

## Adlai E. Stevenson II Elementary School

2106 Arrowhead Drive  
Bloomington, IL 61704  
Principal: Tina Fogal

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Adlai E. Stevenson II Elementary School, a progressive K–5 school, was named a No Child Left Behind–Blue Ribbon School in 2009. The mission at Stevenson is to build a community of lifelong learners. Staff value diversity; nurture each student to reach their full potential; emphasize communication, problem solving, and creativity; and promote good character. The school serves a diverse population of nearly 500 students from throughout Bloomington Public Schools District 87, making it the highest enrolled elementary school in the entire district.

- ◆ Elementary (K–5)
- ◆ 52% White
- ◆ 22% Black
- ◆ 11% Asian
- ◆ 9% Multiracial
- ◆ 5% Hispanic
- ◆ 47% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- ◆ 7% English Language Learners

Stevenson has seen great achievement gains since 2002, particularly among fifth graders. From the 2003–04 to 2007–08 school years, the overall percentage of fifth-grade students who met or exceeded state standards in reading increased from 73% to 94%. During the same period, the percentage of African American fifth graders who met or exceeded state standards in reading nearly doubled — increasing from 47% to 93%. In addition, the percentage of third-grade students who have met or exceeded state standards for reading climbed from 81% in 2003–04 to 89% in 2007–08.

Stevenson’s curriculum is aligned with the Illinois Learning Standards. The core reading curriculum was selected because its theories best met the varied range of student needs. In addition, teachers supplement the curriculum with literature and nonfiction books and magazines. There is a schoolwide focus on learning targets, and these targets are posted clearly for all to see. For example, one target is “I can summarize text,” while others address questioning, predicting, monitoring, clarifying, and evaluating. Reading comprehension strategies are taught across the curriculum, for example, helping students better understand science articles and social studies biographies.

The school uses the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system. The guidelines — posted in each room and reinforced by teachers — are: be safe, be responsible, and be respectful. Teachers spend important class time practicing and modeling effective group work behavior, which serves as a foundation for the literacy center work seen during language arts lessons. Some teachers use observation checklists to monitor if students are staying on task and following PBIS rules.

## **Reading Comprehension Instruction**

Literacy blocks are typically 75 minutes and include direct instruction, guided reading, literacy center time, and independent reading.

Teachers use direct instruction to teach phonemic awareness and phonics skills starting in kindergarten. As students continue onto later grades, direct instruction continues to be used in teaching vocabulary, fluency, reading strategies, and comprehension skills.

Teachers use the read-aloud to model comprehension strategies, teach literary elements, build analytical thinking skills, and address state standards. In second grade, teachers often start read-alouds by introducing the comprehension strategy for the week. After introducing the book and engaging students in predicting what might happen in the story, the teacher begins reading, making sure to incorporate stopping points that allow time for reflection, ensuring comprehension, and helping students practice the week's strategy. This method helps students become well versed in using comprehension terms like monitor, clarify, evaluate, and predict.

After modeling a lesson in the whole group, teachers provide more intensive small-group instruction. Based on formative assessment results, teachers place students in flexible groups, and more specific, leveled readers are used to teach comprehension strategies in this setting. This allows teachers to keep a running record of students' fluency and overall reading progress. The guided reading will typically focus on one of the core reading strategies.

During small-group instruction, the rest of the class completes language arts activities independently at their desks or at differentiated learning centers around the room. Some of the differentiated activities students work on include: leveled reading materials, supplemental activities and projects, and enrichment activities. Teachers also find ways to make the learning center activities more appealing. One center may ask students to work with question cards based on Bloom's Taxonomy by using a die. Students would match the number they roll to the corresponding comprehension activity. For example, rolling a five would require working on an activity related to the fifth level of Bloom's Taxonomy, such as completing a writing assignment or creating a poster. In another center activity, students might work to make a text-to-self connection while completing a graphic organizer. Students keep strategy booklets to remind them of what they have learned and to assist them as they learn to use the strategies independently.

The teachers at Stevenson value the importance of text discussions in engaging students with literature and each other. One teacher has her students "buddy talk" after reading a book. Students might ask questions of their buddy or use whiteboards to write their responses together. Other teachers use literature circles, where students play particular roles like book reviewer, bridge builder, or circle supervisor.

## **Schoolwide Focus on Literacy**

Principal Tina Fogal says, "No matter what students they have, teachers have a feeling that they are teachable, they can learn, and that they will get them to succeed at their level." Staff show their dedication to student achievement in multiple ways, including providing additional assistance to students through an extensive after-school tutoring program. Having strong parent and volunteer involvement in the classroom also allows staff to devote more time to individual student's needs for enrichment and intervention. To support beginning and struggling readers, the school has piloted early literacy

programs in the primary grades and received Title I program support. Many teachers apply skills learned through professional development on aligning classroom instruction and assessment to state educational standards using research-based practices.

Stevenson uses different supports to ensure appropriate instructional practices are in place. The building leadership team conducts professional development for reading comprehension for every school and every new teacher in District 87. Staff's ability to assist other schools with reading comprehension is one indicator of the quality of practice at Stevenson School. There is also a student improvement committee. This schoolwide collaborative committee developed the Passport program, which exposes students to multiple genres in the school library. In this program, each student is given a passport that gets stamped each time they read a book. Classroom teachers decide whether their students complete the reading at home or during class.

### **Using Data for Student Placement and Planning**

Students complete a computerized reading assessment where they select and read short passages from three different genres of their choice and then answer comprehension questions about them. Questions vary in difficulty, and a lexile score is produced, which lets each student know their reading level. Knowing their score allows students to take ownership of their learning and encourages them to make knowledgeable choices about the books they select to read.

Staff and administrators at Stevenson use local and state test scores to make instructional decisions and identify appropriate support services. Data are used to determine areas of instructional strength and weakness, as well as in choosing, tailoring, and targeting curriculum at all grade levels. Typically in the early fall, test results for the school are reviewed in an all-staff meeting. From there, teachers and staff review scores by grade level. Finally, teachers complete a comprehensive review of the test scores for their individual classes. By sharing test scores at and across grade levels, teachers gain an understanding of how skills are transferred in subsequent grades. In addition to local and state tests, Stevenson School uses additional assessment instruments that measure the acquisition of early literacy skills and assess students' progress toward meeting state standards. These assessments serve as powerful tools in creating an action plan, which may include: interventions, after-school tutoring, or adjustments of how or when a subject area is taught.

As one teacher says, "At Stevenson School the model is building a community of lifelong learners. We take that model, use it in our daily practice, and tell our students that there is a reason that we are learning all these things — it's not to get a good grade on a test or to get to the next grade — it's for our own learning."