, "if not better."

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