

SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

# James A. Jackson Elementary's Strong Culture Builds Up Educators, Learners, and Scores

At James A. Jackson Elementary School, part of Georgia's Clayton County Public Schools, learning begins and ends with a strong community culture.

Starting with the school's leadership, each member of Jackson's staff and faculty contributes to the school's focus on data-driven learning to increase student achievement. When educators combined a caring school environment with proven, standards-based programs, their students better understood their own learning needs and became invested in their own growth.

James A. Jackson Elementary School



STUDENTS

625

GRADES

Pre-K-5

TITLE I

93%

“We envision a culture that nurtures and impacts the emotional, mental, and social well-being of all children in order to empower students to discover their strengths and become lifelong learners.”

—James A. Jackson Elementary School Mission Statement

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# What They Did

Relationship building, data-based learning models, stakeholder involvement, and teacher training are the four essential elements of Jackson's thriving school environment.

*"Our district is focused on the acceleration of learning instead of overfocusing on what was missed."*

—Dr. William Greene, Jr.  
Principal

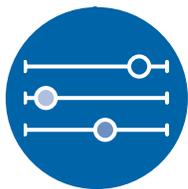


## Relationship Building

"Relationships are key to learning," said Dr. William Greene, Jr., principal at James A. Jackson Elementary School. "Sometimes we assume that everybody is in the relationship-building business, but that's not always the case. Some people are in the business of education, and others are in the business of children. We are in the business of children."

Part of the faculty's relationship building comes in the form of team-building exercises. Jackson leaders recently held a retreat centered on getting to know the challenges students are facing and bringing with them to school. The retreat's theme—What is in a student's bookbag?—emphasized the importance of understanding the ways students' personal challenges contribute to their school mindsets. The end goal of the event was to equip faculty with new ways of thinking that would improve how they personalize relationships with kids.

"It all trickles down," said Assistant Principal Angela Jenifer. "We make sure our staff is treated well. We want our teachers to treat the children the same as we are going to treat them."



## Data-Driven, Tech-Enabled Learning

Jackson adopted *i-Ready Assessment* and *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*—Curriculum Associates' integrated formative assessment and instruction programs—before the COVID-19 pandemic, so when the school had to transition to remote learning, educators and students were comfortable using the programs.

Jackson students were able to keep up their *i-Ready Personalized Instruction* because their educators ensured devices were available for all. "Our district was good about making sure kids received laptops, even with the amount of economically challenged families in our district," said Greene. "New hotspots were created. It was a complete wraparound process."



## Stakeholder Involvement

School leaders have always been very intentional in their efforts to foster student and family engagement. These efforts laid the foundation for continued participation and buy-in from all stakeholders during remote learning.

In many ways, Jackson stepped up its engagement efforts during remote learning with initiatives like the Most Virtual Participant (MVP) awards.

MVP awards were given at regular intervals to families who were working hard to support their students during virtual learning. By publicly recognizing families, Jackson educators emphasized the important roles families can play in students' success and let them know their efforts were appreciated.



## Teacher Training

Over the course of many years in education, Greene has learned that excellent teacher training is paramount to success, and education leaders are responsible for creating school cultures that emphasize a growth mindset for students and teachers.

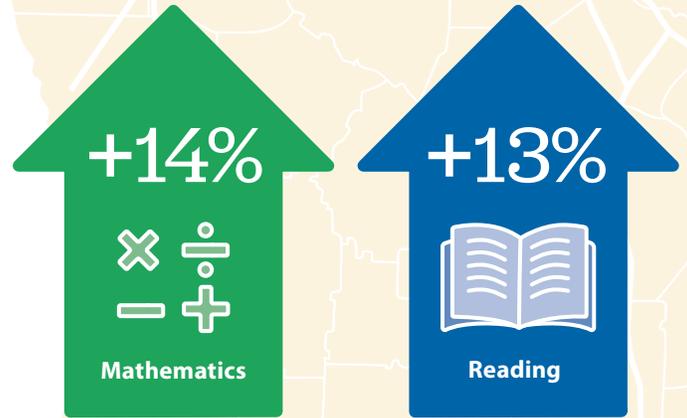
Greene also believes that when it comes to professional development (PD), administrators must lead by example. “We spend a lot of time in PD as administrators,” he said. “Teachers want to increase [their] knowledge with PD, and they are signing up on their own. As teachers’ quality increases, so does [student] learning.”

## What They Accomplished

The fact that students’ *i-Ready* scores in Reading and Mathematics both increased over the course of the pandemic is a testament to the school’s educators, families, and students.

While COVID-19 restrictions were in place, Jackson students’ *i-Ready Diagnostic* data showed increases of 14 percent in Mathematics and 13 percent in Reading.

As Jackson educators look forward, they plan to keep many of the practices that contributed to student growth during remote learning, including engaging families, recognizing accomplishments, and deepening student–teacher relationships. And when it comes to addressing unfinished learning, Greene plans to concentrate on the positive: “Our district is focused on the acceleration of learning instead of overfocusing on what was missed.”



*“We believe in the speed of trust. When you have relationships where you have trust, you can build the relationships to get things done.”*

—Dr. William Greene, Jr.



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