

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Elementary School**  
5-2-2005 to 5-6-2005  
**Introduction**

The New Jersey Department of Education conducted a CAPA (Collaborative Assessment for Planning and Achievement) review of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School on 2-14 to 2-16-2005. This school is designated as “in need of improvement” for four consecutive years as defined in the *NJ Accountability Workbook*. *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) §1117: School Support and Recognition requires that the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) create and maintain a statewide system of intensive and sustained support for those Title I schools designated as “in need of improvement” for four consecutive years. As part of this required support system, the NJDOE developed the CAPA review process, which assigns teams of skillful and experienced individuals to provide schools with practical, applicable, and helpful assistance, increasing the opportunity for all students to meet the state’s Core Curriculum Content Standards. CAPA is required for all Title I schools in corrective action.

The CAPA review team activities included:

- A review of the documents collected for the school portfolio and data profile;
- 48 classroom observations;
- General observations, such as morning and afternoon arrival and dismissal, lunch in the cafeteria, and student restrooms;
- 29 interviews with teachers;
- 5 interviews with building leadership and administrators;
- 2 interviews with district administrators;
- 58 interviews with students;
- 48 interviews with school and student support staff; and
- 14 interviews with parents.

Following the study of documentation, and the conducting of interviews and observations, the team discussed each standard and its indicators. Based on these findings, the team offered its recommendations

Team members and their affiliation included:

<b>TEAM POSITION</b>	<b>NAME</b>	<b>AFFILIATION</b>
Team Lead	Elizabeth Domigan	Educational Consultant
Principal	Robert Durkin	Educational Consultant
Lanugage Arts Literacy Specialist	Katherine Trimarco	Educational Consultant
Mathematics Specialist	Susan Hinkle	Educational Consultant
Special Education Specialist	Joe Jakubowski	Educational Consultant
Parent	Barbara Pugh-Gorham	Educational Consultant
District Liaison	Harvey Ritter	
DOE Liaision	Keith Lockwood	NJ Department of Education

### **Academic Performance Standards**

The following Academic Performance Standards address curriculum, classroom evaluation/assessment, and instruction.

- Standard 1:** The school develops and implements a curriculum that is rigorous, intentional and aligned to state and local standards.
- Standard 2:** The school uses multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs and support proficient student work.
- Standard 3:** The school's instructional program actively engages all students by using effective, varied, and research-based practices to improve student academic performance.

### **Learning Environment Standards**

The following Learning Environment Standards address school culture; student, family and community support, professional growth, development and evaluation.

- Standard 4:** The school functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence.
- Standard 5:** The school works with families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career, and developmental needs of students consistent with 6A: 10A-3.6 Supports for Parents and Families and NCLB §1118 Parental Involvement.
- Standard 6:** The school provides research based, results driven professional development opportunities for staff and implements performance evaluation procedures in order to improve teaching and learning.

### **Efficiency Standards**

The following Efficiency Standards address leadership, school culture and resources and comprehensive and effective planning.

- Standard 7:** School instructional decisions focus on support for teaching and learning, organizational direction, high performance expectations, creating a learning culture, developing leadership capacity.
- Standard 8:** There is evidence that the school is organized to maximize use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance.
- Standard 9:** The School Leadership Council and district planning team develops, implements, and evaluates a three-year operational plan/school improvement plan that communicates a clear purpose, direction and action plan focused on improving teaching and learning.

**Summary Findings in: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE (QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION)**

**STANDARD 1-CURRICULUM: The district P-12 curriculum is rigorous and aligned to state standards.**

**1.1b The district initiates discussions among schools regarding curriculum standards and frameworks to ensure they are clearly articulated across all levels (P-12).**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Grade Level Meeting Agendas
- Teacher interviews
- Literacy Coach Interview
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

The school has set a language arts literacy emphasis on curriculum alignment to state and local standards and grade levels meetings suggest horizontal and vertical articulation. There is some evidence that articulation meetings include discussion about instruction but observations do not support that the efforts transfer to most curriculum taught in the classroom.

**1.1e The curriculum requires all students to take courses with sufficient academic rigor to prepare for college preparatory courses and pass the HSPA, and provides specific links to life and career options.**

**Evidence for this indicator based on:**

- Principal's Quarterly Reports
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom Observations
- Grading Policy Memo , 12-06-04

**Findings:**

Language arts literacy classroom observations indicate an immediate concern for proficiency on state exams, i.e. the GEPA exam, rather than an intentional, strong, sufficiently rigorous academic program to prepare students for post-secondary education and/or career options. The instructional objectives in classes observed lacked the challenge for application of authentic learning

**1.1f The district works with supervisors and faculty to systematically monitor, evaluate and adjust curriculum based on the evidence of student achievement.**

**Evidence for this indicator based on:**

- Review of the three-year operational plan
- Review NJASK3 and 4 Assessment Results

- Progressive Data Analysis (PDA)
- Vice Principals' Binder
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Student achievement is measured on results of the GEPA, NJ ASK3 and 4, and Specific Performance Assessments (SPA). The Language Arts Literacy Department provides fall and spring assessments for the purpose of curriculum adjustment. Test data and and specific item/cluster analysis are identified in the Progressive Data Analysis (PDA). From classroom observations, there is little evidence that the data are used to adjust instruction.

**1.1g The curriculum provides access to a common academic core for all students including, but not limited to, special education and ELL students.**

**Evidence for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- LAL and math local curriculum documents, units of study and lesson plans
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

All students observed in language arts literacy classroom received instruction in a common academic core, as evidenced by objectives directed to the whole class. The implemented curriculum, as seen, did not discriminate among students. However, the curriculum did not challenge or elicit higher order thinking and problem-solving skills from students nor did it address individual student needs.

**1.1h The principal and faculty work together to ensure that the district curriculum determines what is taught through the review of lesson plans and teacher peer review of curricular standards and the best method of teaching them.**

**Evidence for this indicator based on:**

- Review of the three-year operational plan, SLC manual, NJASK3 and 4 assessment results
- Vice Principals' Binder
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Feedback on lesson plan evaluation (four items dated 2004) is limited and there is no indication from the observations conducted in language arts literacy classes that review translates to change in practice. Some teachers who were interviewed state they have received feedback to their lesson plans and that it was helpful. Lesson plans viewed in classrooms did not have any notations or initials by an administrator. Lesson plans in the Vice Principals Binder, chapter titled "Instructional Interferences Documentation" had few comments other than 25+ year teacher, new, 5 year. . .).

## STANDARD 1

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Language Arts Literacy

1. Focus classroom observations on the quality of the objectives as well as the delivery of instruction for all students. Provide feedback on an accurate alignment with NJ CCCS; appropriateness of the instructional strategies, age and developmentally appropriate resource materials, and authentic, varied, and engaging student learning opportunities.
2. Monitor lesson plans for ongoing development of curricular standards, attention to individual differences, pre-assessments as well as varied formative and summative evaluations. Follow-up lesson evaluations by staff development activities to develop authentic student-centered learning opportunities.

**STANDARD 2 -CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION: The district and school use multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs and support proficient student work.**

**2.1a Assessments created by teachers, school and district are frequent, rigorous, aligned with NJ CCCS, used to gauge student learning and adjust teaching to individual needs.**

#### Findings for this indicator based on:

- Review of lesson plans
- Principal's Quarterly Reports
- Grade level meeting agendas
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations
- Vice Principals' Binder
- Grading Policy Memo – 12-06-04

#### Findings:

School policy and procedures address classroom assessments but the assessments are not always rigorous, supported by rubric, and/or authentic. The assessments do not always elicit proficient student work. Guidance in the form of student feedback to ensure continuous student progress is not informative or frequent. Assessments prepared by teachers are not frequently aligned to the NJ CCCS. Some assessments are based on other contents e.g. textbooks. Some of the assessments do not indicate which skills are measured. There is some evidence that students' needs are being addressed for modification of instruction. The grading policy indicates that 65% of a student's grade is based on a total of all assessments.

## **2.1b Teachers collaborate to design authentic classroom assessments aligned with the CCCS.**

### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations
- Principal's Quarterly Reports
- Grade level meeting agendas
- Grading Policy Memo – 12-06-04

### **Findings:**

There is insufficient evidence to support that teachers collaborate to design authentic assessment tasks that are aligned to the NJ CCCS standards. There is a uniformity of assessment without provision for student choice. Opportunities for students to demonstrate learning in varied and authentic ways are limited.

## **2.1c Students can articulate the academic expectations in each class and know what is required to be proficient. Academic expectations are clearly communicated, evident in classrooms and observable in student work.**

### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Literacy Coach interviews
- Student interviews
- Classroom observations
- Principal's Quarterly Reports
- Grade level meeting agenda
- Grading Policy Memo – 12-06-04

### **Findings:**

When questioned by teachers about the academic expectations for the class, students responded that they are studying to pass the GEPA examination. No specific information was offered by the teachers or the students as to why they should know what is on the exam. Most students who were interviewed indicated that they need to learn to become educated. Interviewed students did not ascribe any goal oriented or career directed ambitions connected to their current schooling.

There are few rubrics found that would define and elaborate skills and processes necessary for proficiency in the Language Arts Literacy content areas. The New Jersey Registered Holistic Rubric is the common instrument for measuring most forms of writing. There were some rubrics for poetry writing and a few examples of rubrics in related art areas. In some classes it was found that a rubric was simply placed in portfolios with student work. Student papers within that portfolio did not have annotations nor was there any connection made of rubric to the papers. Some papers seemed to be typing exercises.

**2.1d Test scores are used by the district and school to identify curriculum gaps.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Literacy Coach interview
- Classroom observations
- Progressive Data Analysis (PDA) forms
- Principal's Quarterly Reports
- Grade level meeting agenda
- Grading Policy Memo – 12-06-04

**Findings:**

Evidence exists that teachers have to complete a monthly Progressive Data Analysis (PDA) form. It is not clear what assessment data from students in previous grades or current assessments aids in the construction of the individual profiles of the current students. Teachers provide a ratio of number of students passing to the total number of students in the class relative to a curricular gap. It is not evident that the curricular gap becomes an objective for instruction, assessment, and monitoring for performance accomplishment. In some instances, there is a repeat of the curricular gap with the same proportional ratio of students over months. The ratio does not change nor does the ratio of expectations change. In some cases, the expectations are lowered.

**2.1e Multiple assessments are designed and used to gauge student learning and to adjust teaching to meet individual student needs.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations
- Review of lesson plans
- Principal's Quarterly Reports
- Grade level meeting agendas
- Vice Principal Binder

**Findings:**

There is insufficient evidence in Language Arts Literacy classes to indicate that students choose ways in which they demonstrate learning based on multiple intelligences and preferred leaning styles.

**2.1h Samples of student assessments are shared among teachers and analyzed to inform instruction and to revise curriculum and pedagogy.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Literacy Coach interviews
- Classroom observations
- Review of lesson plans

- Principal's Quarterly Reports
- Grade level meeting agendas
- Principal, Vice Principals' Binders

**Findings:**

Teachers indicate that student progress is discussed. There is little evidence that analysis of student work impacts on teaching and learning. Teachers in early grades state that they use the discussion initiated by the Assessment Wall for reading and writing to talk about individual student needs .

**STANDARD 2**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Conduct an indepth analysis of current data aggregation and disaggregation to determine the best use of data to drive instructional and assessment practices. Consider the needs of all students including Special Education and English Language Learner students.
2. Evaluate and review with teachers the purpose of a Progressive Data Analysis (PDA). Development of a monthly PDA should be thoughtfully planned for language arts literacy to include the one or two curricular gaps, that if taught well, would maximize learning. The process of curriculum development, instruction and evaluation should be coordinated as a team effort to monitor that the goals are accomplished.
3. Engage students in the learning process by empowering them to use assessment tools to self-evaluate their work. An excellent site for teachers to create varied and appropriate rubrics is: <http://rubistar.4teachers.org>. Set goals for PDA at challenge levels for instruction, assessment and monitoring. Provide students with opportunities to demonstrate mastery that accommodates learning styles and multiple intelligences.
4. Review the grading policy for the percentages allocated to assessments (65%), classwork (25%), and homework (10%). If assessments are awarded 65% of the grade, then assessments should be carefully targeted to relevant content. Assessment performance should be varied, authentic and mindful of the learning styles of all youngsters.

**STANDARD 3 -INSTRUCTION: Instruction engages all students by using effective, varied and research-based practices to improve academic performance.**

**3.1a There is evidence that effective and varied instructional strategies are used in all classrooms.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Paraprofessional interviews
- Classroom observations
- Vice Principals' Binder
- Principal's Binder

**Findings:**

The school leadership has instituted a policy that departmentalizes language arts literacy, mathematics, and social studies-science for grade levels three through eight. Some observations of language arts literacy classes did not reveal the integration of varied and effective instructional practices. Most teachers utilized whole group instruction. Questions elicited by teachers were at the lower level of the cognitive taxonomy.

Classroom observations revealed that the readability level of the assigned “novel” by grade did not correspond to the multiple reading levels of the individuals in the classes. Observations indicated that the students could not decode adequately to comprehend text or apply experiential backgrounds to the text. Indications are that there are insufficient novels for students to take home and read.

**3.1b Instructional strategies and learning activities are aligned with the district, school and state goals and assessments.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Instructional strategies and learning activities reveal some alignment to the school curriculum. The learning activities viewed in some language arts literacy classrooms were (a) not the stated written objective(s) of the lesson plan or (b) taught inappropriately to engage students in the intent and quality of the state standard. In many classes, the whole class instructional strategy encouraged passive behavior patterns by the students. It was also noted that much student behavior was extrinsically controlled by the teacher.

**3.1c Instructional strategies and activities are continuously monitored and aligned with individual student needs.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations
- Vice Principals’ Binder
- Principal’s Binder
- Principal’s Quarterly Reports

**Findings:**

There is little evidence in language arts literacy classes that instructional strategies accommodate the learning needs and learning styles of students. Whole group instruction was the method observed in the

majority of classes. There is insufficient evidence that monitoring or feedback by school leadership transfers to modification of instruction to meet the needs of all students.

### **3.1d Teachers demonstrate the content knowledge necessary to challenge and motivate students to high levels of learning.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Administrative Presentation
- Classroom observations
- Lesson Plans
- Student Work
- Student Interviews

#### **Findings:**

The school leadership indicates that 95% of the teachers are highly qualified and possess certifications to teach at their grade levels. Teachers receive professional development through district and school personnel. There is evidence that in some classes language arts literacy teachers do not demonstrate the necessary knowledge of literacy skills. There is evidence that some social studies teachers did not demonstrate content knowledge being taught the day observed. Some student work is displayed relevant to the content, but there is little or no student choice of variety among the products. Upgrading of subject matter knowledge and current professional practices are required to challenge and motivate students to high levels of learning.

### **3.1e There is evidence that teachers incorporate technology in their classrooms.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Technology Coordinator interview
- Vice Principals' Binder
- Principal's Binder
- Principal's Quarterly Report
- Classroom observations

#### **Findings:**

The Technology Coordinator reports that teachers use technology to infuse instruction in the content areas. During classroom visitation, few students in language arts literacy classrooms were viewed using computers as part of their language arts literacy instruction. Teachers state that the computers in the classroom are used. Some teachers indicate printer issues and are not aware of software installations.

A technology survey of teachers conducted in fall, 2004 requires the next steps of data aggregation, analysis and interpretation to determine the strengths and weakness of the technology program. The technology coordinator indicated that two computer labs are available for classroom teachers to utilize with their students.

**3.1f The district and school ensure that instructional resources are sufficient and that all instructional materials are aligned to the curriculum.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations
- Review of materials

**Findings:**

Instructional resources are sufficient in language arts literacy to support the school's implemented curriculum for the general education population.

The ESL program for the English Language Learner (ELL) does not have the appropriate materials to provide instructional supports in language arts literacy and mathematics. There are 23 identified English as a Second Language academic discipline (ESL) students from grade one through grade eight. The regular teacher for this program is out for the remainder of the school year. One replacement teacher for the remainder of the year and a new hire for the English Language Learner (ELL) are on staff. The ESL teacher has sufficient materials for the program. The new teacher for the English Language Learner does not have appropriate language, age and/or developmentally appropriate language arts literacy or mathematics materials. The language arts literacy materials are not provided in English and did not include all the materials and reading books that are the implemented school curricular materials for the general education students.

**3.1g Teachers examine and discuss student work collaboratively and use this information to inform their practice.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations
- Review of Lesson Plans, Student work and Grade Level Meeting

**Findings:**

Grade level meetings provide teachers with opportunities to informally discuss and analyze student work. In addition, teachers of specific subjects meet regularly within their discipline. There is insufficient evidence to ascertain that the analyses are used to inform instructional practice.

**3.1h There is evidence that homework is frequent, evaluated and tied to instructional practice.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Teacher and student interviews
- Classroom observations
- Student work

### **Findings:**

A homework policy exists and is formalized with the District Grading and Promotion Policy. At any grade level, 10% of the student grade is represented by homework performance. Students interviewed did not articulate the connection of homework to grade or promotional policy. Teachers did not express knowledge of the relation of homework to a grade system nor do teachers maintain homework samples that would support the awarding of a percentage in a formal grading system. An observation yielded a full period devoted to reviewing a homework assignment in which the teacher read the assigned homework page. Although the concept continued to be elusive to most students, no modification of instruction took place.

## **STANDARD 3**

### **NEXT STEPS**

1. Provide language arts literacy materials for English Language Learners in English for grade levels 1 through 8 including all the materials that are the implemented school curricular materials. Provide appropriate mathematics texts and all ancillary materials including manipulatives for English Language Learners, grade levels 1 through 8, comparable to the general education population.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Language Arts Literacy**

1. Provide professional development to enable teachers to challenge and motivate students to higher levels of learning by encouraging teachers to prepare lessons by reflecting on the following questions:
  - What knowledge do I want the students to have?
  - What skills do I want the students to acquire?
  - What attitudes do I want the students to develop?
  - What experiences will I plan for them?
2. Provide for staff development of varied instructional strategies and higher order thinking skills. Model varied, effective, and research-based student-centered instructional strategies.
3. Provide staff development for upgrading content knowledge and professional practice to correspond to complex and sensitive topics in all areas of the curriculum. .
4. Connect more firmly the school's commitment to journalism and writing to technology to develop students who can create articles and publish products including newspapers for various purposes, audiences, and situations.
5. Review software needs and ensure operational printers in all classrooms including the ELL and Special Education learners. Analysis, interpretation, and comparative studies of the technology surveys should be prepared to determine technology strengths as well areas of growth needed.

### **English Language Learners**

Provide English Language Learners with appropriate language arts literacy materials that include all the materials that are the implemented school curricular materials. Provide mathematics materials including all resources provided to the general education population to the English Language Learners.

**STANDARD 4 -SCHOOL CULTURE: The school functions as an effective learning community and supports a climate conducive to performance excellence.**

**4.1a The principal and school leadership are responsible for and support a safe, orderly, and equitable learning environment.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher , students, parents, support staff interviews
- Classroom observations
- Operation/Procedures Manual

#### **Findings:**

School leadership has established operational procedures to minimize disruptions. Perceptions surveys completed by teachers, students, and parents indicate that they feel that there is a school-wide safe and orderly environment. Classroom observation of the facility indicated a clean building.

**4.1b The principal and school community (e.g., teachers and parents) foster the belief that all children can learn at high levels.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Student, parent, teachers interviews
- Support staff member interviews
- Classroom observations

#### **Findings:**

Parents are familiar with the school mission statements. The school leadership encourages staff and provides some opportunities for them to share instructional strategies and innovations.

Leadership indicate a belief that all children can learn at high levels and demonstrates that commitment. The mission statement affirms this belief. Leadership stresses continuous student improvement by providing opportunities for some teachers to model exemplary lessons.

**4.1c Teachers hold high expectations for all students academically and behaviorally, and this is evidenced in their practices. There is evidence that teachers care about students and inspire their best efforts.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher, student interviews
- Support staff member interviews
- Classroom observations
- Principal Quarterly Reports
- Teachers PDA

**Findings:**

Staff members and teachers indicate they demonstrate a belief of high expectations for all students. Students state that teachers have high expectations because they encourage them to do better. Classroom observations indicated many teachers set minimal academic expectation for students. Rubrics and comments on writing samples are inconsistent. Some teachers use post-it notes to give students feedback. Some student work in hallways did display quality work. Behavioral standards are defined in student/parent compact, but standards are not always uniformly applied.

**4.1e Teachers accept responsibility for student success/failure.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Local curriculum documents
- Student support staff member interviews
- Teacher, SLC member interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

There is limited evidence that there is any procedure used to revise teaching practice. Many teachers blame student failure on parental involvement. There was little evidence that reflection on teaching practice is part of any formal structure other than the district professional development programs and weekly grade level meetings.

**4.1f The school matches teacher strengths and experience with the needs of students. The school assigns staff to maximize opportunities for all students to have access to the staff's instructional strengths.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Local curriculum documents and units of study
- Teacher interviews
- Support staff member interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

The school meets the mandate set by the State Department of Education for student/teacher ratios. Leadership attempts to match teaching expertise and student need when organizing and assigning staff.

The special education staff appears to be dedicated and caring, however, the absence of the inclusionary program, in-class support with a special education teacher prevents special education students from accessing the least restrictive environment for students.

**4.1g Teachers communicate regularly with families by meetings, phone calls, notes and e-mail about their children's progress.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Support staff member interviews
- Parent interviews
- Review of teacher end of the year reports
- Local documentation
- Administrator interviews

**Findings:**

Vice principals and teachers interviewed indicate that they communicate regularly with parents by phone calls, newsletters, meetings and practice tests . Policy requires that teachers meet with parents four times a year on report card nights and four times each year through progress reports and whenever necessary. Progress reports are sent regularly and in some cases teachers add specific comments for each student. The school leadership follows the district's policy regarding school/home communication about student progress.

Annual reviews are held for each special education student. Special education teachers are not completing quarterly IEP progress reports. Some teachers have indicated that they have ongoing communication with parents.

**4.1j Student achievement is highly valued and publicly celebrated (for example, displays of exemplary student work, assemblies).**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Classroom and hallway observations
- Local curriculum documents and units of study
- Teacher interviews
- Support staff interviews

**Findings:**

Student work of varying quality is displayed in all hallways and classrooms, and is shared with parents during parent/teacher conferences. Interviews revealed that assembly programs are held to recognize student achievements. Student accomplishments are regularly recognized through incentives, exhibition of student work, special honor roll and attendance assemblies.

Students and teachers indicated in interviews that a caring attitude exists for all students. Observations indicate that many teachers use praise as a positive reinforcement.

**4.1k The school supports the physical, cultural and intellectual needs of all students, which reflects a commitment to equity and an appreciation of diversity.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Support staff member interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

School personnel exhibit a commitment to equity and appreciation of the diversity of their students e.g. “Celebration of Women in Math” display . Other indicators include flyers in English and spanish; and personal pledge to respect others recited by all students daily.

**STANDARD 4**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Focus teacher discussions on what high expectations look like in class work. Assist teachers in understanding and using rubrics to focus themselves and students on moving to higher levels of work. Provide exemplars of student work against standards for teachers to gain better skill in scoring .
2. Provide for more oportunities for teachers to reflect on practice.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION**

1. Provide staff development for CST, special education staff and general education staff in inclusionary practices that include a full range of program options.
2. Strengthen professional development to focus on the rigorous strategies, high order questioning, response opportunities, rubrics for assessment, and student reflections. Provide structured, on-going support for implementation.

**STANDARD 5: STUDENT, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

**The school works with families and community groups to remove barriers to learning in an effort to meet the intellectual, social, career and developmental needs of students.**

**5.1a Families and the community are active partners with the school and district in the promotion of programs and services for all students.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher, Parent, Support staff member interviews
- Classroom observations
- Three-year Operational Plan
- Parent Involvement Policy
- Paraprofessional
- Principal Overview

**Findings:**

There has been substantial increase in community involvement in the school to reach out to parents e.g. Chew and Chat, Dinner Out, there are very few parents involved in the school. School-to-home communications there are (English and Spanish) flyers generated from the school to the community. There are active parent and community groups present in the school e.g. . Best Friends, Urban League, Do Something Club. Interviews with paraprofessionals it was stated that on going conferencing with parents would lead to fewer referrals and classifications in more participate. There are classes offered to parents to assist their children with their homework. The school offers computer training for parents. Records of outcomes of these sessions are not kept. The School Leadership Committee (SLC) meets on a regular basis and there is a parent member on the committee. . There is an SLC in the school with policies and procedures for sub-committees and recruitment. Parents without prior appointments are able to observe classrooms or walk their child to class.

**5.1b The school ensures that that ALL students are taught what they are expected to learn and are tested on, with specific attention to special education and English Language Learner students.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Three-year operational plan
- Teacher, Student, Parent, Support staff member interviews
- Classroom observations
- Student/Parent Compact
- Child Study Team

**Findings:**

Support services are provided in the areas of community and district wide workshops, and supplemental education services. Counseling and social work services are offered to all students in the school. Counseling programs include a peer-to-peer program, mentoring services and referral to other services. Extended and after day programs are offered to all students. Enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis.

**5.1d Students receive necessary additional assistance to support their learning in and beyond the classroom.**

1. The school jointly developed with, and distributes to, parents of Title I students a written parental involvement policy that describes the means for carrying out NCLB parental involvement requirements. §1118(b)
2. The school convenes an annual meeting of parents of Title I children to inform them of the NCLB parental involvement requirements. §1118(c)
3. The school has a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, staff and student share responsibility for student achievement. §1118(d)
4. The school builds capacity for parental involvement through use of the 14 mechanisms outlined in the NCLB legislation. §1118(e)
5. The school and district provide full opportunities for the participation of parents with limited English proficiency, parents with disabilities and parents of migratory children. §1118(f)
6. The school and district inform parents of the existence of statewide parental resource and information centers. §1118(g)

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Three-year operational plan
- Teacher, student, Support staff member, parent interviews
- Classroom observations
- Student/Parent Compact
- Principal, Vice Principal interviews

**Findings:**

The school complies with the Title 1 and NCLB regulations.

Title 1 program and support services are partly integrated and support the learning needs of all students. Students are assigned to the SES program and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program on a first come, first served basis. There is no SLC or planning committee that collect data on the effectiveness of the programs. The student support services program collaboration focuses mostly on behavior and discipline issues. There is some collaboration between classroom teachers and providers of extended school services. However, the collaboration does not fully address closing achievement gaps across subpopulations. Documentation, observation and interviews indicate that services beyond the classroom are available. Policies and procedures exist for student health and social services referrals when the condition impedes student learning. Connections with some community agencies are evident. There are some services for assisting students with learning problems when they are not referred to a Child Study Team. The district has established a committee to assist teachers in meeting the academic, emotional and behavioral needs of students who are struggling in these areas.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Findings:**

The PRC is an active committee and has received a number of referrals this year. It is comprised of key school staff, including the building VP or principal. The PRC receives a number of referrals per year and this year has sent on 7 referrals to the CST for further evaluation. The concern is that the CST has received an additional 10 referrals directly from parents who are circumventing this valuable committee, which is charged with the responsibility of offering pre-referral interventions. It is also a concern that in the case where these referrals are valid, why the teacher did not make the referral on behalf of this child. The CST is providing all mandated IEP counseling to students. They also provide crisis intervention and limited assistance in the academic program. The CST is inundated with initial referrals, reevaluations and annual reviews which take almost all of their time. They have had difficulty keeping pace with required timelines, but have done admirably given the demands on this team, with no secretarial support. In addition they lack the advantages of a computerized network IEP system that allow teachers to directly input information for annual reviews and reevaluations. The LDTC is assigned to this school one day per week.

## STANDARD 5

**COMMENDATION: The school principal and staff are to be commended for their commitment to the needs of their school community as witnessed by such acts as opening their school on Christmas Day for a celebratory meal.**

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop clearly defined procedures including conferences between parent and teachers on a need to basis to increase parental and community involvement in order to enhance student learning and performance. A parent committee of the SLC should be formed to consider strategies and meetings that meet the needs of the parents. After a survey of parental needs, programs should be developed to provide literacy and technology training for parents during the 21<sup>st</sup>. Century program and during the school day.
2. Develop, implement and monitor continuous and formalized collaboration among teachers. Title I SES programs, after school programs and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century program to ensure coordination of the delivery of services that promote student achievement. Developed, implement and monitor student referral procedures consistently. Reach out to the Title I advisory board for assistance in expanding the parent involvement program.
3. Consideration might be given to providing a secretary to provide clerical services to the team that would allow CST members to provide additional direct services.

### STANDARD 6 – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

**The school and district provide professional development opportunities based on an evaluation of individual and collective teacher needs.**

6.1a There is evidence of a school wide professional growth plan that supports collaboration among staff and decreases isolation and fragmentation.

#### Findings for this indicator based on:

- District professional development plan
- Teacher interviews
- Administrator interviews

#### Findings:

Professional development activities are conducted throughout the school year and are job-embedded and collegial. Weekly grade level meetings as well as professional development days are targeted toward identified collective needs being met.

Attendance and topics for staff meetings are evident. There is a sense among all staff that there is a focus on the above.

Professional development that the special education teachers have received is only that offered to all teachers about the implementation of the required, school-wide curriculum. The implementation of the SPED program enjoys collaboration among staff. Special education staff does participate in grade level meetings and collaborates among themselves.

Interviews with paraprofessionals provided information that they meet regularly with their teachers to discuss student's learning. They advocate the use of varying strategies when they recognize that students had not mastered learning. All of the paraprofessionals were highly qualified and two paraprofessionals were associate degree graduates

**6.1c District-wide professional development priorities are set by aligning the goals for student performance with the evidence of achievement and with the Professional Improvement Plans (PIP) of teachers and principals.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- School and community survey
- Sample anonymous PIP's
- Teacher interviews
- Administrator interviews
- Support staff member interviews

**Findings:**

All staff professional development is on-going and occurs on district mandated professional days as well as consultants who are in the district regularly. Opportunities for teachers are closely related to PIPs and how to impact student achievement. Current district offerings (Everyday Math, Reading Recovery, Harcourt Trophies) are implemented in most classrooms throughout the school building.

**6.1e Professional development is high quality, frequent, tailored to teacher needs and school-based when possible.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- School and community survey
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Intensive professional development is provided by the district in language arts literacy and mathematics. Some teachers feel that professional development is not job-embedded such as Harcourt Trophies and Everyday Mathematics. Many support staff (aides and paraprofessionals) attend professional development in the school but not in the district-sponsored programs. CST staff have participated in district professional development in the areas of assessment program options and implementation. .

## **PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND EVALUATION**

### **6.2c The school leadership uses the employee evaluation and the individual professional growth plan to connect improvements in teaching practice with individual classroom goals.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of sample anonymous PIPs
- Teacher interviews
- Administrator interviews

#### **Findings:**

The teachers noted that their PIP's are reviewed yearly and they are required to include skills acquired in professional development trainings. Administration also provides collaboration for developing PIP's and identifying strengths and weaknesses with goals for improving student achievement. The school's three-year operational plan also makes mention to the language arts literacy and mathematics programs and the levels of professional development associated with them. PIP's were grade-specific, developed collaboratively and comprehensive. They also correlate to instructional needs of students. However, social education teachers indicate that they developed their own PIPS in isolation of administrative staff

## **STANDARD 6**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Continue content professional development for science and social studies teachers.
2. Create a systematic school-wide professional development plan that is focused on necessary identified areas of student achievement and coordinates all the various activities.
3. Investigate ways to include personal aides who are directly involved in supporting teaching in all appropriate trainings.

#### **Special Education**

1. Provide site-based staff development for special education teachers .
2. Provide a framework for the PRC committee to make recommendations to the district regarding themes for professional development that have presented themselves through the referral process.

**Summary Findings in: EFFICIENCY (QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP, IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHOLE SCHOOL REFORM MODEL, EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP COUNCIL)**

**7.1a There is a shared vision that is understood and ingrained in the school's culture.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Interviews with principal, vice-principals, SLC members, teachers
- Review of lesson plans, SLC minutes, policies and practices
- Student pledge recited each morning
- Student interviews
- Classroom observations – hallways and classrooms

**Findings:**

Upon questioning, the various stakeholders exhibited varying degrees of knowledge of the school mission. In fact, they were eager to have that mission and vision articulated. The principal stated that he inherited the mission statement and thought it was fine. In interviews, teachers seemed to know the mission statement and stated that they supported it. The mission was posted in classrooms and in the halls. The intent of the mission is to promote higher order thinking and the ability of students to be the agents of their own learning. Classroom observations revealed that factual information was supplied to the students by the teacher.

**7.1b All instructional staff has access to curriculum-related materials and the training necessary to use curricular and data resources that enable students to master the CCCS.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans, observations reports, curriculum materials, SLC agenda and notes
- Teacher, principal, vice-principal, SLC member interviews
- Student interviews
- Classroom observations – hallways and classrooms

**Findings:**

The principal, vice-principals, and teachers interviewed all stated that they had received curriculum and materials that were aligned to the state standards. Sample of these materials were available for examination. However, the same interviews, examination of observation reports, lesson plans and classroom observations revealed a need for better training of teachers in the use of the curriculum and their actual implementation in the classroom.

**7.1d The leadership team analyzes disaggregated data that are used to assist teachers to adjust their instruction and to develop PIPs.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of SLC meeting agendas and notes
- Review of three-year operational plan and school Improvement Plan
- Principal, vice-principal, teacher, SLC member interviews

## **Findings**

During our interview with the School Leadership Committee, they stated that no disaggregation of data occurred beyond that supplied by No Child Left Behind data. Therefore, there was no way to monitor progress towards goals during the school year. Also, no clear action plan that specifically identified strategies, timelines and evaluation of the broad goals of the Three Year Operational Plan existed. Teachers stated that they had limited knowledge of the contents of the Three Year Operational Plan and no knowledge of data, goals and objectives beyond the AYP goals for the year. Data driven decision-making on a school-wide and classroom level is severely limited.

### **7.1f Leadership ensures that time is protected to focus on curricular and instructional issues.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans, student code of conduct, district calendar and information guide, teacher handbook
- Teacher interviews
- Administrator interviews
- Classroom observations and entry of students, restrooms and lunch

#### **Findings:**

Interviews with the principal, vice principals, SLC members and teachers indicate that they are proud of their collaboration by grade and content. However, observations in grades 5-8 do not reveal evidence that these meetings have made classroom instruction challenging. Lesson plans focus on factual information and do not challenge the students. Rather, the lessons provide the students with factual information. The protection of instructional time was evaluated based on observations, an interview with the principal and the posted bell schedule. Observations revealed that the first period scheduled to begin at 8:35 am, actually began at 8:45 am. Classes scheduled to begin after lunch at 1:15 PM did not begin until between 1:25 to 1:35 PM. Bell schedules did not indicate any passing time or an actual late bell to class. Clearly, 20 minutes or more of instructional time is being lost.

### **7.1g Leadership plans and allocates resources, monitors progress, provides organizational support and removes barriers to continuous school improvement.**

#### **Evidence:**

- Teacher interviews
- Administrator and SLC interviews
- Classroom observations
- Review of the budget

#### **Findings:**

The stakeholders report that the budget is produced in a collegial manner by the School Leadership Committee based on the input of the whole staff. Interviews with teachers indicate that there are sufficient materials available to teachers and staff. Although the budget is reviewed by the district, there is general satisfaction with the process and the ability to make modifications during the year. However, there is general satisfaction with the fairness of the allocations.

### **7.1k The principal gives highest priority to academic performance.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Administrator and SLC interviews
- Teacher interviews
- Review of lesson plans, student code of conduct, district calendar and information guide, teacher handbook
- Faculty meeting agendas
- Student interviews
- SLC interviews
- Professional development documentation
- Three-year operational plan
- Interviews with teachers and paraprofessionals

#### **Findings:**

Throughout all of our interviews, the principal articulated the highest academic aspirations for his children. He spends long hours planning new initiatives that will improve the academic performance of the students. Every teacher nominates a student of the month based on academic performance and character improvement. Classes are visited regularly by the principal, two vice principals, and literacy coordinator. Teachers have been evaluated based on the academic performance of their children and their ability to devise lessons and units that deliver excellent instruction. Teachers and vice principals report that the principal is motivated and passionate about improving the academic achievement of his students. This is reflected in observation reports, staff meetings, professional development programs and informal conversations.

## **STANDARD 7**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Develop an effective data collection and a system to support effective implementation of the curriculum e.g. walkthroughs, focused observations.
2. Develop a plan for improving instruction, which includes a review of the bell schedule.
3. Disaggregate the data to encompass all subgroups. Create a system of classroom based data in order to shape and guide instruction on a daily basis and deliver an effective instructional program for the students.
4. Create a bell system that allows for passing time and a full period of instruction.

**STANDARD 8: The school maximizes use of all available resources to support high student and staff performance.**

**8.1c The instructional and non-instructional staff members are assigned to serve the learning needs of all students.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of master schedule
- Data analysis records used for classroom assignments
- School staff member interviews
- SLC interviews
- Classroom observations
- Administrator interviews

**Findings:**

The principal enunciates a clear vision of improved student achievement to be achieved by an improved delivery of instruction. The whole staff has been told that by the principal that the academic and affective needs of the students are paramount. He is referred to as a “student advocate” and/or the leader of the “student union.” Teachers and paraprofessionals state that they have the strongest support from the principal and vice principals in order to improve instruction. Teachers and paraprofessionals state that they understand that the needs of the children come first.

**8.1d There is evidence that the staff makes efficient use of time to maximize learning and that the school schedule reflects instructional priorities (e.g., uninterrupted 90 minute block of literacy instruction in primary grades, classes begin on time, and classes continue until the end of the time period).Recommendation:**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of master schedule, SLC records
- Teacher interviews
- SLC interviews
- Observations in hallways
- Classroom observations of student work

**Findings:**

The principal, vice principals and teaching staff express a sincere desire to deliver the best possible instructional program to their students. Observation reports and interviews with the principal and staff indicate that there is a need for more support of instruction. The principal stated that he, the vice principles and the literacy coach need to spend more time in classes to support improved instruction.

**8.1e Staff promotes team planning vertically and horizontally across content areas and grades that is focused on the goals, objectives and strategies in the report on instructional priorities (e.g., common planning time for content area teachers; emphasis on time on task, and integrated units).**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of master schedule
- Review of school-based budget
- Review of faculty meeting agendas and minutes
- School staff member interviews
- Cross-subject teacher interviews

**Findings:**

The principal, vice principals and staff are proud of their ability to collaborate in order to support the children and themselves. Grade teachers talk with pride about their ability to support each other for the benefit of the children. Collaboration exists in the content areas and on grade levels. This culture of collaboration is supported by a master schedule that provides for content teams and grade level teams to meet regularly during the week. Teachers share stories of effective collaboration and professional development serve to improve instruction and promote character development. Collaborations help to provide better guidance services to their students.

## **RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND INTEGRATION**

**8.2d State and federal program resources are integrated (Safe Schools, NCLB, IDEA) to address student needs.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of school-based budget
- Review of three-year operational plan
- Review of technology plan
- Administration interviews

**Findings:**

In interviews with the principal, vice principals, SLC members and teachers stated that there is an attempt to integrate the various state and federal funding streams with the regular classroom program.

## STANDARD 8

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Provide opportunities for regular and after school teachers to meet and discuss their students and the instructional program.
2. The principal and vice principals need to establish their priorities for improved instruction and develop structures to meet these goals

### STANDARD 9 – COMPREHENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE PLANNING:

**The School Leadership Council/NCLB Planning Committee develops, implements, evaluates and adjusts its Report on Instructional Priorities/School Improvement Plan to communicate a clear purpose, direction, and limited goals focused on improving teaching and learning.**

#### DEFINING THE SCHOOL'S VISION, MISSION, BELIEFS

**9.1a There is evidence that a collaborative process that engaged the school community was used to develop the vision, beliefs, mission, and goals.**

#### Findings for this indicator based on:

- Review of three-year operational plan
- Teacher and administrator interviews
- SLC interview
- Mission, vision and belief statements
- Principal overview presentation

#### Findings:

The mission of the school was developed in previous years through a process involving all stakeholders at the time. When the new leadership team began this year, they reviewed the mission and felt that it provided a direction. The school does focus itself on its theme of journalism and publishing and is working to attract new partnerships such as *The Star Ledger*. The school connects its name of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., to its mission and focuses on the motto "Build on the Dream." The SLC is knowledgeable about connecting the mission to the three-year plan and to targeting resources. They agree that they need to create a plan to determine how they will know that the mission is being met. Teachers know the gist of the mission, some recite it verbatim.

**9.2a There is evidence that the School Leadership Council (SLC) or NCLB Planning Committee planning process involves collecting, managing and analyzing data to annually update the comprehensive needs assessment and to develop the three-year operational plan School Improvement Plan.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Administrator interviews
- Teacher interviews
- SLC interviews
- Review of SLC documents
- School report card
- Three-Year Operational Plan

**Findings:** Data is collected and there is some rudimentary analysis at the school level. The SLC works on this. There is no evidence of an annual update of a comprehensive needs assessment. There is evidence that test data is collected and analyzed to create the three-year plan. Strategies are described. There is some evidence that major assessment goals are focused at the classroom level by using the PDAs but school personnel are not aware that these goals and strategies are part of the Three-Year Operational Plan.

The SLC discusses allocations to support needs in the plan. Data is not always disaggregated to the sub-groups beyond ELL and SPED. Strategies here are not well delineated and in interviews with these teachers, strategies in the plan are not known.

**9.4b Data from multiple assessments are used to identify student and school goals and document strengths and limitations of instructional and organizational effectiveness.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of three-year operational plan
- SLC interviews
- Teacher interviews
- School and Community Perception Survey

Goals for student achievement are stated in clear and concise terms but other goals are not stated as measurable. The three year plan only identifies student achievement goals. The principal mentions other achievements, such as reduction of violence, increase in parent involvement, but these are not listed.

**9.5a Strategies in the Report on Instructional Priorities or School Improvement Plan are aligned with student and school goals; identifies resources, timelines and persons responsible; and contains an evaluation plan that evaluates the degree to which it achieves the goals and objectives for student learning.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of three-year operational plans
- SLC interviews
- Administrator interviews

**Findings:**

Most of the strategies in the three-year operational plan include an intentional focus on closing the achievement gap. Goals and objectives are guided by requirements and benchmarks to attain Adequate Yearly Progress according to NCLB. Although school leadership regularly conduct walkthroughs, no evidence was found indicating that these walk throughs are systematically linked to an evaluation of the effectiveness of the Three-Year Operational Plan.

**9.6b The principal and SLC regularly evaluate the degree to which it achieves the goals and benchmarks for student learning set by the plan.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of three-year operational plan
- Review of documentation of evidence of achievement of goals and benchmarks
- SLC minutes and agenda
- Administrator interviews

**Findings:** Goals and yearly test benchmarks for student learning are set by the plan. The expected impact, is not met in all areas, but improvement is shown. There is clear intention that the plan will impact instructional program but the action steps are missing and an evaluation plan beyond state testing scores is not in evidence.

**STANDARD 9**

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Provide professional development for the SLC and additional professional development of school leaders in the analysis of multiple forms of data to facilitate the assessment of strategies in the three-year operational plan related to student achievement, building instructional and organizational capacity, improving classroom practices and identifying the impact and implementation levels of these strategies.
2. Develop a process to systematically collect, manage and analyze data for use in decision making processes and assessing instructional and organizational effectiveness.
3. Review and update the three-year operational plan to include action plans for each strategy that includes timelines and a list of persons responsible for various elements. Bring this to the larger school community for input, increased awareness and to create a formal process for accountability.
4. Use the SLC sub-committees to monitor the Three Year Operational Plan monthly and report outcomes to the SLC at the monthly meetings. The SLC should inform and communicate sub-committee outcomes to the entire faculty at monthly meetings

**Summary Findings in: ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE (QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION)**

**STANDARD 1-CURRICULUM: The district P-12 curriculum is rigorous and aligned to state standards.**

**1.1b The district initiates discussions among schools regarding curriculum standards and frameworks to ensure they are clearly articulated across all levels (P-12).**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Local curriculum documents, units of study and lesson plans
- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

The district provides extensive staff development opportunities to address implementation of the NJCCCS and promote articulation of the standards across grade levels. Teachers attend full-day workshops conducted by the district's mathematics department personnel, and are encouraged to participate in weekend and summer institutes that facilitate articulation among the schools of the district. School instructional staff attends weekly grade level and content area meetings which ensures horizontal and vertical articulation within the building. The district's revised three year operational plan includes a commitment to articulation between the middle and high schools to promote continuity in the mathematics curriculum.

**1.1e The curriculum requires all students to take courses with sufficient academic rigor to prepare for college preparatory courses and pass the HSPA, and provides specific links to life and career options.**

**Evidence for this indicator based on:**

- District interviews
- Teacher interviews
- School and Community Perception Survey

**Findings:**

The K-5 textbook series Everyday Math contains suggested activities or questions which link real-life situations to math skills. Connected Math assignments are usually related to real-life problem-solving situations through extension activities. Several community partnerships provide the students with opportunities to work with local businesses and organizations to explore future career options and promote post-secondary education.

**1.1f The district works with supervisors and faculty to systematically monitor, evaluate and adjust the curriculum based on the evidence of student achievement.**

**Evidence for this indicator based on:**

- Review of the three-year operational plan
- Review NJASK3 and 4 Assessment Results
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

The district follows the guidelines set by the NSF to review and revise the mathematics curriculum. Weekly grade level meetings are conducted by building vice-principals to review curriculum implementation and make adjustments in pacing and delivery based on student achievement. MRTCs periodically attend content area meetings to provide support for teachers on curriculum related issues. A district curriculum committee comprised of content specialists, administrators and teachers meets during the summer to revise the math curriculum. The district has developed guidelines for monitoring implementation of the curriculum at all schools with Walk-Throughs, Educational Audits and Executive Field Observation Visits. An interview with the building principal revealed a need to become better informed about the mathematics program in the building. Although the opportunity exists for training by the district, duties and conflicting schedules have limited his participation.

**1.1g The curriculum provides access to a common academic core for all students including, but not limited to, special education and ELL students.**

**Evidence for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Local curriculum documents, units of study and lesson plans
- District interviews
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

The district is in its third year of a three year, district-wide plan for the adoption of the mathematics program. The Everyday Math Series is now fully implemented in all K-5 classrooms in the district, and Connected Math is used at the 6-8 grade level in both general education and special education classes. Both series emphasize problem-solving skills and higher-order thinking.

## STANDARD 1

### NEXT STEP

Administration should confer with ELL teacher to assure that there are adequate materials that are necessary for implementing mathematics instruction for ELL students, K-8, should be provided to the ELL teacher to enable the district approved math program to begin immediately.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. School will commit to providing a full-time on-site qualified math coach. It is recommended that selection of a coach includes input from the Director of the Office of Mathematics.
2. Develop an on-site staff development plan that focuses on: increasing content knowledge of teachers, using data analysis to inform instruction, developing an understanding of the use of rubrics and open-ended questions, and helping teachers intentionally and thoughtfully link the math curriculum to real life. This will help students understand the benefits of learning the concepts and provide them with a reason to strive for mastery of the skills objectives.
3. Building leadership should conduct regular walk-throughs to monitor implementation of the mathematics curriculum. Guidance in determining the level of implementation should be provided by the MRT/Cs. Teachers are strongly encouraged to attend all in-service opportunities at the school/SLT/district level.
4. Teachers of special needs students should receive class coverage to enable attendance at all grade level meetings, content area meetings, and staff development opportunities at the school and district level.

**STANDARD 2 -CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT/EVALUATION: The district and school use multiple evaluation and assessment strategies to continuously monitor and modify instruction to meet student needs and support proficient student work.**

**2.1a Assessments created by teachers, school and district are frequent, rigorous, aligned with NJ CCCS, used to gauge student learning and adjust teaching to individual needs.**

### Findings for this indicator based on:

- Review of lesson plans
- Local curriculum documents and units of study
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

### Findings:

Several types of assessments are used regularly by classroom teachers to monitor student achievement. These include review of math logs, unit/chapter assessments, and projects involving open-ended questions. Publisher provided assessments are used regularly, supplemented by teacher-made authentic tests. Most of the assessments consist of multiple choice questions requiring fact recall. Multi-step questions requiring higher-order thinking and problem solving skills are not included on either form of assessment and do not mirror state administered assessments. Teacher-made authentic assessments are typically fact recall and do not include open-ended questions. The district has developed mid-year and end-of year assessments

which are administered to students in grades K through 8. JASK3, NJASK4 and GEPA practice tests is also administered at the appropriate grade levels. Students in grades 5, 6, and 7 take the SPA. Student performance data is used to modify curriculum at some grade levels and determine staff development needs.

### **2.1b Teachers collaborate to design authentic classroom assessments aligned with the CCCS.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Local curriculum documents and units of study
- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations

#### **Findings:**

Teachers collaborate at some grade levels to design alternate forms of assessments such as projects and open-ended question activities. Chapter/unit tests are usually publisher created or derived from the publisher-provided test generator software.

### **2.1c Students can articulate the academic expectations in each class and know what is required to be proficient. Academic expectations are clearly communicated, evident in classrooms and observable in student work.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Student interviews
- Classroom observations

#### **Findings:**

Large, easy to read rubrics were posted in most classrooms and easily located by the students when asked to do so. Projects displayed in hallways and classrooms listed both the numeric value and its related criteria. Students were able to clearly articulate the criteria for each of the ratings on the rubric and said they regularly practice using the rubric to evaluate both their own and their classmates' assignments. Few students were able to state the criteria used to evaluate their progress towards meeting the objectives of their current unit of study.

### **2.1d Test scores are used by the district and school to identify curriculum gaps.**

#### **Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations

#### **Findings:**

State and district administered assessments are analyzed by the central office and the results are disaggregated throughout the district. Teachers in grades 1 and 2 stated that the data is discussed at grade level and content area meetings so that adjustments can be made with regard to pacing and modifying

instructional practices. Some fifth and sixth grade teachers reported that they were not made aware of all test results. Teachers used classroom assessments only to modify lessons.

**2.1e Multiple assessments are designed and used to gauge student learning and to adjust teaching to meet individual student needs.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Some teachers use a variety of assessments such as math journals, projects and “slate quizzes” to gauge students’ progress towards meeting learning objectives. Classroom displays of student work showed traditional tests to be the most commonly used assessment tool. Feedback on most assessments is rarely helpful in enabling the student to improve future performance and is limited to a word of encouragement or a simple directive. No evidence was found to show that students were given opportunities to choose how they would demonstrate learning progress.

**2.1h Samples of student assessments are shared among teachers and analyzed to inform instruction and to revise curriculum and pedagogy.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Teachers have received some training in protocols for analyzing student work for alignment with state content standards. There is no consistency among the grade levels in using the protocols. Analysis is performed by grade level or by individual teachers according to the teacher’s preference.

**STANDARD 2**

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Specific performance objectives for daily lessons should be posted and reviewed with students at the beginning and end of all class periods to enable students to evaluate their learning progress.
2. Results of district administered assessments should be reviewed with 5<sup>th</sup> grade and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teachers.
3. Teachers should provide meaningful feedback on all graded assignments including criteria met and suggestions for improving student performance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. Staff development should be planned to specifically address training for teachers in designing assessments that better reflect the format of state assessments by including multi-step problems and open-ended questions.
2. Collaboration on authentic assessments should be required among all grade levels to ensure continuous student improvement in test-taking skills as they move from grade to grade.
3. Provide staff development with a focus on using varied forms of assessments to gauge students' progress on meeting state standards. Create a resource for teachers that include alternate assessment tools and activities which allow students choices in the way they demonstrate achievement. Student portfolios should be updated regularly and used to check student progress towards clearly defined goals.
4. Administration provides training in the development and use of student portfolios. Student portfolios should be implemented, maintained and updated regularly and used to check student progress towards clearly defined goals. Administration regularly monitors this process.
5. Establish a school policy that requires teachers to analyze data that measures student progress towards meeting state standards. Increase the amount of teacher training to enable proficiency in data analysis.

**STANDARD 3 -INSTRUCTION: Instruction engages all students by using effective, varied and research-based practices to improve academic performance.**

**3.1a There is evidence that effective and varied instructional strategies are used in all classrooms.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

Review of lesson plans

- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Instruction seems to be almost equally divided between classrooms in which discovery-based, investigative learning routinely occurs and those where teacher-centered instruction is the norm. Although manipulatives are included in all lessons, the activity is usually teacher-directed rather than investigative in nature. Some teachers require students to draw conclusions based on patterns that develop during guided activities, while others feed information to the students. Questions often do not require students to use higher-level reasoning skills, and limited time is allowed for students to organize their thoughts and form a response.

**3.1b Instructional strategies and learning activities are aligned with the district, school and state goals and assessments.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Classroom observations and interviews with teachers revealed that most teachers use some instructional strategies which align with the school curriculum. All students are required to complete some assignments which mirror tasks included on state assessments, but the assignments are not part of the regular routine of the class. Professional development has been provided at the school and district level to inform teachers on the use of test results to link state standards, school/district goals and instructional strategies.

**3.1c Instructional strategies and activities are continuously monitored and aligned with individual student needs.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans
- Teacher interviews
- District school administrator interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Every Day Math and Connected Math textbooks provide teachers with instructional strategies that address various learning styles and multiple intelligences. Interviews with teachers revealed that teachers are aware of the different learning styles of their students, but rely on textbook activities to accommodate them. Differentiation of instruction was rarely observed during the regularly scheduled class period. School leadership monitors lesson plans according to district guidelines and provides some feedback to assist teachers in modifying instruction. During classroom observations it was noted that some essential lesson components are absent in the presentation of the lesson. These include making connections between past learning and new material, transferring knowledge to new situations, and using embedded recall questions.

**3.1d Teachers demonstrate the content knowledge necessary to challenge and motivate students to high levels of learning.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations
- School documentation

**Findings:**

School leadership has made an effort to assign teachers in accordance with their demonstrated strengths in content areas. Most teachers at the lower grade levels appear to be comfortable with the content knowledge required for their teaching assignment. At the upper grade levels, teachers report the content knowledge required by the Connected Math series is extensive and efforts are made to help instructional staff acquire the necessary skills to effectively implement the program. The district staff development calendar shows opportunities for teachers to grow in expertise, and partnerships with several institutes of higher learning offer staff the opportunity to take courses in their content areas. MRTCs provide on-site

help as requested. Each grade level has a lead teacher who serves as a resource for staff in each of the math programs implemented in the building.

**3.1e There is evidence that teachers incorporate technology in their classrooms.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Scientific calculators are available for use in all third through 8<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, with a shared set of graphing calculators for use in the 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Departmentalization at the upper grade levels results in only one class set of calculators per classroom teacher. All classrooms have four computers, though only two were observed to be turned on and ready for use. During interviews with students in the upper grades it was reported that the computers were rarely used during instructional time. Displays of student work showed computer-generated work obviously done to enhance a unit of study. Technology is used not for classroom instruction, nor is it infused into the curriculum. Program software is used by students to practice and improve learned skills.

**3.1f The district and school ensure that instructional resources are sufficient and that all instructional materials are aligned to the curriculum.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- District interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

Classroom observations revealed sufficient resources to fully implement the math curriculum. Supply requests are honored; however, replacement equipment is sometimes delayed by budgetary time lines. The principal indicated that he was supportive of teacher equipment needs, but obtaining the necessary funds was at times difficult. He stated that he sometimes “needed to be resourceful” in order to meet material requests. Classroom manipulatives are purchased as recommended by the publisher of the textbook series and are sufficient for full-class instruction.

**3.1g Teachers examine and discuss student work collaboratively and use this information to inform their practice.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Teacher interviews
- Classroom observations
- Review of grade level meeting agendas

**Findings:**

Collaboration by teachers that focuses on reviewing student work is encouraged by the building administration and common planning time is scheduled daily for teachers in grades 1 and 2 to achieve this goal. Teachers at other grade levels share student work at weekly grade level meetings when called for in the meeting's agenda. Teachers are not always able to attend the meetings due to lack of class coverage.

**3.1h There is evidence that homework is frequent, evaluated and tied to instructional practice.**

**Findings for this indicator based on:**

- Review of lesson plans, SLC notes
- SLC, teacher and student interviews
- Classroom observations

**Findings:**

The school follows the district homework policy, and review of lesson plans indicates that teachers follow homework guidelines as suggested in the textbooks. Teachers report that homework completion is a problem with many students. They identified parental involvement in overseeing their child's homework as being a big factor in the students' level of achievement in math. Supplemental resources are frequently used as homework assignments and are focused on algorithmic skills, not concepts. Homework is checked for completeness and accuracy. Feedback provided on homework assignments by some teachers enables students to improve their work. This practice was not consistent across grade levels.

**STANDARD 3**

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Require teachers to write the full statement of the NJCCCS in their lesson plan books in lieu of writing the reference number of the standards.
2. Replace skill/drill homework with assignments which require students to perform tasks similar to those required on the district and state assessments.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Continue professional development which focuses on helping teachers and administrators understand the constructivist approach to teaching mathematics and mathematical pedagogy. Training in brain-based learning will improve pacing and implementation in the classroom.
2. Adjust the school schedule to provide greater opportunities for all teachers to collaborate on planning, modeling, and reflecting on Connected Math lessons.
3. Increase professional development in effective teaching techniques. School leadership should conduct frequent informal observations to monitor instructional and presentation strategies. Focus on questioning techniques and wait-time is essential.
4. Continue to provide professional development in analyzing assessments results to modify instruction to meet diverse student needs. Monitor collaboration meetings to ensure teachers of all grade levels are familiar with the process.
5. Develop a plan to train teachers to incorporate technology in instruction and developing assessments.
6. Administration mandates and monitors this process as part of the schools instructional program. Encourage teachers to collaborate to design activities which extend textbook learning using computer software such as Geometer's Sketchpad and Excel spreadsheets.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

Members of the CAPA review team express their appreciation to the staff and community of (NAME) Elementary School for their gracious welcome and for their open interaction with us during our visit. We encourage the school community to review this report in depth, asking themselves deep reflective questions about the findings of fact and recommendations for action.

We also encourage school leadership to lead long-term reflections on the following:

1. How can the school staff and students move to predicting student achievement through a comprehensive analytical instructional process?
2. What will assist teachers in moving from teacher directed, whole-class instruction to other models of teaching more suitable for meeting the needs of all students?
3. How can the school systemically monitor the quality of curriculum and instruction?
4. How does the school's instructional and assessment strategies meet all students' needs?
5. How can the school's assessment system provide an accurate and useful picture of student achievement based upon multiple sources of evidence?

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

District	Newark Public Schools	
School	Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. School	
Principal Name – Years in Building	Mr. Tony K. Motley – finishing first year	
Grade Levels	K-8	
Number of Teachers meeting NCLB HQT	30	
Number of Teachers with Emergency Certification	2	
Total Number of Classrooms	32	
Percent Special Education	17%	
Number – Self Contained Classrooms	5	
Percent Bilingual	4%	
Number of Bilingual Classrooms	1	
Number of Students	2004 - 617	2005 – 576
School Leadership Council (SLC) or Title I Planning Committee (PC) Meets Monthly	Yes	
SLC or Title I PC has complete representation	Yes	
Intensive Early Literacy Visit and Complete Plan	Visit Date: 5/06/05	Completed Plan: Yes
Percent Parent Involvement	10%	
Whole School Reform (WSR) Model	“Reaching for The Brass Ring”	
Status of WSR Contract	2 <sup>nd</sup> year of Implementation	
Corrective Action Plan – Persistently Dangerous “Warning”	N/A	
Most Current Number of Students reading at grade level in 3 <sup>rd</sup> and 4 <sup>th</sup> grades.	3 <sup>rd</sup> - (33) 4 <sup>th</sup> - (27)	Test: Harcourt Brace