

Great Things are Happening at Big Ridge Elementary School

Working Hard Together: HCDE, PEF and Big Ridge

Hamilton County schools and the Public Education Foundation are strong partners in providing training for teachers, helping principals become more effective school leaders, improving literacy in elementary schools, and improving secondary education in Hamilton County. Big Ridge has made great use of this partnership:

- Big Ridge principal **Susan Hixson** collaborates with other Hamilton County principals in regular meetings and annual leadership institutes.
- Big Ridge's successful reading instruction program is reinforced by new teaching methods that were proven highly effective in Hamilton County's elementary reform initiative.

“You should come to Big Ridge because the teachers have fun ways to teach and they never, ever quit – not once!”

- Jacob Turman, Grade 3

Big Ridge teachers blend the best of tradition and current best practices in the various disciplines. Instruction is differentiated in all curriculum areas. Students also have access to the cultural arts via visual and performing arts programs. Big Ridge offers a variety of extra-curricular activities including the chess club, track and cross-country teams, boys and girls basketball teams, chorus, the handbell choir and the student newspaper staff.

Good News! Tests will be harder!

Why is that good news? Because the state is raising its academic standards as part of the Tennessee Diploma Project (<http://tn.gov/TDP/>), beginning with tests taken in spring of 2010. Test scores are likely to dip at first, but they will rise quickly to meet the new standards, and Tennessee's students – your children – will be better prepared to compete for good jobs in our global economy.

2009 Report Card

Highlights:

- 71.9% scored **advanced** in math – up from 61% in 2003.
- 61.1% scored **advanced** in reading – up from 53% in 2003.
- Big Ridge has scored straight 'A's in academic achievement since 2003.

| Achievement (NCLB) | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | Proficient & Advanced | | Advanced | |
| | School | District | School | District |
| Math | 97% | 89% | 71.9% | 44.8% |
| Lang Arts | 98% | 90% | 61.1% | 39.3% |

| | Academic |
|----------------|----------|
| Math | A |
| Reading/Lang | A |
| Social Studies | A |
| Science | A |



Public Education Foundation
Partners for strong schools.

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HCDE and PEF: Partners for Strong Schools

The Public Education Foundation (PEF) is a local non-profit organization that partners with the Hamilton County Department of Education (HCDE) to improve student achievement by improving public schools.

PEF contributes:

- Research into best practices
- Training for teachers and school leaders
- Opportunities for educators to share great ideas
- Fundraising to support this work

Together, HCDE and PEF are changing education in Hamilton County, and changing students' lives. Learn more at www.HCDE.org or www.pefchattanooga.org.

Elementary Reform

The Benwood Initiative is a nationally renowned, highly successful school improvement initiative that began in 2001 in Hamilton County's eight most challenged elementary schools. Lessons learned are being shared with other elementary schools, including Big Ridge, through a principals' network and other types of professional development.

There are excellent teachers in every school in Hamilton County. Read about 20 of them, visit their classrooms, and tell your own story at www.pefchattanooga.org/ExcellentTeachers.

Exciting New Initiatives!

Teacher Residency - Like a medical residency program that provides "on-the-job training" for doctors, teacher residents will spend a year working with a master teacher in the classroom while also taking classes to earn a master's degree and a teaching certificate. Recruits will specialize in math, science, or other hard-to-fill subject areas.

Principal Leadership Academy – It's not easy being a principal! This year, HCDE and PEF will provide a series of workshops for 15-20 assistant principals to help prepare them to move smoothly into the responsibility of being a principal. HCDE, PEF, the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce and UT Chattanooga are currently developing a full-scale Academy that will provide more intensive training, mentoring and support for assistant principals who are likely to become principals.

College Begins in Kindergarten

PEF has recently merged with the local College Access Center – a long-standing partner in our college access work. With help from the Hamilton County Department of Education and the Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga, we have placed part-time college advisors in every high school in Hamilton County, and are working to encourage students to start thinking as early as middle school about post-high school college or technical training.

Partly as a result of this work, the number of graduates who enrolled in college from Hixson High, where Big Ridge students are zoned, increased from 70.6% in 2004 to 73.3% in 2008. For more on school progress at Hixson Middle and High, go to www.pefchattanooga.org/schoolinformation.

Get info on helping your child go to college at www.pefchattanooga.org/CollegeAccess