

# Girls basketball success a part of EHS 'culture of excellence', Cramsey says

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**NORMAL** – For Edwardsville High School principal Dennis Cramsey, it's been fun watching the EHS girls basketball team the past few years.

Not only because of their run the past two years to the IHSA Class 4A state basketball tournament, but for the way the Tigers represent the school and the support they've gotten.

“They've been a lot of fun to watch,” Cramsey said. “They're a great group of kids – well-coached; they put in the time to prepare, they do everything you want basketball players to do, but more than that, they're great kids and great students.”

The success the Tigers have had with this year's senior class – not only two straight state tournament appearances, but four straight trips to the super-sectional; in essence, four straight runs to the state quarterfinals. “Coach (Lori) Blade keeps things intense with the kids in terms of just keeping them focused,” Cramsey said, “but it says a lot about the program, the coaching and the kids.”

The success of the girls basketballers has helped make the EHS athletic program arguably one of the top programs in the entire St. Louis area – and, to Cramsey, one of the best in the entire state of Illinois. “I think you might expand that to one of the best athletic programs in the state,” Cramsey said. “This team we're watching right now – this girls basketball team, in the last seven years that I've been principal (Cramsey took the reins of the school in the fall of 2011) is the 18th team to finish in a top four competition at the state level, and that doesn't even count the individual championships or top 10 finishes in another number of sport like tennis, golf, cheerleading, dance.

“Every year, our kids continue to produce, and it all goes back to a culture of excellence that is just a part of the way we do business, from things that happen on the athletic fields and floors to what happens in our classrooms to what happens in our performing arts to fine arts programs.”

Knowing the entire school has the support of the community, from the sporting arenas to the stage and concert halls means much to Cramsey; students take pride in saying that they go to Edwardsville High School. “Oh, absolutely,” Cramsey said. “We've got a great community following; we couldn't do what we've been doing without that community support, not only the fan base that supports our teams, but the local businesses and individuals who continue to provide extra financial resources to us.

“We've got great partnerships with our of our cities and villages throughout our district; you see our law enforcement agencies and fire departments that our supporting our teams by bringing a reception back to town – it's more than just a school, it's a community.”

There's no doubt a number of schools in the area would like to emulate what Edwardsville has done and been doing.

“I think people can take some things out of our notebook,” Cramsey said. “We have a lot of people contributing – it's not just one person that makes all of this happen, it's a

overall effort by everybody involved – coaches, players, teachers, parents, community members."