

Glasgow Middle School

Baton Rouge, Louisiana



OVERVIEW

Baton Rouge ("Red Stick"—named for a reddish pole which marked two Native American hunting areas) is situated on the Mississippi River and is the state capital of Louisiana. The second largest city in Louisiana after New Orleans, it is a major industrial, petrochemical and active port of the American South. After Hurricane Katrina (August 29, 2005), the city's population doubled. East Baton Rouge Parish's population has climbed to almost 600,000 since the mandatory evacuation was issued.



Glasgow Middle School was built in 1955.

The East Baton Rouge Parish School System serves the Greater Baton Rouge area. With more than 90 schools and an enrollment of approximately 46,000 students in pre-K through grade 12, it is the largest district in the state and nationally among the top 100 school districts in student enrollment.

The 33-year-old building that currently houses Glasgow Middle School (GMS) was constructed in 1955 as a suburban elementary school designed to serve an all-white middle class neighborhood. It later became a junior high school for the same neighborhood. The school closed to become a district satellite office and reopened in 1979 as the district's first magnet middle school. When the magnet program moved to another school, Glasgow Middle School began serving a new community of two nearby inner-city areas. In 1998, the gifted/talented program moved to GMS and serves the southern part of Baton Rouge.

Student Demographics

Glasgow Middle School
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
<http://glasgow.ebrschools.org>
689 students, 6-8

African American	60%
White	28%
Asian/Pacific Islander	10%
Students eligible for free/ reduced price meals	58%
Students with Limited English Proficiency	12%
Special Education Students	5%
Student/Teacher Ratio	16:1

Glasgow students are recognized nationally for their academic achievement. For the last nine years, one or more Glasgow students have competed on the Louisiana State MathCounts team. In 2005, a Glasgow student won the national MathCounts championship. Twenty-five percent of the school's 7th graders are invited to participate in the Duke University talent search.

An urban middle school comprising grades 6, 7, and 8, Glasgow offers a "traditional" academic program, a gifted and talented program, and services for students with disabilities. Traditional students may also take classes in the gifted and talented programs. GMS is a school of choice for parents under the provisions of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), meaning that parents can request a transfer to Glasgow as a high-performing school from a lower-performing one.

Seventy four percent of the GMS teachers are highly qualified according to No Child Left Behind criteria. Two members of the faculty are National Board-certified and one teacher of mathematics has served as the state MathCounts coach for the national competition for the past 19 years.

GATOR BITE

The positive energy of Glasgow's students and staff—the "Gators"—is palpable on entering the building. They live by the Gator BITE code:

Believe in yourself
Integrity
Treat others as yourself
Education is #1

This code is repeated daily during the morning announcements and is posted throughout the school as a beacon. As a teacher said, "When you walk in the door there is a different feeling here. Because of high expectations, the students work from bell to bell in every class." Added another, "My students



Because of high expectations, Glasgow students work from bell to bell in every class, a teacher notes.

know that I want them to succeed in life." Because Glasgow is a choice school, this culture of high expectations serves transferring students especially well. Typically transferring into Glasgow six to eight weeks after the beginning of the school year, many transferring students have incoming norm-referenced scores below the 13th percentile. The Glasgow program is designed to accelerate their learning to close the gap with their peers; for example, transferring students receive a double block of mathematics. This reinforces the key practices of holding high expectations and

rewarding positive behavior, the cornerstones of the GMS community. The school's number one priority is the success of all students at Glasgow Middle School.

HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND RIGOROUS CURRICULA

The phrase "high expectations" has been in vogue for a number of years in education. It plays out in a variety of ways at Glasgow Middle School. High expectations are communicated to students by providing challenging courses in all subject areas; students are also able to accelerate their learning through differentiated instruction based on standardized and formative assessments. All students, if qualified, may participate in any program at the school, including the Gifted and Talented program.

The Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum serves as the framework for core content areas. The school's literacy program emphasizes writing across the curriculum and an appreciation of literature. Five certified as National Writing Project teachers focus on writing skills with 8th graders. A range of mathematics classes are offered, from basic 6th-grade skills to Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, and Advanced Math and Trigonometry for high school credit. The school has invested in two sets of textbooks for each student so that one set can be left at home and the other remains at school, eliminating the disruption of forgotten books at either end.

The school's full menu of electives includes the Arts (music and art), Latin, French and Spanish, as well as beginning, intermediate, and advanced concert band classes. Glasgow also supports three school choirs and string classes. The Arts are not part of the comprehensive curriculum but a state Arts curriculum offers teachers a measure of guidance. Arts educators are also guided by standards and benchmarks recommended by their respective national professional organizations.

"Our students are so ready for high school and they do maintain their academic success. They will go to college and they want to. Before they come here they don't think they can go to college," averred one teacher proudly. The district and schools take full advantage of Louisiana State University (LSU), where students can receive accelerated instruction at LSU summer school.

The Talented Program serves students identified as talented in Theatre, Music and Visual Arts. Trained professionals provide enriched instruction in small group settings. The Gifted Program serves students identified as academically gifted. Its reduced class size and differentiated curriculum have been designed to meet the unique needs of gifted students. Instruction focuses on complex concepts and an in-depth exploration of topics.

The Scholastic Academy is designed to encourage potentially gifted students to think critically and creatively. After one year of participation in a gifted setting, students are referred to Pupil Appraisal Services for gifted evaluation, and continued placement in the program is determined annually. The Gifted and Talented program is an in-class program, rather than the pull-out model used in other schools.

Students at GMS take high expectations as seriously as the faculty. An example is the School for Schools program. Started by two Glasgow students for their social studies fair project, this is an international effort to adopt or build schools in Northern Uganda by building awareness and raising money. GMS was the second middle school and the first public middle school in the U.S. to participate in helping the children of Northern Uganda. At this time, 48 students and 17 sponsors are participating in the Uganda project. The two students won first place in the political science category at the school level and will participate in the state contest.

PASSIONATE LEADERSHIP

Principal Judy Odell is recognized as the school's instructional and inspirational leader. An assistant principal is in charge of discipline issues; a dean of students also works with some discipline issues, conducts classroom observation walkthroughs, and oversees the lesson plan system. They work together as a well-organized team. Parents, students and staff are welcome to discuss and share any concerns with them. Ms. Odell uses distributive leadership throughout the school in a variety of ways:

- A school-level Instructional Management Team (IMT), composed of all the department chairs, translates and supports instruction. As a team member explained, "I am the liaison between the curriculum and the teachers. I check lesson plans, do some observations, and participate in system-wide walk throughs." The IMT meets monthly for half a day to address curriculum, professional development, and assessment concerns.
- Department chairs meet with their departments monthly for half a day to convey information from the IMT and provide professional development.
- Instructional team meetings are interdisciplinary, comprising the four core subject area teachers and, when possible, specialists. Teams meet every other day for a 45-minute common planning time to discuss instructional and student issues and meet with parents. Working from agendas, they document discussions about curricula, goals and feedback, parent and community involvement, positive school climate, and collegiality and professionalism, and submit this report to Principal Odell.
- At the direction of the administration, the Reading Coach works with teachers.
- After-school faculty meetings are held monthly.
- The school improvement team comprises parents, faculty, staff, administration, and community leaders. It meets monthly from October through May to lead the school in following the School Improvement Plan.

The interdisciplinary teams represent the core subject areas of English, mathematics, science, and social studies, and their meetings encourage in-depth discussions about their shared students and their learning needs.

“Our teams really work will together and communicate,” said a team member. Added another, “When we meet we can see and feel how students and teachers are doing. There is a sense of community for children and adults.”

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement is strong, especially considering that Glasgow is not a neighborhood school; most students are bused to the school from areas all around their parish. A small group of parents gathered during the school visit spoke effusively about Principal Odell’s leadership and the quality of the teaching staff, as well as the benefits they saw in the diversity of the student body and the high expectations that the school holds for all students. “The adults approach problems with a positive attitude and sense of humor,” said one parent. Another remarked, “My son really feels cared for here. There are high expectations and a real sense of love and the arts,” and a parent added that “Here there are two trophy cases—one for academics and one for sports!” “The music program is outstanding!” said another.



Parent involvement is crucial to Glasgow’s success.

Among the many reasons parents cited to account for Glasgow’s success were strong leadership, autonomy to work with students, a two-way information flow, a curriculum with a mix of arts and academics, diversity of staff and students, and parents who support what the school needs. “If the school needs something the parents have it within 48 hours,” stated a parent.

Interviews with the school administration disclosed limited participation by community organizations allied with the school, although the local Chamber of Commerce is sponsoring an awards luncheon for the faculty and staff in March to honor Glasgow’s selection as a Blue Ribbon School.

The PTO participates in several activities to support school programs, selling school spirit items, preparing meals for Open Houses and school concerts, and providing teacher grants for instructional materials and supplies. PTO members serve as judges for the science and social studies fairs and “do whatever it takes to get it done.”

INNOVATIONS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Several key innovations make a difference for the Glasgow community. It is a school of choice for parents and families who wish to move their children from a low-performing public school to high-performing and offers all families opportunities for academically advanced and talented children.

An inclusive academic program and a caring learning environment prepare students from diverse elementary academic experiences to work as a cohesive learning unit. Sitting in on several interdisciplinary team meetings, an observer can readily see that the teams encourage in-depth discussions about their shared students and their learning needs. Teachers know what the students are doing and the help they need. "Our teams really work will together and communicate," said a team member. Another teacher remarked, "When we meet we can see and feel how students and teachers are doing. There is a sense of community for children and adults."



Glasgow students are taught to aim for, and reach, high standards.

Teachers new to the school are paired with another teacher for a year, and the dean provides extra support as needed. Teachers new to teaching take part in a two-year mentoring program. The Instructional Management Team supports all teachers and the grade-level interdisciplinary team meetings support active learning communities.

Positive Behavior Support (PBS), a program designed to reinforce positive behavior among all members of the school's population, emphasizes the use of preventive, teaching, and reinforcement-based strategies to achieve meaningful and durable behavior and lifestyle outcomes. It is designed to ensure that everyone is aware of behavioral expectations, that these expectations are clearly and concisely stated, and that positive recognition is awarded to those who exhibit these expected behaviors over a period of time. The program encompasses all students, teachers, and other staff on campus, and focuses on behaviors in the classroom, the cafeteria, during assemblies, and in the hallways between classes. As a parent noted, "Glasgow is a safe place because the response is swift, severe, and sustained if any confrontations [arise]."

Peer helpers are nominated 8th-graders; being a peer helper is considered an honor and the other students look up to them. Under a faculty advisor, peer helpers are trained to work with their peers to understand problems such as signs of depression and how to deal with them. Observations by peer helpers provide insights into what makes Glasgow special. "It helps us in every part of our lives," "There's always someone there to support each other because people look out for each other," "We learn how to help each other. They [new students] become one of us the day they get here," "We are taught mutual respect and manners," "We've got class teachers. The expectations they have is the way of life," "We're equals with the teachers. We can ask questions and respond to the teachers and they don't get mad at you," "They use PowerPoints, hands-on activities, and they don't lecture. We have fun but we

are learning," and "It's a real community. This was a different school on the first day of 6th grade than my other school."

One student's experience highlights the impact of Glasgow Middle School and peer helpers. He and his family came to Baton Rouge as victims of hurricane Katrina. Initially he wanted to attend his neighborhood school rather than Glasgow, but said he was glad he went to Glasgow, because it saved him from the path of drinking and stealing with his neighborhood peers. "I've learned to deal with the peer pressure. I am doing more sports so I am not around [bad influences]."

USING ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE ACADEMIC OUTCOMES

Assessment results are key to school improvement and serve as the instructional focus for all students. Members of the school improvement team analyze student data to note strengths and weaknesses, and incorporate successful strategies into the next academic year, designing interventions for differentiated instruction. The different assessments inform faculty so they can meet the goals of the school improvement plan.

Parents are apprised of their child's assessment results throughout the year. The faculty immediately consults with parents of children who score below the criteria for passing. Students receive extra support through tutoring and test preparation.

Glasgow Middle School administers both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. Until 2006, 6th- and 7th-grade students took the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), which was replaced in 2006 with the iLEAP test. The iLEAP includes both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced data and is geared to the state's criterion-referenced test, the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP21). Eighth-grade students must score a minimum of Approaching Basic in either English or mathematics and Basic in the other for promotion to high school.

Scores for the ITBS (used through 2005) and the iLEAP (begun in 2006) for 6th-graders at Glasgow are typically the lowest in the school, because Glasgow is a receiving school for students of varied socio-economic backgrounds and from some lower-achieving schools. The challenge that incoming 6th-grade student scores present



Michelle Maher (L), dean of students and Judy Odell, principal.

requires special effort from 6th-grade teachers, and new students typically take a few months to become accustomed to the rigorous standards. As the faculty works with new students, test scores improve considerably for 7th-grade students, and improvement is even more pronounced by 8th grade. In spite of low 6th-grade scores, both 6th- and 7th-grade student scores on the IOWA and the iLEAP still exceeded the national norm.

Glasgow has a higher percentage of students scoring at the upper end of the range and a lower percentage scoring at the lower end. The reverse is true statewide. Louisiana's criterion-referenced test (LEAP21) has five levels: Advanced (superior performance), Mastery (competency), Basic (fundamental knowledge), Approaching Basic (partial demonstration of fundamental knowledge), and Unsatisfactory (not ready for the next school year). Glasgow students outperform other students in the state on all portions. In 2006, 25% of Glasgow students scored Advanced in English compared with the state's 3%; 28% scored Mastery compared with 12%; 25% scored Basic compared with 40%; 18% scored Approaching Basic compared with 35%; and 5% scored Unsatisfactory compared with 11%. In the same year, 15% of Glasgow students scored Advanced in mathematics compared with the state's 3%; 12% scored Mastery compared with 4%; 51% scored Basic compared with 46%; 13% scored Approaching Basic, compared with 24%; and 8% scored Unsatisfactory compared with 23%.

Glasgow students demonstrate similar achievement in science and social studies. Administrators are particularly proud of this accomplishment because, in accordance with No Child Left Behind, Glasgow welcomes "choice" students who transfer after school has been in session as many as six to eight weeks and enter with lower achievement levels. GMS also welcomed students displaced by Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. All these students had to acclimate to a different school culture and progress rapidly to high levels of achievement.

GMS has met or exceeded growth targets set by the state for every year but one, and was recognized as a school of Academic Excellence by the state of Louisiana.

Professional Development

Professional development opportunities are found at all levels for administrators and teachers to implement research-based strategies and practices at Glasgow Middle School. The thread that runs through professional development is one of supporting people at every point to become the best they can be. For example, all faculty and administrators conduct classroom walk-throughs to observe instruction and provide constructive feedback to their colleagues. The middle school coordinator (Assistant Superintendent of Instruction) does bi-monthly walk-throughs and provides feedback to Principal Odell, who acts on the findings. The principal is required to complete five walk-throughs per week and file a report with the district office.

Another critical element of support occurs through keeping everyone well-informed. Staff members at all levels communicate at monthly meetings. In addition, there are monthly, half-day assistant principals' meetings for

leadership development, and the principal has a mentor and a coach with whom she meets twice in the fall and twice in the spring. The principal must also conduct two formal observations per teacher per year.

CONCLUSION

Glasgow Middle School has created a community that values each child, family member, and staff person. Its inclusive academic program stresses high expectations in a caring environment that prepares students from extremely diverse elementary level academic experiences to work as a cohesive whole.

Glasgow Middle School Leap 21 % proficient and above: 8th grade English Language Arts				
	2004	2005	2006	2007
All	75	73	78	73
African American	57	54	61	
Reduced or Free Lunch	65	50	60	
State Scores				57
% proficient and above: 8th grade Math				
	2004	2005	2006	2007
All	78	69	78	79
African American	59	47	65	
Reduced or Free Lunch	61	43	67	
State Scores				55

The LEAP 21 is a standards-based test, which means it measures specific skills defined for each grade by the state of Louisiana.