

10 reasons to vote for Issue 6

Leggett chases academic excellence

You've heard the rap on inner-city schools, right? That they are failures, academic disaster zones where students are trapped and teachers are little more than glorified baby-sitters? That added money would merely yield more of the same?

Taxpayers want to reward success. Fair enough. The Akron Public Schools has many success stories. Leggett Elementary is one, an inner-city school that explains why Akron does not fit the mold of a dysfunctional urban district.

Leggett has 285 students, 96 percent of whom are eligible for reduced-cost or free lunch. The school reflects the diversity of the city's population: 45 percent of the students are white. An equal number are black. Many students rotate into and out of the building. Among the 42 fifth-graders who graduated in 2006, just three attended from kindergarten. That's a typical inner-city school profile. Yet Leggett is posting performance scores that schools in more affluent neighborhoods would envy.

Leggett rated effective on the latest state report card, one rank higher than it scored the two previous years. It passed six of the eight statewide achievement indicators, up from two in 2005 and one in 2004. In the three year period, the percentage of third-graders who aced the reading test

has climbed from 64 percent to 82 percent. In math, the percentage has advanced 72 in 2005 to 82. Ninety-one percent of fourth-graders passed the writing test, 25 percentage points better than last year.

Leggett is doing many things right. The principal credits the impressive progress to a stable, dedicated staff. The past five years, the school has lost one teacher. Students have daily 90-minute sessions in math and reading. They participate in a supplemental reading program called The 100 Book Challenge, which requires an additional 30 minutes of reading at home and at school.

Partnerships bridge school and community. Alliances with groups as varied as The Chapel, the University of Akron, Hale Farm and the Akron After School Program provide students with supplies, experienced tutors, sports and enrichment programs, parent outreach and discipline intervention.

The Leggetts of the Akron Public Schools deserve support to sustain the progress. Don't punish success. Vote for Issue 6 on Nov. 7.