Pattonville is high performing

Pattonville has a richly diverse student population. In the past 20 years the district has evolved from an 87 percent resident white school district to one whose students hail from over 50 countries representing more than 30 languages. One challenge Pattonville and districts across America face is rising poverty and mobility. Last year 47 percent of Pattonville’s students qualified for free and reduced lunch compared to about 20 percent in 1998. Pattonville’s free and reduced lunch rates mirror those of Missouri and the nation. Many schools struggle academically when poverty and mobility grow beyond their district. While Pattonville still has much work left to do to ensure all students are proficient, the district has bucked that trend by continuing to improve academically. The reason? Pattonville shares the characteristics of other districts that succeed by focusing on what works.

Characteristics of successful school districts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts that work</th>
<th>Districts that struggle</th>
<th>Moral of the story</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District has results-focused plan to improve student achievement</td>
<td>No plan or plans that constantly change district’s focus</td>
<td>Fail to plan, plan to fail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Education hires superintendent and holds him/her accountable for achievement results</td>
<td>School board focused on personal agenda (i.e., nepotism, jobs for friends, policies, etc.)</td>
<td>Focus on student achievement, what is best for ALL students and avoid personal agendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable leadership committed to goals/mission of the district (district and school levels)</td>
<td>Frequent turnover in leadership leading to constant changes of focus</td>
<td>Longevity with leadership focused on goals helps stay the course and make improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent/administrative team engage students, parents, staff and community to develop and implement a plan in ways that lead to desired results</td>
<td>Superintendent/administrative team pursue own agenda or is limited in his/her capacity to improve student achievement</td>
<td>Follow the plan; empower others to achieve the desired results, and keep the bar for accountability set at a high, attainable level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers who are highly effective in every classroom</td>
<td>Ineffective teachers in too many classrooms</td>
<td>Recruit, hire, develop and retain great teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents engaged in their child’s education</td>
<td>Large percentage of parents not involved in their child’s education</td>
<td>Parents working as partners with teachers/school makes a difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students focused on meeting academic goals and growing as responsible citizens</td>
<td>Students disengaged from the learning process</td>
<td>Hire great teachers and administrators who help all students achieve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community that supports and works in partnership with its public schools</td>
<td>Community disengaged from its schools</td>
<td>Regardless of community resources (e.g., wealth), it is critical that school districts and communities work together so student achievement improves or remains at a high level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pattonville results improve with focused planning

Last year, Missouri released figures on how school districts in the state performed on current data as if the new MSIP 5 accreditation system were already starting (see more on this evaluation system on the next page - MSIP 5 is not official until the Fall of 2015). Though close to making the target on all state standards, Pattonville fell short in some areas, scoring 83 percent on its annual review under MSIP 5 standards last year. Pattonville analyzed data to determine where improvements were needed, created purposeful, focused plans on how to improve in those areas and spent the entirety of last year implementing those plans and monitoring its progress along the way. Here are some strategies that helped Pattonville achieve nearly 97 percent on this year’s review:

- Higher academic expectations - Pattonville educators strengthened expectations in core classes (communication arts, mathematics, social studies and science). High school educators used state End of Course (EOC) exams as feedback on how they were doing. This also contributed to higher ACT scores (see story on page 2).
- Focus on students attending school all day, every day - With the new state standard requiring 90 percent of students to attend school 90 percent of the time, each school in Pattonville developed a plan to increase attendance – and they worked.
- Encouraging college-level work - More high school students took the college-level Advanced Placement (AP) classes and performed well on AP exams.
- Individual plans for at-risk students - PHS improved its graduation rate through a concentrated effort by high school counselors who developed individual plans for each student at-risk of not graduating. This resulted in the school being one of the highest one-year increases in its four-year graduation rate.
- Assistance for students on college/career planning - Pattonville High School used a program called Pirate Connections to work with every student on career and college plans. For the duration of their time at PHS, students meet bimonthly to learn about a variety of topics that will help them succeed after high school. Instruction takes place via videos, handouts, various grade-level activities and collaboration with a staff member who mentors the same students all four years of high school.

Missouri’s schools are held to some of the highest standards in the nation; find out how Missouri reviews and accredits schools, how Pattonville is doing and how the plight of struggling districts impacts us all
Accountability and its Impact

State Annual Performance Report (APR)
Total of 140 points possible on five state standards

- Academic Achievement 60 points possible
- Subgroup Achievement 16 points possible
- College/Career Readiness 30 points possible
- Graduation Rate 30 points possible
- Attendance 10 points possible

Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP)

State Accreditation
Based on average percentage of points earned over multiple years
- Accredited with Distinction – Criteria to be determined
- Accredited – Greater than or equal to 70%
- Provisionally Accredited – 50% to 69.9%
- Unaccredited – 0% to 49.9%

How did Pattonville perform on its APR?
Total of 140 points possible on five state standards

- Academic Achievement: 60 points earned (100%)
- Subgroup Achievement: 11 points earned (78.6%)
- College/Career Readiness: 29 points earned (96.7%)
- Graduation Rate: 30 points earned (100%)
- Attendance: 9.5 points earned (95%)

Pattonville Total APR Score: 96.8%

School Accreditation
How does the state system work?

Missouri’s accreditation program - The Missouri School Improvement Program (MSIP) is the system used by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to review, accredit and recognize districts for academic performance. Based on a school district’s performance on a set of standards established by DESE, a district will be designated as accredited, accredited with distinction, provisionally accredited or unaccredited. The MSIP process is in limbo as the state moves from MSIP 4 (the current accountability system) to MSIP 5, a new, more challenging set of standards, which becomes official in Fall 2015.

Annual evaluations with increasing standards - Each year, school districts are measured on a set of academic standards on an annual performance report (APR) released by DESE. Results on these reports are used to determine a school district’s accreditation status through MSIP. MSIP 5 is designed with more rigorous standards. It measures a district’s success in five areas: academic achievement (overall district performance on state standardized tests); the achievement of subgroups (black, Hispanic, students eligible for free/reduced lunch, students with limited English proficiency and students with special education needs); college and career readiness; attendance rate; and graduation rate. Each standard is assigned a specific point value, with a total of 140 points possible. Districts earn accreditation status based on how many points they earn (see graphic at left).

New system could lead to large fluctuations in scores - The way MSIP 5 is designed, fluctuations in a district’s score from 2013 to Fall 2015 could be dramatic. This is because MSIP 5 awards points in one of two ways. The first way is “status,” which means scores are at a high level and stay high year after year. The second way is “progress,” which awards points only when a district shows improvement. By earning “progress” points, it is possible for a district with lower test scores to earn a higher overall percentage on MSIP 5 than a district with better test scores. If a district does not continue to show improvements each year, the points given for progress will not be earned and the district’s overall MSIP 5 percentage scores can drop fast. Pattonville earns most of its points under the “status” category for consistently high performance.

Missouri’s standards among the highest in nation, but education budget is among lowest

When Pattonville students score advanced and proficient on state tests, they are meeting or exceeding some of the toughest academic standards in the nation. A report from the National Center for Education Statistics confirmed that Missouri’s academic standards in reading and mathematics are among the most rigorous. In four areas measured – fourth- and eighth-grade reading and math – Missouri ranked in the top three of all states. The study looked at proficiency standards set by each state and compared them by using the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as a common yardstick, thereby measuring the relative difficulty of each state’s expectations. Missouri’s standards are: first in rigor in Grade 8 reading; second in Grade 4 reading and math; and third in the nation in Grade 8 mathematics. An additional report from National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) shows that Missouri ranks 49th in the nation for the percentage of funding that goes to support local school districts’ budgets. At a time when Missouri is increasing its standards and expectations for all districts (at the risk of losing accreditation), the state’s financial support of these improvement efforts is among the lowest in the nation.

Pattonville ACT composite scores increase

Pattonville High School students showed an increase in ACT scores last spring and continue to outperform peers on a state and national level. Recently released figures show the average ACT composite score in Pattonville increased from 22.1 in 2013 to 22.4 in 2014 - a figure that is among the highest in Pattonville history (second only to 2012’s score of 22.5). Pattonville students scored higher than the Missouri average of 21.8 and the national average of 21.0. The 2014 composite score also reflects the highest percentage of students taking the ACT in Pattonville’s history - 72.3 percent.

“Our staff members have worked hard to increase rigor in the classroom and provide opportunities that better prepare students for college and career after high school,” said Dr. Tim Pecoraro, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction. “Their efforts - and the hard work of our students - are evident in these scores. We’re proud of their accomplishments and the work they’re doing to prepare for the future.”
Accountability and its Impact

Transfer issue: 1993 state law helps some at the expense of the majority

Every child matters and every student deserves a quality education. Pattonville’s mission “That ALL Will Learn” is grounded in this belief. It is also the basic foundation for the state’s transfer law, which was enacted by the Missouri legislature as part of the Outstanding Schools Act of 1993. The law gives students in an unaccredited district the right to transfer to an accredited district in the same or adjoining county, with the unaccredited district paying tuition costs to the receiving district. For more than a decade after the law was passed, no school district in Missouri was deemed unaccredited. At the time, Missouri’s accreditation system (the Missouri School Improvement Program or MSIP) primarily evaluated school districts on the processes a district used to educate students and the resources they had to do their job. In the 24 years since MSIP’s inception, it has slowly evolved. By 2006, the system had been transformed completely, and the state began basing school district accreditation solely on performance standards (i.e., standardized test scores, graduation rate, attendance, etc.).

“We need to understand that the transfer law was passed in the early 1990s, school districts were primarily evaluated based on criteria such as how many books they had in the library and how many students were assigned to a teacher’s classroom,” said Dr. Mike Fulton, Pattonville superintendent. “Now, all districts are evaluated based on high-stakes standardized tests and some factors, such as attendance, over which we have limited control.”

The advent of MSIP 4 in 2006 brought with it a major shift regarding the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s (DESE) role in the accreditation process. On-site reviews, designed to provide feedback to school districts on how improve, gave way to a system where only school districts struggling with academic performance received site visits. That practice continues today. The schools and school districts receiving support typically have high levels of poverty in their communities.

“Districts with high poverty often struggle because families have limited housing options,” Fulton said. “Mobility, moving from school to school on a regular basis, is common. That in turn leads to an inconsistent learning environment for children causing them to fall behind grade-level peers. How we assess students, report those scores and then accredit schools in Missouri needs a careful review. The new MSIP 5 system has some nice features but there are underlying flaws that need to be carefully modeled out in the public eye so we don’t inadvertently propagate a system that continues to designate more and more school districts as unaccredited.”

After years of litigation, the courts continue to uphold the transfer law because it clearly states what must happen when a district becomes unaccredited. However, now that the transfer law is in actual practice, the result is that a fraction of students are helped at the expense of the majority of others who either choose to stay in their neighborhood schools or are unable to provide transportation to a school outside their community. Millions of dollars are flowing from struggling school districts - the ones who need it the most - to accredited districts.

In 2007, Pattonville’s school board decided to enact policy designed to protect unaccredited school districts from undermining their financial ability to provide needed resources for their students. That policy involved the simple action of no longer accepting non-resident, tuition-paying students except for a few existing programs. This was done in response to the St. Louis Public Schools becoming unaccredited and in recognition the transfer law existed and that it could potentially devastate the finances of the St. Louis Public Schools.

Pattonville’s decision was to stand in support of the students of St. Louis Public Schools by not taking critical resources away from their schools.

Today, two school districts in Missouri are unaccredited (Normandy and Riverview Gardens). Although Pattonville is complying with its obligations under the transfer law by accepting students from Normandy and Riverview, district officials remain concerned about the impact this has on these districts, their students and their communities.

“We cannot stress enough the seriousness of this matter,” Fulton said. “We have doubt about Normandy’s ability to remain financially solvent through this school year. The dissolution of Normandy carries with it deeply concerning consequences. (See story below for details.) It is important during this school accreditation debate to protect all children. It is essential we find common sense solutions that ensure every Missouri child has access to great public schools in their community.”

Pattonville works to be part of the solution

Pattonville educators have worked locally and at the state level to be part of the solution with struggling schools and the transfer issue. Pattonville leaders have:

• Provided Pattonville’s curriculum to the Normandy and Riverview Gardens school districts free of charge and gave advice and counsel when asked;
• Assisted Normandy this past summer in conducting screening interviews of teaching candidates;
• Served on local and state committees related to writing academic standards, curriculum and assessments;
• Collaborated and partnered with other school districts in the area of professional development;
• Joined a group of chief financial officers to meet with Riverview and Normandy to go over their budget modeling;
• Served on advisory committees working on the revamped accreditation system;
• Reviewed and provided data analysis on the impact of the transfer program and what could happen to area districts if the state mandated that Normandy were to consolidate fully with another accredited district; and
• Worked with educators across Missouri on a plan addressing how to help struggling districts (the New Path to Excellence plan developed by the Missouri Association of School Administrators).

We believe...

• Every student matters, every school matters, every community matters.
• Transferring students from one location to another does not improve schools nor does it revitalize communities.
• Local control builds strong communities.
• Early intervention is essential to improving schools.
• School buildings and the children they serve should be the focus rather than school districts.
• School funding should be spent on improving instruction rather than transporting students to other districts.
• Poverty matters.
• Stronger Missouri schools come from keeping every student, every school and every community intact.

What happens if Normandy lapses and the state consolidates it with another school district?

A study conducted in early 2014 looked at the financial impact if the Normandy School District were consolidated into another district. This study was based on Missouri’s school funding formula that was created in 2005. This formula has no provisions to address a situation where an unaccredited district is consolidated with an accredited one, however, based on the study, it was clear the financial impact to the accredited district could be damaging. A recent change passed by the Missouri legislature would make the potential financial damages even worse. This past May House Bill 1689 was approved, which requires a special recalculation of state aid when district boundaries change. The consequence is that any district that might receive Normandy as part of a consolidation plan would be assured of losing millions in state aid (see chart at right).

Last year’s study also looked at what could happen to a school district’s accreditation if Normandy were consolidated with other accredited or provisionally accredited school districts. Based on the first year of data under the new Missouri accreditation program (MSIP 5), the study showed the following would happen if Normandy were fully consolidated with an individual district:

• Nine districts in the St. Louis region would go from accredited to provisionally accredited if Normandy were consolidated into their district.
• Three districts in the St. Louis region would go from provisionally accredited to unaccredited if Normandy were consolidated into their district.

Addressing unaccredited school districts is of urgent importance to students in unaccredited districts and to students in districts that could be impacted by a consolidation mandate. The incidence of this happening is likely to grow in the very near future as state accreditation standards increase under MSIP 5. This new system takes effect in Fall 2015. Under MSIP 5, the number of provisionally accredited and unaccredited school districts will almost double increasing from 14 to 27 statewide, according to the 2014 study.

Financial impact of possible state consolidation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Lost State Aid (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parkway</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladue</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>21.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pattonville</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindbergh</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentwood</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkwood</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University City</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maplewood RH</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferg. Florissant</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Francis Howell</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazewood</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritenour</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jennings</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Normandy currently receives approximately $25 million in state aid. The chart at left shows how much of that $25 million in state aid would be lost if Normandy was fully attached to a specific district through a state consolidation.