

Athens Area Schools

4320 K Drive South, East Leroy, MI 49051

(269) 729-5427

Richard Franklin, Superintendent

www.athensk12.org

District Annual Education Report (AER) Cover Letter

August 15, 2013

Dear Parents and Community Members:

We are pleased to present you with the Annual Education Report (AER) which provides key information on the 2012-2013 educational progress for the Athens Area Schools. The AER addresses the complex reporting information required by Federal and some requirements of State laws. Our staff is available to help you understand this information. Please contact Walter Dubbeld at 729-5427 ext. 230 for help if you need assistance.

The AER is available for you to review electronically by visiting the following web site www.athensk12.org or you may review a copy in the principal's office at your child's school.

The report contains the following information:

Student Assessment Data – Elementary or middle school assessment results on the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), high school assessment results on Michigan Merit Exam (MME), and assessment results for students with disabilities on Michigan's Alternative Assessment Program (MI-Access or MEAP-Access)

- Presents achievement data for all five tested subjects (mathematics, reading, science, social studies and writing) compared to targets for all students as well as subgroups of students.
- Helps parents understand achievement progress within schools and compare these to district and State achievement.

Accountability Scorecard – Detail Data and Status

Information is provided for the district and each school related to achievement targets in reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies answering questions like:

- Did the district (and schools) meet achievement targets for all students and subgroups of students?
- Did the district (and schools) meet achievement growth targets for all students and subgroups of students?

Teacher Qualification Data

- Identifies teacher qualifications at district and school levels
- Reports percentage of core academic classes taught by teachers not considered highly qualified to teach such classes

NAEP Data (National Assessment of Educational Progress)

- Provides State results of the national assessment in mathematics and reading every other year in grades 4 and 8

Review the table below listing our schools. The state has identified some schools with the status of Reward, Focus or Priority. A Reward school is one that is outperforming other schools in achievement, growth, or is performing better than other schools with a similar student population. A Focus school is one that has a large achievement gap in 30% of its student achievement scores. A Priority school is one whose achievement and growth is in the lowest 5% of all schools in the state. Some schools are not identified with any of these labels. In these cases no status label is given.

School Name	Status Label	Key initiative to accelerate achievement
East Leroy Elementary	N/A	Math Recovery
Athens High School	N/A	Writing Across the Curriculum

We are very proud of the education we provide our students. Our MEAP and MME scores are outstanding and are consistently better than the neighboring districts. We are in the top 30% of the State's Top to Bottom Rankings. We are recognized also for our caring staff and family atmosphere. Our students demonstrate sportsmanship and are continually recognized in Michigan for their excellent character and attitudes. Our Youth in Government program is recognized in Michigan and across the nation for the achievement of our students. Even though we have great test scores, we are always researching ways to improve the education of our students. We are excited about programs being implemented such as Math Recovery and Writing Across the Curriculum.

Sincerely,
Richard Franklin

Athens High School
300 E. Holeomb Street
Athens, MI 49011
(269) 729-5414

East Leroy Elementary
4320 K Drive South
East Leroy, MI 49051
(269) 729-5419

Athens Area Schools

Annual Report

2012-2013

Where teachers teach and children learn!

Organizational Profile

The Athens Area School District serves children and families from the villages of Athens and East Leroy, and the townships of Athens, Burlington, Leonidas, Leroy, Newton, Sherwood, and Wakeshma. Our District boundaries encompass farmland, small communities, and natural surroundings within a short driving distance of Battle Creek and Kalamazoo. We are a group of communities rich with time and talent; willing and able to demonstrate a strong commitment to educating our children.

The District has an Elementary School located in East Leroy and this past year we served around 300 students, grades kindergarten through fifth (5th). Our High School is located in the village of Athens. The High School had an enrollment of around 300 students, grades sixth (6th) through twelfth (12th).

We offer a comprehensive program of academic study, fine arts, interscholastic athletics and other extracurricular activities.. We continue to create more opportunities for academic excellence through our strong relationships with the Battle Creek Area Math and Science Center, the Calhoun Area Technology Center, the Kellogg Community College, and the Michigan Virtual High School. We invite you to read further and learn more about this “little pocket of excellence south of Battle Creek”.

Organizational Culture

The following organizational framework was created through the staff and supported by the Athens Board of Education:

Our Vision Statement for our District:

The Athens Area Schools are committed to providing a quality education for all students within a respectful, caring environment. Our schools strive to be a family-friendly place where people want to send their children to learn and where students are excited and motivated to achieve excellence. We are dedicated to helping young people become independent, well-rounded, contributing members of society. It is our hope and passion to see that our students are prepared for the world, have the tools and skills necessary to succeed in life, and are challenged in becoming confident leaders for tomorrow.

Our Core Mission for the schools:

The Athens Area Schools are dedicated to helping all students achieve their full academic and human potential.

Our Strategic Goals related to our core mission:

- Our students will meet, or exceed, proficiency standards as measured by the state's standardized assessment in the core content areas of science, social studies, English/language arts, and mathematics.
- Our students will successfully complete their secondary education.
- Our students will progress to postsecondary education and/or training after graduating from the Athens Area Schools.

Please note the targeted benchmarks for each strategic goal will be set on an annual basis until we can accomplish 100% of our core mission.

Our Guiding Principles for the teaching, learning, and work environment for both staff and students are:

1. We always act in the best interest of those we serve.
2. No one has the right to harm others.
3. Everyone has a responsibility to help.

Teaching and Support Staff

The Athens Area Schools had 31 professional educators teaching across our District this past year. We also had 2 school counselors, 11 paraprofessionals assisting our students in the educational process, and 20 support staff seeing to it that our students were transported safely, fed healthy and nutritious meals, and were able to learn in a clean, orderly, and functional school environment. Our administrative team and building secretarial staff included 8 more dedicated professionals striving for excellence in education.

Federal oversight and accountability placed on schools through the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation required every school district in America document how their teachers met the standards to be recognized as Highly Qualified. An audit completed by the Michigan Department of Education found that all of our teachers in the Athens School District (or 100%) met the federal standards for being Highly Qualified to teach their assignments. 100% of our teachers hold a valid teacher certification with the state of Michigan. 100% of our Paraprofessionals also are highly qualified. In addition, all of our administrators hold valid certificates.

Curriculum

The Michigan Merit Core Curriculum and the State's graduation requirements require rigorous academic requirements. Although the Athens Board of Education and teaching staff adopted new graduation requirements one year earlier that matched the new state requirements, each class hereafter must meet these increased standards for Michigan.

Michigan has adopted the Common Core Curriculum which has been developed with most of the other states in the United States. This will provide a common curriculum for all students who are educated in other participating states as well as common testing. A student moving to Michigan from Indiana will have had the same curriculum as he or she now receives from the new school in Michigan. Athens has implemented the Common Core Curriculum.

The high school provides dual enrollment opportunities through Kellogg Community College as well as opportunities to attend the Calhoun Area Career Center and the Battle Creek Area Math and Science Center.

We continue to provide all day/every day Kindergarten and believe such a program has had significant impact on our children's readiness to learn and their subsequent academic growth. We also provided other support programs to aid in our students' development; Summer Tutoring for grades 1-6, and after-school Tutoring, Credit Recovery and GAP services.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities

Our interscholastic sports program continues to move forward in a very positive and constructive direction. Athens offers student athletes the opportunity to compete in the following sports: Football, Cross Country, Basketball, Wrestling, Volleyball, Track and Field, Baseball, and Softball. We had a very busy year with extracurricular activities offered through the schools in Athens. The following activities were provided through the year: Chess Club, Student Council, 8th Grade Science Camp, Environmental Club, 5th Grade Greenfield Village Trip, Math Olympiad, National Honor Society, Quiz Bowl, Youth Advisory Committee, STAND and SADD, High School Cheer Club, Science Olympiad, Spanish Club, Varsity Club, Middle School Vocals, Yearbook, Youth in Government, and Junior and Senior Follies. It is also important to note that many of our teachers and support staff were involved with our students in extracurricular activities and/or interscholastic sports throughout the year.

District Technology

This past year we continued to build upon our solid foundation in the use of technology across the District and in the educational process for students. We are participating in the Computers for Learning Program offered through the United States military and federal government. This program has supported our efforts to upgrade every computer in the district. We have 3 instructional computer labs in the district. Our curriculum for computer technology meets all of the Michigan Educational Technology Standards for learning, and many of these benchmarks are achieved by the time our students finish the 8th grade. We adopted the Moodle applications and Renaissance Place across K-12; along with a keyboarding program that begins in early elementary through eighth grade that tracks a student's personal skill development.

Parental Involvement

The Athens Area Schools begin each year with an Open House designed to introduce and orient parents to our staff and facilities. At the beginning of each sports season, a Parent Night is held to introduce the coaching staff and Athletic Director and to review the athletic handbook or other rules/regulations pertaining to student athletes. Twice each year the schools provide Parent/Teacher Conferences to update parents on their child's academic progress and to address any concerns parents may have with their child's school experiences. Over 90% of parents attend these conferences. We also have a large number of parents using our Parent Connect web-based system to monitor attendance, grades, and nutrition. The elementary school provides regular newsletters home to parents, and the high school uses email to communicate weekly updates to parents. Our district website is constantly updated to provide information to parents. In addition, we maintain a curriculum website that can be accessed through the district site.

Aside from these regular opportunities for input, parents are encouraged to drop in to our school offices at any time. Our Board of Education holds a Business Session the third Monday of each month. Parents and community members are welcome to provide

"public comments" at the appropriate times during the agenda and can participate extensively in the work session topics as they are discussed by the Board.

We also have a standing Committee on Sex Education, the Athletic Boosters Club, a Band Boosters Club, and a School Safety Standing Committee that have parent participation. East Leroy Elementary has a longstanding Parent/Teacher/Student Organization (PTSO) made up of concerned parents wishing to have a more formal and positive influence on our schools. We also have Motor Moms and Dads offered at the elementary school strictly through parent volunteers to provide activities that enhance gross, fine and visual motor skill development. There were a number of opportunities for parents to volunteer in special projects around our District last year. We cannot adequately express our appreciation for all of the parents and community members who volunteered their time and talents so selflessly to help our schools and students.

Student Achievement

Our core mission is really student achievement, plain and simple. Although we are often given many tasks and priorities by the state and federal government and by our own communities, our main purpose is to educate our students and help them reach their fullest human potential. Toward that end, we will review our strategic goals and the related data from our performance last year.

Our students will meet, or exceed, proficiency standards as measured by the state's standardized assessment in the core content areas of science, social studies, English/language arts (reading and writing), and mathematics.

One way of measuring this goal is by the state's standardized assessment scores on the MEAP for grades 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, & 9th, and the Michigan Merit Exam (MME) for the 11th grade.

Besides the standardized testing administered by the state, we offer numerous other assessments to determine the needs of the students. At the elementary level, there are Reading assessments such as DIBELS and MLPP. The math program has additional assessments and the science kits have pre and posttests. Teachers also use a variety of formative and summative assessments in both the elementary and high school. The high school has end-of-course exams which are given to all students.

Another way of considering how our District is meeting its responsibilities for student achievement is to use the Michigan Department of Education's Ed YES Report Card. In this report, the school is assessed on 40 different data points to determine if we met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on student achievement and what our school building's composite grade should be for the year. In the school year ending 2012, all of our schools met AYP. Our Elementary School received a grade of C, and our High School received a grade of C. This was due to the increase rigor imposed by the state. Neighboring districts achieved similar grades or below.

When reviewing such data from the state and federal level on student academic performance, we also look closely at our special needs population. Each year the Michigan Department of Education performs an audit of 40 requirements from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These requirements range in nature from official documentation and planning, time lines and legal actions, to student achievement and graduation. Our determination rating was a 1 overall; which is the best rating possible for a district indicating that we met all such requirements.

Highlights and Student Successes

One of the unique attributes of this school district and this community is our focus on community service. We share the value that contributing the wellbeing of others is a worthy service and a legitimate outgrowth of a strong education. The Athens Board of Education requires that every student must provide and substantiate 40 hours of community service between their junior and senior year to graduate from Athens High School. Along with their time and talents, all of our students across the district raised money for national, state, and local causes (Red Cross Blood Drive, Soup-r-Bowl for Food Banks, St. Jude's Children's Hospital, Leukemia Foundation, Salvation Army). What a great effort from our students and a great lesson in philanthropy!

Our high school students have been participating in the Youth in Government program for many years now, and each year our students distinguish themselves as leaders among their peers.

Another way we demonstrated quality writing outside of the classroom was the high school newspaper, "The Echo". This newspaper has a student editorial board, and is a completely student-run newspaper covering school and community local news. The circulation increased this past year to 1,300 copies printed per month, and has become a newspaper the whole community has grown to appreciate and count on for local news.

This school year, professional learning teams met once every three weeks to review data, identify growth edges where we can improve instruction, and better support our students to achieve excellence. This requires a shared belief that all children can and will learn; that being public and transparent about how we teach is critical to improving instruction; that data-driven decision making is fundamental to school improvement. We have a completed District Improvement Plan, and a completed improvement plan for each building. These plans will be revised as needed. Technology will play a big role in the success of this effort so that teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders will have easy and timely access to information to improve learning.

The budget, and the state's economy, continues to present challenges for public schools. We continue to be good stewards of the public dollar and the public trust, making needed improvements across our campuses and upholding this District as one that the community and our students can be proud of. The move to two campuses was made for the 2010-2011 school year. East Leroy Elementary houses Kindergarten through 5th grade. Athens High School houses 6th through 12th grade. Even with the reductions we have had to make in spending, personnel, and programs, we have maintained a high level of quality in all that we offer. We will continue to be a "Small, but Strong" district providing the best in a quality education for the students we serve.