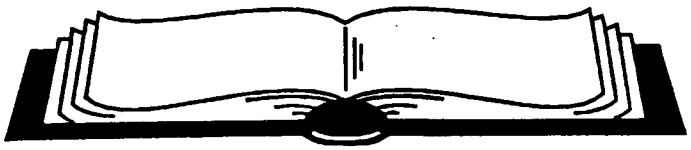
Code # 74
(for office use only)

NEW JERSEY

1999-2000 Guidelines and Application



BEST PRACTICES

ORIGINAL

Deadline for Application to County Office: NOVEMBER 20, 1999

Category	Citizenship/Character Education (Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name	Homestead
Number of Schools with Practice	one (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County Bergen	Fair Lawn
District (Proper Name)	School District
District Address	35-01 Morlot Avenue (street/p. o. box)
	Fair Lawn, New Jersey 07410 (city, zip code)
District Telephone	201-794-5500 **Fax** 201-475-2760 **Email**
Chief School Administrator	Dr. Robert Byrne
Nominated School (Proper Name)	
School Address	Thomas Jefferson Middle School
	35-01 Morlot Avenue (street/p. o. box)
	Fair Lawn, N. J. 0740 (city, zip code)
School Telephone	201-703-2240 **Fax** 201-475-9185 **Email**
School Principal	Mr. James F. McGuire, Jr.
Program Developer(s)	Marjorie Kuhn and MaryAnn Pasuit
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	Robert Byrne

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: ✓ Yes ___ No **County Superintendent's Signature** Aaron R. Graham

NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
1999-2000 APPLICATION

Application Requirements:

- **RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS.** No reference should be made to the names of the district or the school(s). Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements.
- **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM on pages 1, 2 (if applicable) and 4 and THE NUMBER OF LINES SPECIFIED FOR RESPONSES to the statements.** Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
- Application must be **keyboarded on 8 ½" x 11" white paper, portrait** format. **Ten-point or larger computer font** or **twelve-pitch or larger typewriter font** must be used. (This sentence is in ten-point.)
- **KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to the statements below must be **no more than a total of three pages. Keyboard the statement followed by the response.** Format your response to the number of lines specified.
- **The information on page 4 and the keyboarded responses** to statements must be printed or copied **on one side of the page. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable)** must be printed or copied **on one side of the page.** Staple pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) and 4 and the keyboarded responses together.
- **The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.**
- **The original and seven copies of the application** must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **November 22, 1999,** with the **Itemized List of District Applications** form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.
- **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE PROCEDURES FOR SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION MAY RESULT IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE APPLICATION.**

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:

Type of School	Grade Levels
___ Elementary School	___
X Middle School	6
___ Junior High School	___
___ High School	___
___ Other: ___	___

Practice Name HOMESTEAD

Number of Schools with Practice 1

Number of Districts with Practice 1

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.

___ Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	___ Educational Technology	___ Safe Learning Environment
X Assessment/Evaluation	___ Health and Physical Education	___ School-to-Career/Workplace Readiness
___ Bilingual Education and Diversity	___ Language Arts Literacy	___ Science
X Citizenship/Character Education	___ Mathematics	___ Social Studies
___ Early Childhood Education Programs	___ Professional Development	___ Special Education
___ Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs (services contributing to high student achievement)	___ Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community and/or higher education)	___ World Languages

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**

2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. **(Maximum of 60 lines for response)**

*The 1996 edition of the ***Core Curriculum Content Standards*** published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at http://www.state.nj.us/education.

1. The basis of social studies is the understanding of human behavior within a prescribed period of time and location under a defined set of circumstances in the hopes of improving the human condition. The Homestead period is a small component of our social studies curriculum, yet it sets the stage for a yearlong study of real life circumstances. This unit allows the students to experience the trials and tribulations of the pioneers as they leave their homes to seek their fortunes on the Prairie. While *The Homestead* is social studies/ language arts/ mathematics based, its focus is *citizenship and character education.*

Student objectives are as follows:

- develop civic responsibility
- work as a "family" encouraging positive interdependence
- utilize the multiple intelligences of all "family" members to succeed
- problem solve as an individual, a "family", and a community
- secure information from sources other than a textbook or encyclopedia
- write in clear, concise, organized language for a variety of purposes
- speak before a group to convey information and opinion
- generate, collect, organize, and analyze data in charts and tables

The students are prepared in social studies class by reviewing the actual 1862 Homestead Act and historical events leading to Western Expansion in America. The order of events is as follows:

1. A town clerk is appointed to log all students' information: census, birth/ marriage, voter, and tax.
2. Identities of homesteaders are determined using a series of spinners which designate point of origin, ethnic background, age, occupation, and wealth.
3. Students compose and post ads seeking spouses. Teachers pair couples based on homestead identities.
4. Scale wagons are constructed, and a landrush is simulated. Land claims are recorded. Deeds are issued. Land use is decided. Log cabin vs. soddie is determined.
5. Each town meeting represents one year. Through the use of spinners, homesteaders "earn" their yearly income. Annual financial records are filled out, and taxes (3% - 1862) are levied.
6. As it becomes evident that a town government is needed, strict guidelines are issued. Any student wishing to run for office must attend an actual borough council meeting; fill out and file a ten-signature petition; and be interviewed by the principal. Political campaigns, women suffragettes protest, and elections are held. Council is sworn in.
7. After completing a residency requirement, town businesses may be established. Applications are submitted to the town council for review.
8. Various writing activities develop as the unit evolves such as family memoirs, campaign speeches, letters of protest, and journal entries.
9. The multiple intelligences of the students are addressed through the construction of a corrugated paper model Conestoga wagon; construction of wooden craft stick model town buildings; creation of Transcontinental Railroad games; weekly quilting bees; reverse painting on glass; line dancing.
10. A community outreach project is held for "our neighbors" through a food drive to benefit DYFS.
11. An evening family hoedown concludes the unit. Students and their families are invited to attend.

This initiative is innovative as the project encompasses several disciplines while promoting personal and civic responsibility with the enthusiastic support of family, borough council, and county. Real people with real jobs become student resources. It is a working model of civic responsibility.

Students find relevance in the curriculum as they apply literacy and math skills to build a life on the Prairie. Success in various academic projects within *Homestead* translates to "financial" success in their pioneer lives. Students also have the opportunity to demonstrate their creativity in the nonacademic projects. This combination is a great motivator for all students and produces high levels of achievement.

In order to replicate this project, an era in history is identified. Its social class system is researched and assigned to students through a lottery. Family and community roles are developed through a series of writing assignments that reflect the historical era. Nonacademic activities and governing structures are based on the culture of the time and implemented accordingly. Since food is the sustenance of any society, it may become the source for family involvement and community outreach projects.

2. As students enter adolescence, the need for decision-making and problem-solving skills increases. As they mature, students are expected to recognize problems, explore alternatives, and identify and implement the best solution. The concept of middle schools evolved from an awareness of the adolescent's need to step out of "the family" and into society. Throughout the year, *The Homestead* places students in a variety of situations that require critical thinking and the development of interpersonal skills in a simulated society. Its goal is to produce citizens who recognize their responsibility to themselves, their families, and the community.

As an interdisciplinary unit, *Homestead* addresses many core curriculum content standards in the areas of visual and performing arts (1.3, 1.5), language arts (3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5), mathematics (4.3), and social studies (6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.9). Its focus is, however, the development of good citizens. Thus *Homestead*'s primary goal lies within the cross-content workplace readiness standards.

2.2 Select appropriate tools and technology for specific activities.
2.3 Demonstrate skills needed to effectively access and use technology based materials through keyboarding, troubleshooting, and retrieving and managing information.
3.1 Recognize and define a problem, or clarify decisions to be made.
3.2 Use models, relationships, and observations to clarify problems and potential solutions.
3.4 Identify and access resources, sources of information, and services in the school and the community.
3.5 Use the library media center as a critical resource for inquiry and assessment of print and nonprint material.
3.8 Organize, synthesize, and evaluate information for appropriateness and completeness.
3.9 Identify patterns and investigate relationships.
3.10 Monitor and validate their own thinking.
3.11 Identify and evaluate the validity of alternative solutions.
3.12 Interpret and analyze data to draw conclusions.
3.13 Select and apply appropriate solutions to problem-solving and decision-making situations.
3.14 Evaluate the effectiveness of various solutions.
3.15 Apply problem-solving skills to original and creative/design projects.

Establishing an alternate society from scratch with 50 – 75 students from 3 feeder elementary schools can be accomplished when all students are engaged in meaningful experiences. The above standards are infused in a wide variety of activities that also address the multiple intelligences. Students work in cooperative groups to create exhibits specific to the 1800's (as stated in section 1, order of events).

To develop problem solving, decision-making skills, "fates" are distributed weekly. A typical scenario reads: Your neighbor's cow wanders onto your pasture. Since your best milking cow has died, you are in need of milk for your growing family. Do you keep the cow or return it? Explain. Written responses are submitted and later discussed.

There comes a time during the homestead experience when families want more land to increase their financial worth. The only land available belongs to neighboring Native Americans through a treaty. The community must decide whether to petition the government to amend the treaty or leave their neighbors in peace. Speeches pro and con are delivered at a town meeting, and a vote is taken. The will of the people is followed.

These are just a few of the many core curriculum activities that have been developed to address the cross-content workplace readiness standards. Such decision-making situations teach the students the democratic process at its best and worst, the value of good leadership, and the power of the individual citizen.

3. The success of this program was measured through authentic assessment. Performance based criteria was set as well as standards in literacy and social studies. Content area assessments were more traditional in nature yet directly connected to the project. That was the easy part. But how does one measure civic responsibility and positive interdependence? We can only base these findings on behaviors exhibited within the "alternate society" and school community.

Within the homestead unit, the success of each homestead family was determined by "liquidating" the family's assets. Each assignment was allotted a dollar value based on criteria appropriate to the task. Rubrics were designed as a framework to guide the students to success. For example, each homesteader

was directed to write the text for a picture book based on his "experience" on the Prairie. Blank hard cover books were purchased (in our case by the PTO) and illustrations were provided. Assessment was based on content, conventions of English, and creativity.

Several research projects were assigned throughout the year. The school librarian worked with the students to develop research skills using text and Internet resources. One project required each citizen to investigate a "mover and shaker" of the 1800's. The results of the research were used to develop oral presentations, which were delivered to the township and invited guests (Superintendent of schools and PTO officers). The purpose of the project was to find an appropriate honoree for the township's newly erected school (craft stick construction). In some instances, creativity and the power of persuasion placed a "dull" research subject into the running.

In addition, many civic and "hands on" opportunities were provided to earn extra money. Some activities were initiated by the citizens for the good of the "township" without any thought of compensation. For example, elections were held for town council. Those seeking office were required to run a political campaign. Candidates gathered signatures for petitions, filed for a position on the ballot, wrote and delivered speeches, and pressed the flesh. While those students earned a minimum stipend for their efforts, their campaign staff did not. In return, council members gave up their lunch periods to conduct township business. A sense of commitment was evident in both the candidates and voting community.

Very few of these citizens/students are referred to the dean of discipline or peer mediation. They learn how to settle disputes through the township. Families learn to problem solve together. The result: only one divorce was granted in the *Homestead's* seven-year history. However, when disputes arise the town council acts as a support to its citizens.

Our former "homesteaders" have moved on to high school and college. On return visits, several have spoken about leadership roles they have assumed in student government and national academic organizations. Others have maintained civic responsibility by volunteering time in nursing homes. We'd like to think that these seeds were sown in the many projects initiated through *Homestead.* Food is collected for the NJ Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) and The Good Shepherd Shelter in Paterson. Our citizens craft a school gift each year.

The spirit in this group of students known as the Voyager House is evidenced in this student comment: "This isn't just a house, it's a home."