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## Great things come from small school district

By Joy Barr  
[jbarr@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:jbarr@kde.state.ky.us)

The old adage about “good things coming in small packages” certainly holds true for Eminence Independent Schools. Located in rural Henry County, the district may be small in size but its success is large.

All 575 students — preschool through 12th grade — attend classes in one building. Yet, learning is occurring at high levels in every part of the facility.

Superintendent David Baird praised the school’s teachers, students and parents for the steady academic increases. “Our success does not come without tremendous teamwork and an outpouring of support from the community.”

The entire school district is focused on developing world-class students in all aspects of life. All programs in the district are designed to take a step forward to 100 percent proficiency for all students and to provide a vision for a world-class school district.

“The main focus of their success is the positive school culture. Every teacher cares for their students and holds them accountable,” said Louise Byrd, the

Kentucky Department of Education’s achievement gap coordinator working with Northern Kentucky schools to close achievement gaps. “The students know the expectations and govern their behaviors appropriately.”

The elementary school has embraced the America’s Choice literacy design. America’s Choice is a comprehensive, K–12 school improvement program developed by the National Center on Education and the Economy.

Primary students receive two-and-a-half hours of literacy instruction each day. This includes skills instruction, mini-lessons, author and genre studies, writers workshops and readers workshops. Teachers establish other rituals and routines that enable them to spend time with individuals and small groups of students.

Eminence has seen dramatic growth in state test scores over the last four years. There were no novice portfolios in the district during the 2002–2003 school year.

“We begin with each child at their level of academic ability and move him or



her forward,” said Literacy Coordinator Tommy Baxter. “It is based completely upon developmentally appropriate best practices that begin with our youngest preschool students and continues across all grade levels.”

Another literacy component is the school’s 25 Books Campaign where students and adults pursue the goal of reading at least 25 books by the end of each school year. Each person keeps a log of books read, and student book reviews are selected for display in the school’s hallways. Last year, the elementary students read approximately 18,000 books.

Michael Doran, principal of the elementary school, was instrumental in developing a Book of the Month program. Doran reads the selected book of the month to each classroom.

Students, faculty, staff and families have a common frame of reference for discussion and accountable book talk around the selected books. “Our entire staff demonstrates daily that they care about all students, and they find a variety of ways to make sure each student is successful. The Book of the Month is just one of the ways students can express themselves,” said Doran.

Students’ hard work and determination is evidenced by impressive student work displayed throughout the school. Each

example identifies important teaching elements.

“Our kindergarten students learn from rituals, routines and modeling beginning with a drawing rubric. The students are held accountable to meet writing and reading standards,” said Phyllis Jamison, a kindergarten teacher.

Jamison just received her National Board Certification. Teaching practices at Eminence are in line with what “the best schools are doing,” she added.

All students in grades 5–8 at Eminence develop their own individualized education plan. SPREE — Student Plan for Reaching Educational Excellence — is a set of seven goals specific to the interests, strengths and/or weaknesses of each individual student.

The student, teacher and parents meet at the beginning of each school year to plan the child’s SPREE. They sign a contract agreeing that the student must meet a minimum of five of the seven goals to be promoted.

“SPREE helps give each student an atmosphere to grow academically, socially, personally and emotionally — the world-class citizen,” said Steve Frommeyer, middle and high school principal.

A three-step initiative is in place at Eminence that allows students to excel and to move toward proficiency. Wellness, assessment and



accountability are all goals in development of this world-class school. “Some may be surprised about our emphasis on wellness, but each student must be mentally and physically fit in order to learn and be accountable,” stated Frommeyer.

To make certain all students get the support they need, several high school students serve as mentors to younger students. The mentors work daily with designated elementary and middle school students to provide additional assistance in academic skills.

The Final Frontier is considered by many as the “missing link” to connecting some students to academic success. This committee, made up of various district resource people, addresses the at-risk population in schools. The committee assists students and families in finding resources to break down barriers that may prohibit students from learning.

Eminence Independent and the City of Eminence obtained a 21st Century Community Learning Grant. Their partnership gave new life and use to the city’s community center, located across the street from the school.

The building is used for after-school programs and a state-of-the-art fitness center. A federal grant provided equipment for the fitness center that can be used by the school and the community.

The district recently received a “School of Merit” designation from the National Association for Year-Round Education. Eminence is one of only eight in the nation to receive this distinction.

“We have been a year-round school district for eight years and believe that it contributes to the overall success of the district and continued test score improvement,” said Superintendent Baird.

He also feels Eminence students are self-reliant and confident as a result of the learning environment that exists. The teachers are all organized together. “It is a total-team effort, from staff to faculty, bus driver to custodian. We are all involved in helping students learn and thrive,” said Baird. “We believe that our success comes as a result of years of work in implementing strategies that lift Eminence students to a higher level of learning.”

For more information about Eminence Independent programs, contact David Baird, Steve Frommeyer or Michael Doran at (502) 845-5427; or send e-mail to dbaird@eminence.k12.ky.us, sfrommeyer@eminence.k12.ky.us, or mdoran@eminence.k12.ky.us.

