

A graphic of a spotlight shining down from the top center of the page, creating a yellow cone of light that illuminates the title and the school name.

Spotlight School

McKee Elementary

Jackson County

GRADES SERVED: K-5

McKee Elementary School is a Title I school located in the county seat of McKee, Kentucky in Jackson County and serves about 400 students preschool-5th grade. Many families in the community have deep, multi-generational roots in the area. The limited industry in Jackson County, largely due to the protection of the Daniel Boone National Forest, contributes to a high unemployment rate, leading many residents to leave in search of better-paying jobs. However, the area benefits from lower pollution, less congestion and an abundance of natural beauty. McKee Elementary School has scored Blue for the Overall Performance Rating for consecutive years.

DEMOGRAPHICS

76.2% Economically Disadvantaged

39% Students with Disabilities

9.2% Homeless

PRINCIPAL AND CONTACT INFORMATION:

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WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS SCHOOL:

- 1.** How to incorporate blended learning through small group instruction at all grade levels for all Tiered levels
- 2.** Effectively utilizing all school staff and intentional scheduling to provide personalized learning for all student needs
- 3.** Using data at all grade levels to systematically group students
- 4.** Recognizing the importance of teacher voice and autonomy

SERVICES AND STRATEGIES USED TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS

McKee Elementary has implemented several proactive strategies to drive desired changes across multiple areas. The school collects and analyzes data from multiple sources, including Kentucky Summative Assessment (KSA), i-Ready, STAR™ Reading, and other assessments, to inform instruction. To maintain high proficiency, the school uses i-Ready diagnostics to inform interventions and has dedicated protected intervention times in the schedule. Data analysis is used to identify struggling students quickly, allowing timely interventions to help them catch up to grade level. Grade-level “Magic i-Ready numbers” are aligned with prior KSA data to predict proficiency on state tests, and teachers share these goals with students. i-Ready diagnostics continue to be a key tool for identifying struggling students and grouping them for targeted interventions. Teachers also use diagnostic results to track progress and identify students who may need additional support, such as special education referrals. The use of aligned “Magic Numbers” has helped predict student performance and improve groupings for individualized instruction.

The Read to Achieve (RTA) program supports students K-3, helping them develop grade-level reading skills and avoid potential special education referrals. A new multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) monitoring system allows for real-time tracking of interventions.

Efforts to close the achievement gap for special needs students continue through collaborative instruction that increases exposure to the general education curriculum.

The school has also implemented a positive behavioral intervention and supports (PBIS) system with a focus on respect, responsibility, safety and kindness. Parent involvement is prioritized through various communication methods, including Keep it Together (KIT) folders, progress reports, conferences and social media to keep parents informed and engaged in their students’ education.

The school maintains a strong focus on ensuring students are performing at or above grade level before advancing to the next grade. Parents are kept informed through daily communication, progress reports and meetings regarding possible student retention.

Professional learning communities (PLCs) meet weekly for grade-level planning, and bi-monthly for content-specific collaboration, addressing achievement and curriculum gaps. The school also partners with Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (FRYSC) and Partners for Rural Impact to strengthen the connection between home and school, with the goal of increasing parental involvement.

WHAT DATA SUPPORTS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SERVICES AND STRATEGIES OFFERED?

- McKee Elementary has implemented new reading and math curricula, which have been successful in differentiating instruction to meet students’ specific needs.
- A strong focus has been placed on small group instruction and interventions to meet students where they are.
- KSA results from 2021-2022 show 72% of students are proficient in reading and 55% in math.
- In 2022-2023, proficiency rates held steady or improved, with 71% in reading and 57% in math.
- In 2023-2024, proficiency increased significantly: 77.3% in reading and 70.1% in math.
- To reach the 2025 goal, McKee Elementary plans to continue using the aligned curricula, i-Ready diagnostics, targeted interventions and standards deconstruction.

WHAT CHALLENGES HAS THE SCHOOL FACED? HOW WERE THEY OVERCOME?

One of McKee Elementary's biggest challenges during its transition from a struggling to a high-performing school was the divide between non-KSA tested primary grades and KSA-tested upper grades. Primary grades felt undervalued, as they didn't participate in KSA/KPREP, leading to a sense that they lacked accountability. To address this, the school implemented data-driven PLCs, using i-Ready diagnostic scores to create an academic index score for all grade levels, similar to KSA reporting. Each teacher calculated their own beginning-of-year score and set a goal for their end-of-year score. These goals were displayed in the teacher conference room for transparency. After the end-of-year diagnostic, the scores were recalculated to determine whether the goals were met and to assess the overall school index. This approach emphasized that all students' scores were equally important, fostering a sense of ownership and cohesion among the staff. As a result, the primary and intermediate grades worked together toward a common goal, helping the school grow and improve.

WHAT ADVICE DOES THIS SCHOOL SUGGEST TO SCHOOLS ON THEIR JOURNEY TO SUSTAINED ACHIEVEMENT AND TRANSFORMATION?

- Keep students at the center of all decisions and practices.
- Avoid getting caught up in daily tasks and stay focused on student success.
- Implement effective practices, maintain high expectations and foster a positive school culture.
- Use data to drive instruction and ensure progress.
- Encourage students to take ownership of their diagnostic scores and set goals.
- Push students to understand where they are and where they need to be to succeed.
- Ensure staff work to meet each student at their individual level.
- Positive outcomes will follow when staff and students see and embrace growth.
- When positive changes become everyday practices, real growth occurs as these practices become habits.



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