

**SCHOOLS ATTUNED RESEARCH REPORT:
ACADEMIC AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGES**

**Evergreen Avenue Elementary School
Woodbury, New Jersey**

**Submitted by:
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Background

Evergreen Avenue School, with approximately 300 students, is one of three elementary schools in the K-12 Public School District of Woodbury, NJ. Located in Southern New Jersey, Evergreen Avenue School, in particular, experienced a significant change in demographics about 10 years ago. Teachers were witness to a significant increase in discipline problems and an equally significant drop in academic proficiencies. The problems we faced upon my arrival six years ago were overwhelming the staff. Our school had a 60% poverty rate and a 40 % mobility rate. Fights were commonplace on the playground; academic performance was extremely low and teachers were realizing the “one size fits all” mentality had to change. Logic brought to bear on what we knew from experience and in our hearts to be right for learners- that we abandon failing practices and re-train our teachers to deal with the extreme academic and behavioral diversity within the regular educational spectrum. Brain-based research had promised a wealth of direction for our teachers; yet, we hadn’t had the opportunity to study it. Because our demographics had changed drastically in a few years prior to 1997, our staff acknowledged the strategies they had used in the past were no longer sufficient. Our teachers approached the classroom as the hiker in the woods – without a compass. Schools Attuned has provided that direction.

The Impact of Schools Attuned

We began studying Schools Attuned five years ago. A cohort of 8 teachers and myself traveled to Chapel Hill, NC the summer of 1998 to be trained. For the past 4 years we have trained almost all classroom teachers and several special area teachers including the resource teacher, nurse, librarian and guidance counselor. Each year an additional cohort of 4-8

teachers were trained which revitalized us and added to our repertoire of skills. We met monthly at Grand Rounds where individual teachers presented student profiles after completing the Views. Only about 10% of all students are “attuned” annually and have formal management plans. However, the number of students influenced is far, far greater since the Schools Attuned model actually impacts all students through improved instructional strategies. The sharing at the monthly Grand Rounds has been a powerful model, supporting staff as they develop a greater understanding of the brain processes involved in learning. This professional collaboration strengthens each of us and is reflected in our lesson planning. In scheduled monthly meetings after school, teachers discuss student work and reflect on strengths and weaknesses. Collaboratively, they suggest interventions to be included in the management plan. This process has greatly impacted student achievement and student behavior. Additionally, once a student is attuned, the child is demystified. Children seem to really appreciate this input about their strengths and their area of weakness and act on the information provided. They value this respectful conversation.

Morale was low. We had to improve student achievement, but to accomplish that task, we had to get student behavior under control. Those two broad areas were the basis of our research study. In our opinion, one could not be accomplished without getting a grasp on the other. Our collaborative discussions, and the support that it provided to colleagues was a pivotal point for establishing change in our school. The research of Schools Attuned provided the data we needed and the framework for discussion. It allowed a very professional staff to receive help from within the building. The staff became the resident experts on how to accomplish change within our building and we have demonstrated the effectiveness of that effort. (See attached charts – Increase in ESPA Testing and Decline in Disciplinary Referrals

and Suspensions). Additionally, there was a substantial decline in child study team referrals (See attached chart).

To meet the challenge of increasing student achievement and decreasing student behavioral problems, we altered many of our teaching strategies. A staff survey on how Schools Attuned was utilized during one week of instruction generated the following responses:

- To increase *depth of processing*, students cut out symbols for sun, temperature and rainfall to create a graphic organizer of rainforest characteristics.
- Students use a program called Kidspiration to organize thoughts before writing in journals to help with *ordering*.
- One of my struggling students writes one sentence a day to have a complete paragraph in his journal by end of week (scaffolding) to improve *written expressive language*.
- Throughout the year, students role-play situations they've experienced, and ways to resolve them, to improve *social cognition*.
- Students sort math facts based on having them memorized or not, to monitor their own *level of grasping*.
- To increase *mental energy*, a student is given frequent breaks i.e. get a drink, stand and stretch, or bring something to the office or another teacher
- At the kindergarten level, I pair phonemes and lip movements with pictures to develop *memory* preservation and prepare students for recognizing letters which are more abstract.
- Students learn word family chunks and definitions to music or a beat to assist memory.

- When students can't think of a word, they blame their *left cerebral hemisphere* because that controls language.
- Instead of the one student being attuned, my whole class is given the Student's View to decide on which areas they'd like to focus.
- Students are given focus cards to maintain *attention*.
- Directions are paraphrased by a student to aid in *short-term memory*.
- Tests are read to some students to overcome dysfunctions in the semantic, syntax and discourse levels of *language*.
- Mnemonic devices help with the consolidation of new information: J.A.R. (Jobs, Adventure, and Religious freedom) are three reasons pilgrims came to America.
- Students have the opportunity to use word processing, rather than write their assignments, to aid with *expressive language*.
- Students memorized song about thirteen colonies to the tune of "Mary Had a Little Lamb".

School Attuned, among other things, has enabled teachers to use a common language to discuss student needs and progress in a very objective way. In using these neurodevelopmental constructs, we have become better observers of a child's actions in the classroom. Teachers chart their observations and discuss the ramifications of these observations with colleagues, providing a more objective clinical approach to a student's needs. The modifications and interventions listed with the constructs help us to decide which we can use to successfully correct a problem at the breakdown point. Additionally, as a result

of Schools Attuned implementation, there is a significant increase in differentiating instruction.

The chart below provides a description of the changes in the school’s instruction strategies, structure, and climate before and after the implementation of Schools Attuned.

OUTLINE OF CHANGES

<u>School Before the Change</u>	<u>School After the Change</u>
Disconnected lessons	Integrated thematic units
Rote lessons/memorization in mathematics	Manipulatives – Critical Thinking – Exploratory
One size fits all	Accommodations and interventions/differentiated instruction
Basic Skills Pull-out	In class support
Minimal basic skills support (40 minutes daily)	Use of part-time tutors as opposed to full time (2 ½ hr) support daily
Low test scores	High test scores
Isolation of teachers	Teaming and collaboration (multi-age), basic skills, grand rounds)
Dependence on workbook	Emphasis on writing and making meaning
No technology	3 internet connected computers in each class and entire tech lab
Single grade classrooms	Multi-age/looping Gr. 1-4
Half-day kindergarten	Full day
No Pre-school	Inclusion of Pre-school
Suspensions for fighting (70)	Suspensions for fighting this year (1)
Negative	Positive
No independent reading program	25 books required of each child
No character education program or self-esteem programs	Good Deed Tree, Positively Great, Student of the Day initiated

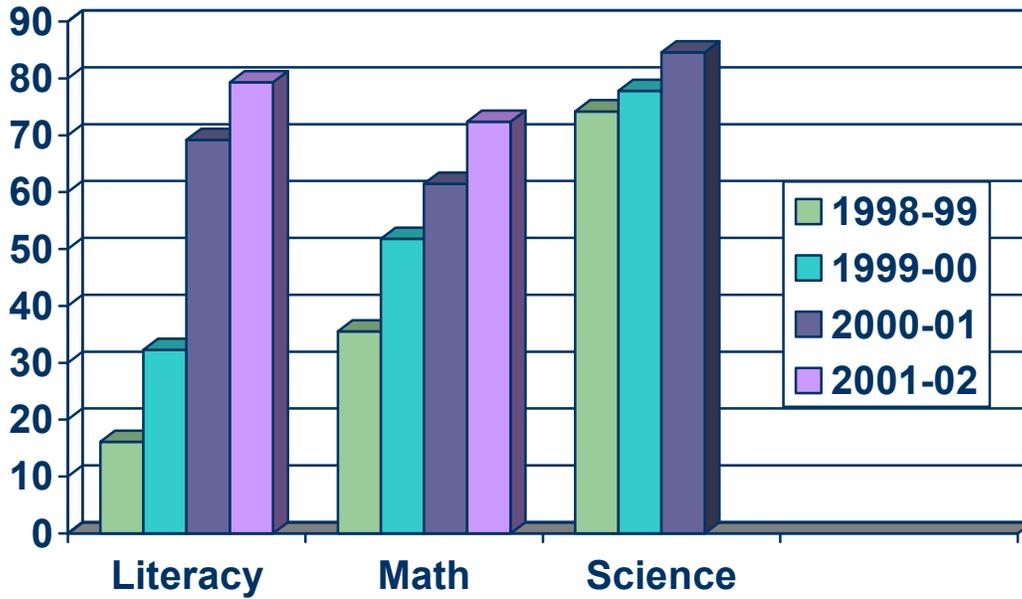
SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENT</u>	<u>DEPICTS</u>
ESPA test results, (Chart A) started in 1998-99 to 2001-02, mandated 4 th grade NJ State test.	Dramatic increase in scores over the four years of the test.
“Decline in Discipline Referrals and Suspensions” 1998-02 graph (Chart B)	Substantial decrease in disciplinary referrals and dramatic decrease in suspension.
“Decline in Child Study Team Referrals” with the implementation of Schools Attuned Brain Based Research program on how children learn, (Chart C)	Decrease in Child Study Team referrals became readily apparent with Schools Attuned implementation.
General Population ESPA (4 th grade State Test scores of the 3 district elementary schools) (Chart D)	Evergreen Avenue School scores not only increased over 4 years, but the gap between Evergreen Avenue School and the 2 other district schools became insignificant as opposed to formerly large discrepancies.
Total Population (general and Special Ed combined) (Chart D)	When general and Special Ed student scores were combined, Evergreen Avenue School was the highest in the district in both literacy and math. Evergreen still has the highest poverty rate.

The attached test results and reports demonstrate the effectiveness of the implementation of Schools Attuned. Although there is much yet to be accomplished, our growth has impacted positively on both student and staff morale and our community and state hold us in high esteem. Evergreen Avenue School is now a beautiful place to be!

Chart A

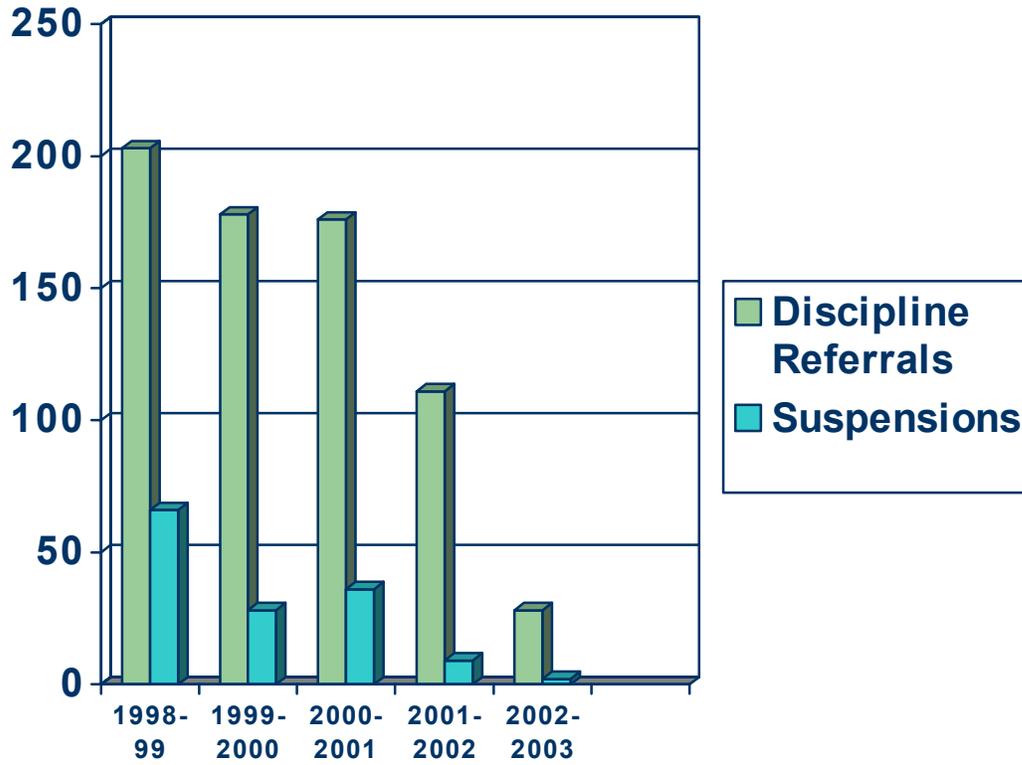
Changes ESPA Test Scores from 1998 to 2002



	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
Literacy	16.1	32.3	69.2	79.3
Mathematics	35.5	51.8	61.5	72.4
Science	74.2	77.8	84.6	---

Chart B

Decline in Discipline Referrals and Suspensions



	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03
DR	203	178	176	111	28
S	66	28	36	9	2

As of April 1, 2003

Chart C

Decline in Child Study Team Referrals

1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
21	17	5	19

*From 1998-2000, same guidance counselor, trained in Schools Attuned

*Increase in 2001 attributed to new guidance counselor, who was not trained in Schools Attuned

Chart D

ESPA Comparison Scores from 1998 to 2002

Literacy: General Education Students

	Evergreen	Walnut	West End
'98-99	16	50	50
'99-00	32	44	42
'00-01	69	68	62
'01-02	79	82	71

Math: General Education Students

	Evergreen	Walnut	West End
'98-99	36	98	58
'99-00	52	81	53
'00-01	62	100	57
'01-02	72	82	60

In reference to general education students (ESPA 2002), there was substantial growth not only numerically, but also relationally between Evergreen Avenue School and the other two district schools. Evergreen Avenue School, by far the lowest achieving school in both literacy and math in 1999, advanced to the middle position in both areas in 2002. Additionally, the differential in the scores was minor between the top achieving school and Evergreen Avenue School as opposed to a substantial difference in 1999.

Total Population 2001–2002 (General & Special Education)

	Evergreen	Walnut	West End	Woodbury
Literacy	68.4	62.5	60	63.2
Math	65.8	62.6	51.6	57.9

When general and special education student scores were both reflected in a total population score, Evergreen scores were the highest in the district in both literacy and math.